

# collective bargaining

Issue 7/2009 July-August

This newsletter presents up-to-date information on collective bargaining developments across Europe since February 2008. It aims to facilitate information exchange between trade unions and to support the work of the ETUC's collective bargaining committee.



AMSTERDAM INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED LABOUR STUDIES  
UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM



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## Austria

### **Unions prepare for private health sector negotiations**

*August 26, 2009*

The vida and GPA-djp trade unions are carrying out surveys of works councils before drawing up demands for the next round of negotiations in the private health sector. The BAGS agreement covers 75,000 workers in a range of health and social services and is one of the biggest negotiated by the two unions. The current agreement was negotiated last November and included a 3.6% increase in pay from 1 January.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/317>;

German: <http://www.vida.at/servlet/...>

### **Union calls for negotiations over underpaid wages**

July 15, 2009

The GPA-DJP trade union has called on the Red Cross to negotiate over how to pay wages owed to around 200 workers. For many years the Red Cross's blood donation service has made errors in its wage calculations, failing to pay correct overtime payments and other allowances. It is estimated that the 200 workers are owed around Euro 2 million. The union says that the Red Cross is trying to resolve the issue through individual discussions with workers, giving them a tight deadline to accept offers of payment below what they are really entitled to.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/314>;

German: [http://www.gpa-](http://www.gpa-djp.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GPA/Page/Index&n=GPA_0.a&cid=1246616837041)

[djp.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GPA/Page/Index&n=GPA\\_0.a&cid=1246616837041](http://www.gpa-djp.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GPA/Page/Index&n=GPA_0.a&cid=1246616837041)

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## Belgium

### **Bridgestone strike ended**

*August 24, 2009*

After nine weeks, the strike of workers at the Bridgestone aircraft tyre plant in Frameries has ended. After conciliatory negotiations at national level failed, a draft agreement at the local level was finally agreed. On 7 August workers ratified the agreement by 57%. The agreement accepts the closure of the plant, but with a number of conditions, including payment of compensation to workers in lieu of plant-closing notice plus compensation based on seniority. Also, placement of each worker into another job in a different company near the worker's home was a condition. A bonus pay-out with an advance of Euro 500 was agreed too. Bridgestone has lifted all sanctions or punishment related to the strike. The Centrale Générale-FGTB is proud of its victory, standing up to a huge multinational. The achievements were not the goals that the union had set out for, but they are notable.

English: <http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/3360-Bridgestone-Strike...>

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## Bulgaria

### **Unions left out of talks on Kremikovtzi mill fate**

*August 10, 2009*

Trade union representatives were not invited at the August 9 meeting between Prime Minister Boyko Borisov and representatives of shareholders in the Kremikovtzi steel mill, union leaders Vasil Yanachkov and Lyudmil Pavlov told a news agency. Yanachkov, chairman of the Federal Trade Union Organization "Metaliziti", said: "We have shown enough activism and we have impressed the society. Yet, we couldn't tell management, shareholders nor the prime minister what to do, though we will express our position." According to Yanachkov the right way to save the steel mill is through debt capitalization (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 April 2009).

English: <http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=n190591>;

via [http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show\\_news.pl?country=Bulgaria](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Bulgaria)

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## Croatia

### **International federation intervenes on behalf of local government union**

*August 26, 2009*

The European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) has written to the President, Prime Minister and Minister for Public Administration in Croatia to protest at proposed changes to pay determination in local government. EPSU's letter condemns the government for failing to consult with unions over the proposed changes and for planning to implement a form of pay determination that undermines the unions' right to collective bargaining. The letter of the European union organisation was reported on the website of Vercernji, one of the main daily newspapers in Croatia.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/317#a5676>;

Croatian: <http://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/sindikalci-eu-mesica...>

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## Czech Republic

### **Union criticizes Czech Airlines lay-offs**

August 25, 2009

The state-run air carrier Czech Airlines (CSA) will not sell any property until the privatisation process is completed, supervisory board chairman Ivan Kocarnik told the press after a board meeting. He did not, however, rule out that parts of the company may be sold in the event that the state does not manage to privatise CSA. The board also acknowledged the layoff of 860 out of CSA's current 4,600 staff that is to take place in the next seven months. A major part of the staff to be dismissed is formed by pilots and stewardesses. This measure is to save up to CZK 800 million (Euro 31.5 million) next year, Kocarnik said. Trade unions are monitoring the situation in the firm. Pilots' union CZALPA leader Filip Gaspar said he welcomed the decision not to sell any assets until the end of privatisation, but he criticized the planned layoffs. Pilots are willing to go on strike to protest against the layoffs, he said. Earlier, CZALPA agreed to a 6.5% wage cut in order to save jobs.

English: <http://praguemonitor.com/2009/08/25/%C4%8Dsa-not...>;  
<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2009/05/articles/cz0905029i.htm>

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## Denmark

### **Pay formula could lead to salary cut**

August 26, 2009

The FOA public services trade union is concerned that salaries in the municipal sector could be reduced as a result of the mechanism in the collective agreement that links public sector pay rises to those in the private sector. On current trends it is possible that pay could be cut by 1%. Dennis Kristensen, president of the FOA, suggested that there could be a compromise solution that allows the social partners to abide by the agreement but defer any potential cuts to see how salaries develop. He underlined the fact that a 1% pay cut would not help councils recruit and retain skilled and experienced staff.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/317>;  
Danish: <http://www.foa.dk/sw501974.asp>

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## Estonia

### **New Labour Contract Law enacted unless protests**

July 2, 2009

Unless protests like strikes and picket lines in front of the parliament building, organised by the Estonian Confederation of Trade Unions (ECUTU), the new Labour Contract Law took effect on 1 July. The law includes the last minute amendments criticized by the union movement and disturbing the balance between job security and labour market flexibility, for the unions an essential goal of the law (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 May and June 2009).

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2009/07/articles/ee0907029i.htm>

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## Finland

### **Confederation calls for co-ordinated approach to minimum wages**

July 15, 2009

The SAK blue-collar trade union confederation is aiming to secure a minimum wage of Euro 1,500 for all full-time workers covered by the agreements negotiated in co-ordination by its affiliates. The new president of SAK, Lauri Lyly, stated that the organisation will fight for this basic pay during the next round of wage negotiations. He added that employees should be able to survive on their earnings without having to resort to welfare benefits. There is no statutory minimum wage in Finland with minimum wages set in different sectoral collective agreements, and a Euro 1,500 minimum wage would mean a substantial increase for some groups of workers.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/314>; <http://www.artto.kaapeli.fi/unions/T2009/m26>;  
<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2009/06/articles/fi0906039i.htm>

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## France

### **Chemical union supports training agreement**

August 10, 2009

The Federation Chimie Energie CFDT (FCE-CFDT) has pledged full support for the national framework agreement, reached between the Union des Industries Chimiques (UIC) and the Ministry of Economy, Industry, and Employment. The agreement outlines the responsibilities of companies facing difficulties during the current economic and financial crisis. Companies are encouraged to expand training programs for employees, to avoid redundancies, and to develop skills. The French state has made a commitment of Euro 8.5 million for the implementation of the programmes outlined in the agreement, until December 2011. The FCE-CFDT will ensure, in particular, that this training development plan will benefit the most vulnerable workers and the companies truly facing serious financial difficulties.

English: <http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/3353-French-Chemical-Workers...>

### **Unions welcomes success of campaign**

July 30, 2009

The CGT public services federation is hopeful that draft legislation that would undermine employment rights in local and regional government will be defeated, also as a result of the union campaign. The proposal was introduced with a view to relaxing the rules on recruitment of workers to local and regional government. The union warned that the draft legislation would effectively mean the end to the statutory regulations that cover employees in the sector. Not only the Association of Mayors but also the Minister of the Interior have rejected the proposals and indicated their support for the maintenance of the statutory regulations.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/315#a5519>;

French: <http://www.spterritoriaux.cgt.fr/spip.php?article3319>

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## Germany

### **IG Metall demands return to secure jobs**

August 20, 2009

On 19 August, IG Metall Vice President Detlef Wetzel called on political leaders to ensure that priority is given to employment in secure, regular employment as the economy recovers and that use of agency labour is limited and based on equal pay for equal work. The union's demands were backed by the results of the study "Changes in the use of agency labour", conducted by the Friedrich Schiller University of Jena and released on the same day, finding that enterprises are increasingly using agency labour in order to pass on business risks to workers. Also, figures released by the Federal Office of Statistics showed that the share of German workers in regular, secure jobs with social benefits and working more than 20 hours a week fell from 73% in 1998 to 66% in 2008.

English: <http://www.imfmetal.org/index.cfm?c=20485&l=2>;

German: <http://www.igmetall.de/cps/...>

### **Vote confirms agreement for social workers and childcare staff**

August 26, 2009

After a marathon five-day negotiating session, public services union ver.di secured new agreements on pay rates and health covering around 220,000 social workers and childcare staff. The agreement on health acknowledges the increased responsibility and workload of social workers and childcare workers, and introduces health committees, health working groups and risk assessments. The revised pay structure means that a newly recruited childcare worker will start on Euro 2,240 a month instead of Euro 2,130, which after four years will rise to Euro 2,400, up from Euro 2,240. In July, the deal has been approved by ver.di's collective bargaining committee and the strike committee. In August, the members confirmed with a 55% vote in favour. Ver.di has said that it will continue its campaigning to force politicians and employers to recognize that they should better acknowledge the importance of social occupations. In particular the union is looking to improve the quality of training available to workers in the sector (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 May and June).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/315#a5519>; <http://www.epsu.org/cob/317#a5676>;

German: <http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews...>

### **Union secures jobs commitment from EON**

August 12, 2009

Energy union ver.di and the EON group works council have negotiated a compromise agreement with the company to protect jobs and working conditions for most of EON's 40,000 employees in Germany. The company's planned "perform-to-win" savings programme threatened job cuts and other major changes across the group. The agreement means that jobs, collective agreements, training provisions and pensions will be protected until 2012. However, the company still aims to go-ahead with its plans to split off its EON IS subsidiary and sell its IT infrastructure. Ver.di estimates that around 1,000 workers will be affected by these changes although here the union has managed to negotiate some basic protection for the workers concerned (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 June).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/316#a5631>;

German: <http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews...>

### **Interim report on 2009 bargaining round**

*July 1, 2009*

In June 2009, the Institute of Economic and Social Research (WSI) within the Hans Böckler Foundation presented its interim report on the 2009 round of collective bargaining. It evaluates the collective agreements concluded in the first half of 2009, affecting about 20% of all employees covered by such agreements. Calculated on an annual basis, the average increase in wages and salaries will amount to about 3% in 2009, which is slightly above the average pay increase of 2.9% in 2008. The average increase in eastern German pay levels is estimated to be about 3.5%, thereby bringing this year's increases above the western German level. The effects of the economic crisis were only partly felt.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2009/07/articles/de0907019i.htm>;

German: [http://www.boeckler.de/pdf/p\\_ta\\_hjb\\_2008.pdf](http://www.boeckler.de/pdf/p_ta_hjb_2008.pdf)

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## **Ireland**

### **Marine Terminals strike to continue**

*August 26, 2009*

On 26 August, the Dublin Port Company, which administers the port on behalf of the state, refused to facilitate a meeting of SIPTU members with union officials to discuss the dispute at Marine Terminals. The eight week long strike at the south side of the docks was sparked by attempts by the UK multinational Peel Ports, that took over Marine Terminals in 2008, to introduce mass redundancies, drastically reduce pay and conditions for other workers, and introduce strike breakers. Two days earlier, SIPTU General Secretary Joe O'Flynn told a rally outside Marine Terminals that if a solution was not quickly found, the dispute would cause further damage to business in Dublin Port and the wider economy.

English: <http://www.siptu.ie/PressRoom/NewsReleases/2009/Name,11026,en.html>;

<http://www.siptu.ie/PressRoom/NewsReleases/2009/Name,11013,en.html>

### **Civil service unions reject further pay cuts**

*August 12, 2009*

The executive committee of the CPSU civil service union has said it will vigorously oppose any attempt by the government to implement proposals from the report by the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes. The report focuses on measures that the "Special Group" claims to be necessary to respond to the financial and economic crisis, and include further reductions in pay and allowances; a new benchmarking exercise to look at international pay rates, and recommend reductions; privatisation of public service work. Earlier, the Impact public service union warned that widespread industrial action will be organised if the government plans any further cuts in public sector pay, pensions or jobs. The union was responding to what it regards as a relentless campaign by politicians, business and the media targeting public sector workers. Impact stressed that public sector workers have already seen a 7.5% cut in pay as a result of the government's pensions levy.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/316>; <http://www.epsu.org/cob/315#a5519>; <http://www.cpsu.ie/>

[http://www.impact.ie/iopen24/newsdesk\\_info.php?newsdesk\\_id=255](http://www.impact.ie/iopen24/newsdesk_info.php?newsdesk_id=255)

### **Employer survey reveals pay freezes in most companies**

*August 12, 2009*

A May 2009 survey by the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) shows that, while more employers have increased pay for production workers (13%) than have cut it (10%), a growing majority of

companies are freezing wages. The survey was based on a sample of about 2,500 IBEC members, with a response rate of 20%. Commenting on the findings, IBEC's Director General, Danny McCoy, stated that "across all of the companies surveyed, the average change to pay rates during the first half of the year was a fall of 4% for management staff; 1.6% for other salaried staff; and 1% for production workers." Companies were asked what actions they intend taking over the next three months. With regard to production workers, only 2% of the respondents stated that they will increase pay; 7% said that they intend to cut pay; 20% did not state what they will do, and a large majority (71%) revealed that they would freeze pay rates. Recruitment freezes (67%) and retraining of existing staff (41%) were other likely actions.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2009/07/articles/ie0907039i.htm>

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## Italy

### **Private health workers still waiting for renewal of agreements**

*August 26, 2009*

The 150,000 workers in the private health sector are still waiting for collective agreements over the years 2006-07 and 2008-09 to be renewed. The FP-CSIL public service federation has said that this is a priority, now that most of the other major agreements in the public services have been re-negotiated, particularly the public health agreement. Over the summer the FP-CSIL, FP-CGIL and FPS-UIL public service federations have been looking at ways of making progress, for example, by putting pressure on the regional health authorities that sign contracts with the private sector employers. In July, the three federations wrote a letter to the Minister for Labour, Health and Social Policy, asking him to intervene in this long-lasting conflict.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/315#a5519>; <http://www.epsu.org/cob/317#a5676>;

Italian: <http://www.fp.cisl.it/index.php...>

### **Solidarity contracts replace redundancies at Telecom**

*August 31, 2009*

On July 21, at the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Policy, Italy's biggest telecommunications group, Telecom, signed an agreement with the sectoral trade unions, transforming collective redundancy for 470 workers into 1,054 solidarity contracts. This move follows the company's announcement of its Strategic Plan 2009-2011, providing for 4,000 redundancies. The job security agreements will be valid for two years, from 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2011. In this period, the actors involved will meet every six months to verify the activities that the company has undertaken to re-launch services and the use of human resources. The three trade union confederations have welcomed the agreement and the company's effort to save jobs in difficult times.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2009/08/articles/it0908019i.htm>

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## Latvia

### **Wide-scale cuts in wages and social benefits**

*August 12, 2009*

As of July 1, after long discussions between the Latvian government and social partners, a number of new regulations concerning the amount of wages, pensions and social benefits have come into effect. The monthly non-taxable minimum or tax free allowance on personal income tax has been reduced from LVL 90 (Euro 129) to LVL 35 (Euro 50), which means that the tax burden for workers has increased. In addition, the government has decided to cut state sector salaries. Monthly salaries below LVL 300 (Euro 430) have been reduced by 15% – affecting 21% of employees in the ministries and subsidiary institutions – while wages above that amount have been cut by 20%, impacting on the remaining 79% of the workers. Moreover, from 1 September 2009 on, teachers' monthly gross wages will be cut by almost one third, from LVL 345 (Euro 494) to LVL 250 (Euro 358). Finally, between 16 June 2009 - 2012, old-age pensions and long-service pensions have been cut by 10%.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2009/07/articles/lv0907019i.htm>

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## Netherlands

### **Union confederations divided over retirement age**

*August 26, 2009*

The main union confederations are divided over the pressing issue of increasing the retirement age. The government has proposed to lift this age from 65 to 67 years. Latest 1 October, social partners can bring in

alternatives. Recently, the CNV confederation changed its earlier position and announced that under certain conditions the increase would be acceptable, whereas the largest confederation, FNV, maintained that there are no good reasons for retiring at 67. A major FNV argument is that basic pension rights in the Netherlands are comparatively very low. Recent internet polls resulted in large majorities "voting" against an increase.

Dutch: De Volkskrant, 26 and 31 August;

[http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/81\\_procent\\_tegen\\_verhoging\\_aow\\_leeftijd\\_naar\\_67/](http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/81_procent_tegen_verhoging_aow_leeftijd_naar_67/)

### **Employers suspend deal**

*August 26, 2009*

Both public service unions ABVAKABO FNV and CNV Publieke Zaak are disappointed that the employers have suspended negotiations over the new collective agreement covering ambulance workers. With a restructuring of the sector the employers and unions agreed to negotiate a single agreement for the sector to replace a number of different agreements. Unions thought that it would be possible to announce that a new agreement was ready on 1 September but now the employers have raised concerns over two issues, redundancy pay and second careers (the career that ambulance workers might switch to once they are too old for active duty). The unions say that the employers should have allowed for these two elements in their costs. There is also an issue about whether to be part of the ABP public sector pension fund.

English: <http://www.epso.org/cob/317#a5676>;

Dutch: [http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/nieuwe\\_cao\\_ambulance\\_op\\_de\\_tocht/](http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/nieuwe_cao_ambulance_op_de_tocht/);

[http://www.mijnvakbond.nl/Werkgevers\\_zetten\\_werkgarantie...](http://www.mijnvakbond.nl/Werkgevers_zetten_werkgarantie...)

### **Employers lose appeal over extension of childcare agreement**

*August 12, 2009*

The public service unions ABVAKABO FNV and CNV Publieke Zaak are pleased that the BKN employers' association has lost its appeal against extension of the collective agreement in the childcare sector. The main agreement, covering 80% of the sector, is negotiated between the unions and the MO employers' group. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment agreed that this should be extended to cover the whole sector, but BKN appealed against the decision. The unions argue that it is important that workers are covered by the same arrangements across the sector to ensure their conditions are maintained when they move from job to job.

English: <http://www.epso.org/cob/316>;

Dutch: [http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/een\\_cao\\_voor\\_de\\_kinderopvang\\_behouden/](http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/een_cao_voor_de_kinderopvang_behouden/);

[http://www.mijnvakbond.nl/Definitief\\_n\\_CAO\\_Kinderopvang?referrer=272](http://www.mijnvakbond.nl/Definitief_n_CAO_Kinderopvang?referrer=272)

### **Two-year deal for mental health workers**

*July 15, 2009*

The three unions, ABVAKABO FNV, CNV Publieke Zaak and NU'91 have negotiated a new 24-month collective agreement for the mental health care sector in a difficult bargaining environment, with the government willing to cut the health budget. There will be a 1% pay increase on 1 October 2009 and another 1% on 1 August 2010. The year-end bonus payment will be worth 5.25% of salary in 2009 and 5.75% of salary in 2010, while there will also be a 0.65% lump sum payment. New flexible working hours' arrangements will be introduced, along with improved work-life balance provisions that will allow employees to use or save an extra 35 hours of leave.

English: <http://www.epso.org/cob/314>;

Dutch: [http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/op\\_de\\_valreep...](http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/op_de_valreep...)

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## Norway

### **Unions reject changes to working time rules**

*August 12, 2009*

The HRH commercial and services employers' association has called on the government to allow greater flexibility in working time in response to the impact of widespread flu infection across Norway. The association claims that a flu epidemic could double the number of workers off sick and that employers need to be able to change shift arrangements at short notice. By contrast, the Fagforbundet municipal union has rejected this claim, arguing that there is enough flexibility in the current working time rules that allow for shift changes and overtime. The YS civil service union has also expressed surprise that HRH has raised the issue this way, rather than as part of the normal process of negotiation.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/316>;  
Norwegian: <http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/1.6721393>

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## Poland

### **Nurses and midwives strike over pay** *August 17, 2009*

On 5 August, nurses and midwives at the specialized hospital in Radom in central Poland, the biggest in the region, went on strike in support of their demand for a pay rise of PLN 450 (Euro 110) per month. The hospital maintained it cannot afford the pay increase as it is already in deficit. The strike ended late in the evening of 16 August, and the nurses and midwives' union had to settle for a rather poor deal: the workers will only receive PLN 1,000 (Euro 238) as a one-time payment, to be paid in three installments. In addition, the hospital will put some money into the social security and work funds, provided no fines are imposed on the hospital.

English: [http://www.pracownik.net.pl/radom\\_hospital\\_strikes\\_ends\\_in\\_unfavourable\\_deal](http://www.pracownik.net.pl/radom_hospital_strikes_ends_in_unfavourable_deal);  
via [http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show\\_news.pl?country=Poland](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Poland)

### **Copper giant wants strikers punished** *August 17, 2009*

On August 11, workers at the giant copper mining and manufacturing firm KGHM, in total employing 28,000, staged a two-hour warning strike against the government's privatization plans. In keeping with what has become almost standard practice in Poland, the board of KGHM is now looking for ways to punish the strikers and union leaders. The company already decided to retain the workers' pay and to cut the yearly bonuses. Moreover, KGHM filed a complaint with the public prosecutor's office claiming that the strike was illegal and caused losses. If found guilty, the union leaders and perhaps some workers face fines and up to five years in jail. In the meantime, unions are considering another strike.

English: [http://www.pracownik.net.pl/kgmh\\_wants\\_punishment\\_for\\_strikers](http://www.pracownik.net.pl/kgmh_wants_punishment_for_strikers);  
via [http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show\\_news.pl?country=Poland](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Poland)

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## Portugal

### **Unions demand negotiating on firefighters' terms and conditions** *August 26, 2009*

On 7 August a joint delegation of the STAL and STML trade unions presented demands for negotiation to the secretary of state for internal administration. The unions are concerned about government proposals to change the regulations covering the careers, working hours and other conditions employment of firefighters, and they demand the right to negotiate on this. They plan to resort to further action if they don't get a positive response from the government by 3 September.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/317#a5676>;  
Portuguese: [http://www.stal.pt/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=429&Itemid=1](http://www.stal.pt/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=429&Itemid=1)

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## Romania

### **Union leader says government shows lack of professionalism** *August 13, 2009*

Bogdan Hossu, chairman of the National Trade Union Confederation (Cartel ALFA), has said that the government shows a lack of professionalism by its planned move to cut the working hours in the public sector. Hossu told the press that the International Monetary Fund did not require from Romania a restructuring or salary cut, but its requirement was that all the spending made by the state be covered by revenues. He argued that restructuring, if needed, should have been made after a dialogue with the representatives of all sectors, i.e. education, health care and home affairs. Currently a lot of staff involved, the union leader added, is working overtime.

English: <http://www.financiarul.ro/2009/08/13/cartel-alfa...>

### **Union federation demands minimum wage increase**

August 12, 2009

On 12 August, the chairman of the Romanian National Trade Union Bloc (BNS), Dumitru Costin, said that the minimum wage cap should go up even at a time of crisis. Costin pointed out that the measure should be taken because the current monthly minimum wage level of RON 600 (Euro 142) is not able to cover even the daily expenses of Romanians.

English: <http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=n190749>;  
via [http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show\\_news.pl?country=Romania](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Romania)

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## Spain

### **Unions oppose pay freeze in public sector**

August 26, 2009

The president of the FSP-UGT public services federation, Julio Lacuerda, has called for a “calm, measured and rigorous” analysis of the current economic situation as part of pay negotiations with the government. He rejected the idea of a pay freeze put forward by one minister and underlined the need for a fair outcome for the 2.5 million workers in the public sector. The federation also wants to see progress on a number of statutes covering public service workers that were agreed two years ago but not yet implemented. Earlier, the FSC-CCOO public services federation clarified its opposition to any proposal to freeze the pay of public sector workers. This federation also warned against job cuts at such a crucial time when it is vital that the public sector maintains its role in delivering services to those worst affected by the crisis.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/317>; <http://www.epsu.org/cob/316>;  
Spanish: [http://www.fspugt.es/UGT\\_afirma\\_que...](http://www.fspugt.es/UGT_afirma_que...)

### **Agreement in general state administration welcomed**

August 12, 2009

The two main public service federations, FSC-CCOO and FSP-UGT, have signed the third agreement covering workers in the general state administration. The agreement covers around 60,000 workers across Spain and was also signed by the CSI-CSIF, CIG and ELA trade unions. The unions are positive about the agreement and its improvements in pay. The agreement runs until 31 December 2009 and confirms a range of increases including the 1% increase in the wage bill established by the 2009 budget, 0.37% in additional funds from 2007-2009, 2% in productivity payments and an overall sum of Euro 90,000 arising from the extension of the 2004 agreement. Unions are especially happy about the overall increase in funding of Euro 1.2 million that was not included in the government's original offer.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/316>;  
Spanish: [http://www.fspugt.es/UGT\\_cierra\\_el\\_III\\_Convenio...](http://www.fspugt.es/UGT_cierra_el_III_Convenio...)

### **National social dialogue breaks down**

July 30, 2009

Discussions over the economic crisis involving the government, the CCOO and UGT union confederations and the CEOE employers' association have broken down, after the CEOE set out a series of “clarifications” regarding the current negotiations. The unions reaffirmed their commitment to the social dialogue and the need to discuss how to deal with increasing unemployment. They said that the CEOE had undermined the negotiating process by trying to introduce a series of demands that were clearly unacceptable. These included reopening the debate on labour reform and the issue of the ease of dismissal, the conversion of recruitment agencies into for-profit agencies and the use of temporary employment in the public arena, cutting social security contributions, and separating the reduction of corporate tax from any requirement to maintain employment.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/315#a5519>;  
Spanish: <http://www.ugt.es/actualidad/2009/julio/c23072009.html>

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## Sweden

### **Union rejects calls for pay cuts**

July 15, 2009

The Kommunal union has warned that the crisis has already spread from the private sector to the public sector as

care workers have been losing their jobs. A survey carried out by the union suggests 7,500 care jobs have already been cut, while the SKL local and regional government employers' association predicts 15,000 job cuts this year and next. The union points out that those losing their jobs are invariably women on part-time and precarious contracts; it stresses that employers are finding it easy to cut jobs, particularly among fixed-term and agency workers. Kommunal wants to see increased funding for care services from the central government and rejects any notion of a pay cut for care workers.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/314>;

Swedish: <http://www.kommunal.se/Nyheter/2009/Mars/Absolut-nej-till-lonesankningar/>

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## Switzerland

### **Union calls for shorter hours and more jobs**

*August 26, 2009*

Criticising the tax cuts of recent years, the VPOD/SSP public services union is calling for more jobs to be created in the public sector with shorter working hours and longer holidays for public service employees. The union argues that working hours in the public sector are longer than most other sectors while annual leave is shorter. It also maintains that increased workloads in the public sector justify an expansion in employment rather than any contraction forced by tax cuts. The VPOD/SSP is calling above all for an expansion in training for health workers in order to meet the increasing demands for health care in the future.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/317>;

German: <http://www.vpod.ch/aktuell/nachrichten/ansicht/article/steuergeschenke...>;

French: <http://www.ssp-vpod.ch/actualites/nouvelles/ansicht/article/salaires...>

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## United Kingdom

### **Joint union campaign against National Grid**

*August 12, 2009*

The GMB, UNISON and UNITE trade unions have come together in a campaign against plans by the National Grid energy transmission company to close a facility in Newcastle with the loss of 189 jobs, some of which the company intends to switch to India. The European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) has written to the company's chief executive, calling for the decision to be reversed (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 June 2009).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/316>; <http://www.nationalgrid.co.uk/>

### **Unions angry at low local government pay offer**

*July 30, 2009*

Local government employers have made a final offer of a 1% pay increase (1.25% for the lowest paid) for craft workers such as bricklayers, electricians and plumbers. The 40,000 workers covered by the negotiations are covered by a different agreement from the administrative and other council workers covered by the main local government services agreement. The craft trade unions involved (Unite, GMB and UCATT) are unhappy at the employers' offer. Moreover, they want to abolish the separate agreement and integrate all craft workers into the main local government agreement.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/315#a5519>;

[http://www.unitetheunion.com/news\\_\\_events/latest\\_news/unite\\_disgusted...](http://www.unitetheunion.com/news__events/latest_news/unite_disgusted...)

### **Wage freezes are not the only story**

*July 27, 2009*

According to data from the Labour Research Department (LRD) Payline database, wage freezes are not the only way employers have responded to the economic crisis. According to Payline, just 23% of wage settlements since January 2009 have included pay freezes. Only in a handful of cases there have been pay cuts. Yet, the level of pay increases has dropped to an overall median of 2.5% from January – June 2009. The median rise since January 2009 for long-term deals is 3.2%, compared to the median for new deals of 2%. "It is likely that employers that sign long-term deals with their unions favour stability and good industrial relations", said Lewis Emery, LRD's pay and conditions researcher.

English: press release Labour Research Department (LRD);

**Union wins equal pay battle**

*July 15, 2009*

Public services union UNISON has won an equal pay tribunal case against the Bury Metropolitan Borough council in the North West of England. Around 1,200 low paid women workers – cleaners, cooks and support staff – are set benefit from new pay arrangements that will mean they can earn the same kind of bonus payments, worth 33.3% or 50% of hourly pay, as are paid in male-dominated jobs like in gardening and refuse collection.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/314>;

[http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease\\_view.asp?id=1483](http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=1483)

**Overtime ban in tax offices**

*July 15, 2009*

The PCS civil service union has organised an overtime ban in tax offices, in protest at the increase in overtime that is being used to maintain services after 19,000 jobs have been cut from the department. The union argues that the department should be hiring staff not relying on overtime and temporary workers, particularly in a recession when it is vital to try to collect the estimated Euro 30 billion in uncollected tax. A further 6,000 jobs are due to go by 2011.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/314>;

[http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news\\_and\\_events...](http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events...)

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