

# collective bargaining

Issue 5/2011 May

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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## contents

### **Austria**

Union considers holidays of six weeks  
Call for proper training for care workers

### **Belgium**

New agreement in construction industry  
Mediation proposal in textile industry accepted

### **Bulgaria**

Inflation compensation for pensioners  
Confederations demands legal strengthening of workers' rights

### **Czech Republic**

Unions lead protest against government reform plans

### **Denmark**

Retirement changes anger union  
Union argues that job cuts will affect services

### **Estonia**

Unions push for public sector wage increases

### **Finland**

Agreement in paper industry cuts gender pay gap

### **France**

European federations negotiate on equality at GDF-Suez  
Strike at FedEx's Paris hub after minimal pay offer  
Unions to mobilise over pay on 31 May

### **Germany**

Over 2 million workers covered by minimum wages  
Union petition calls for decent work in health sector  
Two-year deal at hospital group

### **Greece**

Public services union plans national strike

### **Hungary**

Minister agrees to pay for firefighters' extra hours  
Prime Minister launches 'social consultation'

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## Ireland

Tesco staff to loose on outstanding pay rises  
Attempt to force cuts on low paid could result in industrial action  
Unions prepared to enter new pact

---

## Italy

Clashes in ports over job cuts  
General strike organised on 6 May

---

## Netherlands

Unions mobilise for sheltered workplaces  
Defense staff protests forced dismissals  
Local government negotiations stalled

---

## Norway

Wage increase for municipal workers

---

## Poland

Tentative accord reached on coal privatisation  
Union pursues legal challenge over employment cuts

---

## Portugal

Unions remain concerned on bailout

---

## Romania

Prime Minister suggests recoup salary cuts

---

## Slovakia

Train engineers on strike  
Doctors threaten mass resignation

---

## Spain

Unions rally against labour reforms

---

## Sweden

Union again defends pay in local government

---

## Switzerland

Union plans day of action on equality

---

## United Kingdom

Strike action of Southampton municipal workers  
Ballot of British Airways cabin crew begins  
Public sector unions ballot for strike action  
Living wage in London increased

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## Austria

### **Union considers holidays of six weeks**

*May 24, 2011*

On 24 May, the Board of the GPA-DJP private service workers' and journalists' union has agreed a resolution on shortening working hours, aiming at more prominence of union demands in this direction. The resolution demands shortening the legal working week to 38.5 hours, with further steps to bring the normal working week to 35 hours. The union also has started up a debate, including an on-line poll, on expanding yearly holidays from five to six weeks. GPA-DJP argues that currently mainly workers with very long tenure are entitled to six weeks of holidays, but that such tenures growingly become rare. The union has declared 6-10 June the Action Week 'More Holidays

for Everybody’.

English: [http://www.gpa-djp.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GPA ...](http://www.gpa-djp.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GPA...)

### **Call for proper training for care workers**

*May 19, 2011*

The VIDA services union used 12 May – national carers’ day – to stress the need to establish a proper training framework for 24-hour care. The union, which has drafted its own proposals on training, points out that people expect trained mechanics to work on their cars, but currently there is no requirement for those caring for the elderly and vulnerable to have any kind of training. The union also argues that recruitment to the sector needs to be improved and an important factor is having clearly organised shift planning so that workers know in advance when they are on duty and are not forced to change their hours at short notice.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/422>

German: [http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=S03 ...](http://www.vida.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=S03...)

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## **Belgium**

### **New agreement in construction industry**

*May 31, 2011*

With a 70% majority, on 31 May the General Council of the ABVV/FGTB federation agreed with the basic agreement for the construction industry (180,000 workers). The negotiation delegation defended the result though they characterized it as “minimal” because of the wage increase of only 0.3% as of January 2012. In contrast, the increase in mobility allowances and some improvements in leave arrangements were regarded as positive, as was the fact that the unions succeeded in maintaining the wage indexation system and the existing limits to internal flexibility. Three days earlier, the ACV/CSC federation council voted with 93% in favour of the agreement. As in between the employers’ federation has also accepted the basic agreement, the new collective agreement will be ratified on 1 June.

Dutch: [http://www.demorgen.be/dm/nl/996/Economie/article/detail/1271221 ...](http://www.demorgen.be/dm/nl/996/Economie/article/detail/1271221...)

[http://www.demorgen.be/dm/nl/996/Economie/article/detail/1272435/2011/05/31 ...](http://www.demorgen.be/dm/nl/996/Economie/article/detail/1272435/2011/05/31...)

### **Mediation proposal in textile industry accepted**

*May 14, 2011*

After long negotiations, on 13 May the Joint Committee for the textile industry, in which the unions and the Fedustria employers’ federation are represented, accepted the mediation proposal of the Committee’s chairwoman for a set of new collective agreements for blue-collar workers. It includes a wage increase of 0.25% by 1 September 2012. The wage indexation system, earlier attacked by the employers’ delegation, will remain, and internal flexibility will not be expanded. Training efforts in the sector will be intensified. The employers’ side and the unions shared their lack of enthusiasm for the final outcomes, the unions in particular as the wage rise is lower than the 0.3% hike laid down a few months earlier in the IPA, the national framework agreement for the private sector.

Dutch: [http://www.demorgen.be/dm/nl/996/Economie/article/detail/1259046 ...](http://www.demorgen.be/dm/nl/996/Economie/article/detail/1259046...)

<http://kanaalz.nnews.be/z-nieuws-items-textiel-maakt-cao-waar-niemand-tevreden-mee>

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## **Bulgaria**

### **Inflation compensation for pensioners**

*May 10, 2011*

The trade unions have won agreement from employers for a one-time ‘holiday bonus’ for all pensioners. The money will be paid in the middle of 2011 as a compensation for inflation. While specific amounts have not yet been determined, it is expected that agreement will be reached with employers and the government before the summer.

English: <http://paper.standartnews.com/en/article.php?d=2011-05-10&article=36239>

## **Confederations demands legal strengthening of workers' rights**

*May 9, 2011*

The Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB) has called for better legal protection of the social and labour rights of the country's workers. "We expect some engagements to be undertaken with regard to future actions on behalf of the National Assembly," said CITUB President Plamen Dimitrov. According to Dimitrov, social protection in Bulgaria has not reached the European level. He says his confederation has grounds to require legal amendments in relation to trade union association, especially in small private companies, and that there is also a need for amendments concerning collective negotiations and the right to strike.

English: <http://www.focus-fen.net/index.php?id=n249111>

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## **Czech Republic**

### **Unions lead protest against government reform plans**

*May 22, 2011*

On 21 May, following the breakdown of talks between the trade unions and the government over social reforms in late April, some 40,000 people took part in a demonstration in Prague against these reform plans organised by the Bohemian and Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (CMKOS). In the weeks before the rally, the unions had run a campaign, 'Open your eyes', to explain to people the implications of the government's proposals. The protest ended with the adoption of a resolution stating that the plans are treacherous and will harm employees and the disabled. The reforms "throw health care, pensions and social care into the services of profit," Josef Stredula, from the Kovo union organisation, quoted from the statement (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 April 2011).

English: [http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/czech-unions-protest-against ...](http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/czech-unions-protest-against-...)  
<http://www.praguepost.com/news/8789-tens-of-thousand-protest-against-government.html>

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## **Denmark**

### **Retirement changes anger union**

*May 19, 2011*

The FOA public services union has attacked the government's pension changes which will mean an end to early retirement for many workers. Currently workers can retire from 60 but the changes will mean the earliest pension age will be 65 with specific rules for ill-health retirement. FOA says the changes will have a negative impact on the low-paid as they are more likely to be the ones in affected by poor and difficult working conditions and who will find it hardest to remain in work to 65. The union says that around 65% of its members would plan to retire at 60 or 61 and are now likely to lose that right.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/422>  
Danish: [http://www.foa.dk/Forbund/Presse?newsid= ...](http://www.foa.dk/Forbund/Presse?newsid=...)

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### **Union argues that job cuts will affect services**

*May 6, 2011*

The FOA public services union says that the number of employees in the municipal sector fell by 21,300 between March 2010 and January 2011. The union argues that the government has overestimated the impact of the crisis on the economy and that there was no need to implement a standstill budget. FOA maintains that the level and quality of services cannot be guaranteed with the current high level of staff cuts. In a separate statement the union also highlights problems in the childcare sector with childminders being required to look after too many children.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/420>  
Danish: <http://www.foa.dk/Forbund/Presse?newsid=...>

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## **Estonia**

### **Unions push for public sector wage increases**

May 4, 2011

Police and rescue workers will demand a wage increase of at least 8% as of next year, says Kalle Liivamagi, chairman of the public workers' union association, ROTAL. The increase would restore wages to the level earned before budget cuts in 2009, according to Liivamagi. He added that unions will also demand that all public workers get their wages raised back to the levels of 2008. The state's budgetary strategy for 2012-2015, approved late April by the government, prescribes zero growth in operating costs of state institutions for the next four years. Finance Minister Jurgen Ligi said that this does not mean that all public sector wages would be frozen; yet, total payroll costs cannot grow much.

English: <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/28598/>

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## Finland

### **Agreement in paper industry cuts gender pay gap**

May 23, 2011

On 18 May, bitter strikes by 4,000 members of the Ammattiliitto Pro union against Finnish paper producers came to an end. After six weeks of tension, the union and the Finnish Forest Industries Federation (FFIF) came to terms over a second-year wage renewal. The white-collar union won an across-the-board national wage increase, but most importantly the pay gap among the clerical, technical, and front-line managerial ranks of the pulp and paper industry was narrowed. Effective 19 May there is a 1.5% pay increase, or €48-per-month minimum, whichever is higher. The effect is to weight the package toward lower-wage clerical workers in order to narrow the pay gap. The settlement, mediated by national mediator Esa Lonka, calls for an additional 1% to be negotiated at the local level by 17 June. If talks on local issues such as training, development, skill requirements, and work tasks do not conclude by then, the 1% will be awarded on 1 July (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 March and April 2011).

English: [http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4434-Ammattiliitto-Pro ...](http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4434-Ammattiliitto-Pro...)

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## France

### **European federations negotiate on equality at GDF-Suez**

May 25, 2011

Three European union federations organizing workers in the GDF-Suez energy multinational (EPSU, EMF, and EMCEF) are leading European-level negotiations over equality in this company. The aim is to secure an agreement with a specific plan of action on a range of equality measures. Negotiations are continuing and are set to consider issues such as pay equality, dealing with part-time work, improving work-life balance and maternity and other forms of leave. On May 25, the union group continued its considerations of the proposals of management; a next meeting is foreseen for 20 and 21 June 2011.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/r/260>; <http://www.epsu.org/a/7604>;  
<http://www.epsu.org/a/7654>

### **Strike at FedEx's Paris hub after minimal pay offer**

May 20, 2011

Hourly paid workers at FedEx's Paris hub at Roissy-Charles-de-Gaulle airport have shown they are prepared to fight for a fair pay rise above the "derisory" 1% pay increase offered by the highly profitable global delivery company. Flights to Memphis, Dubai and European cities were cancelled and freight shipping and parcel deliveries delayed after 700 day and night staff walked out over three days. The strike came after FedEx made its 1% offer, rejecting joint claims of unions affiliated with GCT, CFDT and FO for a 5% rise at the start of annual pay talks. Also, mounting concern over the widening pay and benefits gap between full-time employees and the growing number of precarious workers FedEx is recruiting plays a role.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/5990>

### **Unions to mobilise over pay on 31 May**

May 19, 2011

Eight public sector federations are planning mobilisations across the country on 31 May that will include strikes and demonstrations. The unions are calling for a public-sector wide increase in pay. The government has frozen pay and has said there will be no general pay rise for another two years. At the same time it claims that other changes in pay mean that many individual public sector workers will see their pay increase. The unions challenge this saying that even with these changes in pay, workers overall are still losing out in terms of purchasing power and have seen their take-home pay hit by increases in social contributions (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 February 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/422>

French: [http://www.cfdt.fr/rewrite/article/33732/l-actu/pour-la-revalorisation ...](http://www.cfdt.fr/rewrite/article/33732/l-actu/pour-la-revalorisation...)

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## Germany

### **Over 2 million workers covered by minimum wages**

May 18, 2011

The trade union movement continues to campaign for a national statutory minimum wage but in the meantime the introduction of sectoral minimum rates has now spread to nine sectors, covering about 2.2 million workers. The rates range from € 6.53 an hour in the security industry in the east to € 12.95 in the construction industry in the west. Other rates include € 8.24 in waste management and € 7.50 (east) and € 8.50 (west) in care services. In another three industries minimum wages have been agreed but these are not yet mandatory extended.

German: [http://www.boeckler.de/320\\_113970.html](http://www.boeckler.de/320_113970.html)

### **Union petition calls for decent work in health sector**

May 6, 2011

To coincide with the opening of the German labour market to citizens of the eight central and Eastern European countries that joined the European Union in 2004, services union ver.di has launched a petition calling for decent work in the health sector across Europe. Ver.di argues that it is more important than ever that health workers have decent pay and conditions and that they get equal pay for work of equal value at the workplace. The union has called on German health employers to adopt the ethical code on cross-border recruitment and retention in the health sector as agreed by EPSU, the European Federation of Public Service Unions, and HOSPEEM, the European hospital employers' organisation, in 2008.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/420>

German: [http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id ...](http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id...)

### **Two-year deal at hospital group**

May 6, 2011

The ver.di services union has negotiated a new collective agreement at the Helios hospital company which employs around 17,000 workers across Germany. The agreement runs from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2012 and includes a 2% increase for 2011 (backdated to 1 April) and a 3% increase from 1 May 2012. Increases for doctors are different as they get on average a 3% increase from 1 January 2011 and a 2.4% increase from 1 March 2012. Their 15% increase on the supplement for night work which will now also be paid for on-call time at night.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/420>

German: [http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id ...](http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/showNews?id...)

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## Greece

### **Public services union plans national strike**

May 26, 2011

On 24 May, Ilias Iliopoulos, General Secretary of the ADEDY public services union told a press agency that his union planned a 24-hours national strike to protest against the government's new package of austerity measures and planned privatisations, stating: "We want to block the new measures, prevent

what has been decided. We will continue until we succeed.” According to Iliopoulos, the most likely date for the nationwide strike is June 21, while he added that the private sector sister union GSEE would most likely also call a strike for the same day.

English: [http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/05/24/greece-unions ...](http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/05/24/greece-unions) via [http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show\\_news.pl?country=Greece](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Greece)

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## Hungary

### **Minister agrees to pay for firefighters' extra hours**

*May 27, 2011*

Interior Minister Sandor Pinter has agreed to pay for extra hours worked by firefighters between 2004 and 2007. Pinter agreed with Budapest Mayor Istvan Tarlos, Zsolt Borkai of Győr in northwestern Hungary and Karoly Szita of Kaposvár in southwestern Hungary that the three local councils and the ministry will start transferring unpaid wages. In the first step, 50% of the amount due, plus interest, will be transferred to those still in service. The remainder will be paid before the end of the year, the ministry said. The firefighters have been calling for years for the transfer of their unpaid wages for the period between 1 May in 2004, when Hungary joined the EU, and the end of 2007. They have filed for court cases and the Supreme Court ruled several times that their claims were justified. Pressure was added on 16 April, when around 10,000 firefighters, police officers, soldiers and customs officers took part in a national demonstration in Budapest in protest against the government's continuing austerity measures. A key focus was to defend pension rights but unions were also calling for wage increases after a lengthy period of pay freezes.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent;  
[http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/04/16/uk-hungary-demonstration ...](http://uk.reuters.com/article/2011/04/16/uk-hungary-demonstration)

### **Prime Minister launches 'social consultation'**

*May 27, 2011*

In a letter addressed to citizens, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has launched a 'social consultation', with the official goal that, as the letter states, "we Hungarians find answers together on important questions of everyday life". Ten questions can be answered on pensions, job creation, education or in relation to foreign currency loans. According to the PM, his government is ready to have talks with trade unions after the social consultation process is completed. The letter says that no government measures will be introduced during the social consultation period that affect the issues brought up by the unions recently.

English: Máté Komiljovics, union correspondent

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## Ireland

### **Tesco staff to loose on outstanding pay rises**

*May 29, 2011*

Staff at Tesco's 131 Irish stores will not receive pay rises outstanding since 2008, following a ruling by the Labour Court after a year-long dispute. Workers represented by SIPTU and Mandate had claimed pay rises equivalent to increases that were outlined in the Towards 2016 social partnership agreement. The unions argued that Tesco was the most profitable company in its sector and could afford to pay a wage increase. Tesco, which has more than 14,000 staff in Ireland, rejected the claim, arguing that a pay increase was unwarranted given the poor economic climate, and that it would put the retailer at a disadvantage to its competitors. After considering the arguments, the Labour Court said it did "not recommend concession of the unions' claim at this time".

English: [http://www.sbpost.ie/news/ireland/tesco-staff-to-lose-out ...](http://www.sbpost.ie/news/ireland/tesco-staff-to-lose-out)

### **Attempt to force cuts on low paid could result in industrial action**

*May 27, 2011*

The major SIPTU union has warned that any attempt by the government to force through changes to the Joint Labour Committee/Employment Regulation Order (JLC/ERO) and Registered Employment Agreement (REA) wage setting mechanisms for the low paid could result in industrial action. SIPTU vice president Patricia King said the proposals, included in the 'ERO/REAs: Outline Reform Agenda' released by Enterprise Minister Richard Bruton, "represent a serious assault on the most vulnerable,

lowest paid workers in the country.” She added: “Any attempt to enforce these proposals and cut the wages of up to 300,000 workers covered by these wage setting mechanisms will be resisted, including by industrial action. We are not opposed to negotiating a reform of the system but will not accept any proposals that will effectively dismantle it” (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 January, February and March 2010).

English: <http://www.siptu.ie/media/pressreleases2011/mainnews/fullstory,14588,en.html>;  
<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2011/0525/1224297714624.html>

### **Unions prepared to enter new pact**

*May 14, 2011*

IMPACT union’s general secretary Shay Cody has said that in spite of the collapse of social partnership in Ireland, his union and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) confederation believe there is a need for a new framework or pact to get the country out of the current crisis. “We can and should be self-critical about our past experience of social partnership. Over time, we became too deeply embedded with the system. We got sucked into that process and we should learn from the lessons of that,” Cody told delegates at the IMPACT conference in Tralee. “Nevertheless, IMPACT was and remains a supporter of social partnership,” he added, “We are not advocating the low-level social dialogue mentioned in the media where we say ‘howya’ on the street, but a more serious engagement for the public and private sectors to get the country out of the mess it’s in.”

English: [http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/unions-are-prepared-to-enter ...](http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/unions-are-prepared-to-enter-...)

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## **Italy**

### **Clashes in ports over job cuts**

*April 25, 2011*

Port workers have clashed with police in a number of protests following the announcement of sweeping job cuts. The job cuts constitute part of the Berlusconi government's latest round of austerity measures. The state-owned shipbuilder, Fincantieri, is imposing job cuts and changes to terms and conditions that will affect around a third of its employees or 2,500 workers. These include forced early retirement and reduced hours, which the unions claim will result in the closure of the historic shipyards at Sestri and Castellammare. In response, port workers have staged protests at a number of locations, which have resulted in clashes with management and police. The company has so far stated that the offered changes are “take it or leave it”. Further negotiations with unions are scheduled for 3 June.

English: <http://libcom.org/news/clashes-italian-ports-over-job-cuts-25052011>

### **General strike organised on 6 May**

*April 6, 2011*

On 6 May, the CGIL union confederation organised a general strike with a set of 12 key demands, but particularly to protest against a tax reform that is widely seen to unfairly affect salaried workers. The main strike rally of the day was held in Naples, but demonstrations took place in more than 100 towns and cities, including a rally of tens of thousands of people in Milan. CGIL leader Susanna Camusso said the strike was ultimately aimed at “shifting the balance of force with regard to a government which thinks that nothing about the redistribution of incomes in our country needs to be changed” (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 April 2010).

English: <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/178563.html>  
[http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/global-filipino/world/05/06/11/thousands-rally ...](http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/global-filipino/world/05/06/11/thousands-rally-...)  
Italian: <http://www.cgil.it/htmlviewer.aspx?id=%24Sciopero.generale.6.maggio.2011>

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## **Netherlands**

### **Unions mobilise for sheltered workplaces**

*May 30, 2011*

In April, the government announced massive cuts in spending on sheltered workplaces (‘Sociale Werkplaatsen’) and related arrangements. The municipalities were supposed to take over most tasks in this field from the national government, and this was laid down in a so-called management accord between government and VNG, the association of municipalities. It soon became clear that this

accord still implied large budget cuts, with 70,000 of 100,000 handicapped workers involved supposed to find jobs in the 'regular market'. Also, negotiations for a new collective agreement for workers at the sheltered workplaces have been broken off. The unions have already undertaken quite some local actions, and now focus on 8 June, when the representatives of the municipalities will meet in a small town to discuss the management accord.

Dutch: [http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao's/Alle-Cao's/sociale-werkvoorziening ...](http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao's/Alle-Cao's/sociale-werkvoorziening...)  
<http://www.mijnvakbond.nl/Op-de-bres-voor-de-SW!?referrer=271>

### **Defense staff protests forced dismissals**

*May 26, 2011*

On 26 May, over 6,000 military and civil staff of the Dutch armed forces held a 'March for Esteem' to The Hague, followed by a rally, in a peaceful protest of the immense budget cuts the government has announced for the army. According to the plans of Minister of Defense, Hans Hillen, 12,000 army jobs are to disappear, half of these through forced dismissals. According to all unions involved, the Minister refuses to make decent arrangements for negotiating a new collective agreement and a social plan. AbvaKabo FNV union official, Marieke Manschot, argued that forced dismissals largely could be avoided by spreading out the army restructuring.

Dutch: [http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/sectoren/overheid2/?OverviewType=Nieuws ...](http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/sectoren/overheid2/?OverviewType=Nieuws...)

### **Local government negotiations stalled**

*May 19, 2011*

Despite unions offering to negotiate far-reaching reforms to the collective agreement in order to underpin job security, negotiations have stalled as local government employers are taking a hard line on both pay increases and changes to employment conditions. The unions say that the pay rises offered of only 1% in 2011 and 2012 are inadequate with inflation expected to reach 2.5% in 2012. They also say that while they are willing to see changes to the collective agreement –covering 180,000 employees-- to allow more flexibility and mobility in the sector, they cannot agree to the employers' plans to repeal all local employment rules by 1 April 2013 with no protection guaranteed for existing staff (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 March 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/422>

Dutch: <http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao's/Alle-Cao's/gemeenten1/>

<http://www.mijnvakbond.nl/Overleg-CAO-Gemeenten-mislukt?referrer=272>

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## Norway

### **Wage increase for municipal workers**

*May 6, 2011*

Municipal unions have negotiated a pay increase for 2011. Workers get a 1.72% increase from 1 May 2011, with a minimum rise of NOK 7,000 (€ 882). There will be a new minimum annual salary of NOK 222,200 (€ 28,028) for workers aged 16-18 while the lowest rate for unskilled workers rises to NOK 246,800 (€ 31,131) (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 March 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/420>

Norwegian: [http://www.fagforbundet.no/forsida/?article\\_id=63382](http://www.fagforbundet.no/forsida/?article_id=63382)

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## Poland

### **Tentative accord reached on coal privatisation**

*May 23, 2011*

After a four-month dispute, on 5 May unions at the major state-run coal company, Jastrzębska Spolka Weglowa (JSW), gave their consent to a 30% float of JSW shares on the Warsaw bourse through a deal reached with the government. The unions, including Solidarność, gained a ten-year guarantee of employment for 22,000 workers. On 23 May, negotiations have continued over specifics reached in the 5 May framework agreement, and conclusions must also be reached over pay increases. The government will maintain 51% stake in JSW, but the possibility exists that future sales of shares will occur. What still must be negotiated is the shape and structure of free-of-charge shares to staff, which will not be bound as an entitlement, certain provisions inside a 2007-2015 strategy

plan of JSW, and the appointment of board members to the partially privatised company (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 April 2011).

English: [http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4440-Tentative-Accord ...](http://www.icem.org/en/78-ICEM-InBrief/4440-Tentative-Accord...)

### **Union pursues legal challenge over employment cuts**

*May 19, 2011*

The Solidarnosc union is backing a legal challenge to government legislation that allows for a 10% cut in employment in public administration. A key part of the union case is that while the cuts might deliver savings in the short term, their long-term results would have a negative impact on public services. Solidarnosc organised a demonstration outside the hearing.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/422>

Polish: [http://www.solidarnosc.org.pl/pl/aktualnosci/ciecicia-w-administracji ...](http://www.solidarnosc.org.pl/pl/aktualnosci/ciecicia-w-administracji...)

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## **Portugal**

### **Unions remain concerned on bailout**

*May 18, 2011*

The union confederations, CGTP and UTP, after a first meeting with the delegation of International Monetary Fund (IMF)/European Commission (EC)/European Central Bank (ECB), stated their main concerns about the potential bailout. Secretary General of CGTP, Manuel Carvalho da Silva, said they had asked for an extension of the period to reduce the deficit to less than 3% at least until 2013, and expressed opposition to measures similar to those applied in other countries. The CGTP leader added that his confederation had insisted on proposals that promote economic growth and avoid situations of social disruption, reaffirming its opinion that “austerity packages do not lead to economic growth.” Secretary General of UGT, João Proença, declared that his confederation had advocated the implementation of the tripartite agreement for competitiveness and employment signed in March. UGT drew attention to the fact that the system of collective redundancy in Portugal is one of the most liberal in Europe. During the 1 May celebrations, CGTP and UGT focused on the ongoing negotiations and once again highlighted their concerns. During these celebrations CGTP called for a national demonstration on 19 May 2011. This call resulted in two CGTP manifestations on 19 May with mass participation, one in Lisbon with about 50,000 participants and one in Porto with 15,000.

English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2011/05/articles/pt1105019i.htm>

Portuguese: CGTP leaflet and further information

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## **Romania**

### **Prime Minister suggests recoup salary cuts**

*May 30, 2011*

Prime Minister Emil Boc has indicated that public employees will eventually have their salaries restored to the levels they were at in June 2010, before the 25% cuts. He said this is most likely to happen during 2012 in two stages, on the condition that economic growth is ranging between 1.5 and 2% in 2011 and between 3.5 and 4% in 2012.

English: [http://www.financiarul.ro/2011/05/30/pm-boc-public-employees-to-recoup ...](http://www.financiarul.ro/2011/05/30/pm-boc-public-employees-to-recoup...)

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## **Slovakia**

### **Train engineers on strike**

*May 26, 2011*

The Federation of Slovak Train Engineers (FSSR) was set to hold a one-hour strike on 27 May. A FSSR spokesperson said that the aim of the strike is to make clear the union's dissatisfaction with the way the revitalisation of rail companies is carried out. However, the passenger railway company Železničná Spoločnosť Slovensko (ZSSK) spoke out against the action and employees of the railway infrastructure operator Železnice Slovenskej Republiky (ŽSR) were not participating. That company and representatives of the Trade Union Association of Train Dispatchers and Traffic Controllers

struck a deal after talks lasting for several hours, according to ŽSR spokesperson Martina Pavlíková.

English: [http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/42777/10/train\\_engineers\\_set\\_one\\_hour ...](http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/42777/10/train_engineers_set_one_hour...)

### **Doctors threaten mass resignation**

*May 16, 2011*

Slovak physicians are warning that they may submit mass resignation notices to demonstrate their frustration over poor pay and low status, following the example of their Czech colleagues who used a similar tactic earlier in 2011. Medical Trade Unions Association (LOZ) chairman Michal Polician said while it is unclear how many doctors might submit such notices, he expects physicians who are not members of LOZ to join the protest. Polician said the threat of mass resignation could be ended only if the government meets the healthcare unions' demands, including observance of the restrictions on working hours in the Labour Code and a gradual increase in health-care workers' salaries so that they reach between 1.5 and three times the average wage by 2013, depending on qualifications. Anton Szalay, chairman of the Trade Union of Medical and Social Services Employees (SOZZaSS), said he considers the option of mass resignation a very last resort, but added that his union will talk with LOZ to discuss the protest action and will survey its members about their attitudes towards this tactics.

English: [http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/42646/3/doctors\\_threaten ...](http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/42646/3/doctors_threaten...)

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## **Spain**

### **Unions rally against labour reforms**

*May 2, 2011*

On 1 May, many thousands answered the call of the two main union confederations UGT and CCOO for a nationwide walkout in protest at the government's labour law reforms that were carried through earlier in 2011. Over 80 rallies were organised throughout the country, but the largest masses gathered in the centre of Madrid to condemn the government and the financial institutions who are in their opinion the cause of the deep crisis in which the country is immersed. Yet, the Zapatero government remains adamant, repeating that reforms and austerity measures are needed to bring it through the crisis.

English: <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/177692.html> via  
[http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show\\_news.pl?country=Spain](http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Spain)

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## **Sweden**

### **Union again defends pay in local government**

*May 19, 2011*

Having already responded to government projections for future pay increases, municipal union Kommunal has criticised finance minister Anders Borg for saying that starting salaries in local government are too high. General secretary Annelie Nordström said it was hard to believe that anyone could say a gross monthly salary of SEK 16,070 (€ 1,788) was too high and furthermore, with so many women workers on part-time hours, many were earning much less than this. Earlier, Kommunal had shown anger about the fact that wage moderation in the public sector would mean that a sector dominated by women will be getting lower increases than sectors dominated by men and so will increase the gender pay gap.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/422>; <http://www.epsu.org/cob/420>  
Swedish: [http://www.kommunal.se/Kommunal/Nyheter/2011/Maj/Annelie ...](http://www.kommunal.se/Kommunal/Nyheter/2011/Maj/Annelie...)

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## **Switzerland**

### **Union plans day of action on equality**

*May 19, 2011*

The VPÖD-SSP public services union is planning a day of action on 14 June as part of a campaign to secure a range of measures on equality. The union is calling for demonstrations and strikes in order to achieve progress towards equal pay, securing a minimum wage, improving childcare and parental leave and many

other policies that would help achieve greater equality.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/422>

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

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## United Kingdom

### **Strike action of Southampton municipal workers**

*May 31, 2011*

On 31 May, traffic wardens, car park maintenance engineers and bulk cash collectors employed by Southampton City Council started seven days of strike action: potentially a costly affair for the employer. On 23 May, thousands of workers employed by the same Council had already taken strike action in response to the Council's decision to sack 4,300 employees across a range of services and re-employ them on new contracts with considerable lower pay and poorer conditions. The unions involved, Unison and Unite, have attempted to negotiate with the Council and have offered talks using the ACAS conciliation service but the Council has rejected these moves. EPSU, the European Federation of Public Service Unions, has sent a message of solidarity to the union members, stressing that undermining social dialogue and imposing austerity measures are not a way out of the crisis.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/a/7649>;

[http://www.unitetheunion.org/news\\_\\_events/latest\\_news/costly\\_strike\\_action ...](http://www.unitetheunion.org/news__events/latest_news/costly_strike_action ...)

### **Ballot of British Airways cabin crew begins**

*May 30, 2011*

On 30 May, the long-running dispute between British Airways and its cabin crew came a step close to ending as the ballot on the settlement negotiated between the airline and Unite the union opened. Unite has posted ballot papers to nearly 10,000 crew with a letter from its general secretary, Len McCluskey, recommending a vote in favour of the agreement. The poll on the latest attempt to end the industrial conflict will close on 22 June, 18 months after Unite opened its first strike ballot on the dispute. The agreement includes a two-year pay deal and the return of travel perks for 6,700 staff who took part in 22 days of walkouts in 2010. It also gives the ACAS conciliation service a role in arbitrating the cases of staff who were sacked or disciplined during the dispute. If accepted by the crew, the deal will be implemented with immediate effect.

English: [http://www.unitetheunion.org/news\\_\\_events/latest\\_news/ballot\\_of\\_british ...](http://www.unitetheunion.org/news__events/latest_news/ballot_of_british ...)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2011/may/29/british-airways-unite-strikes>

### **Public sector unions ballot for strike action**

*May 24, 2011*

At its annual conference, the PCS civil service union agreed to ballot members over a national strike on 30 June over job cuts and in protest at government proposals for public sector pension reform. Public sector workers are facing the prospect of their pension contributions rising by 3% of pay and teaching and lecturing unions are also planning ballots over action. At the PCS conference, Len McCluskey, general secretary of Unite, with 1.5 million members the country's biggest union, emphasized the importance of the alliance between his union and PCS against what he called "the savagery of the government coalition". Other unions may also consider balloting with the prospect of a nationwide public sector strike. The National Union of Teachers and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers already launched ballots the same week. Up to 750,000 union members could walk out in June, affecting schools, courts, ports and job centres if the negotiations have not succeeded (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 4 April 2011).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/422>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2011/may/18/public-sector-unions-ballot ...>

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

[http://www.unitetheunion.org/news\\_\\_events/latest\\_news/unions\\_join\\_forces ...](http://www.unitetheunion.org/news__events/latest_news/unions_join_forces ...)

### **Living wage in London increased**

*May 19, 2011*

From 2 May on the living wage, as calculated by the Greater London Authority (GLA), is set at UKP

8.30 (€ 9.42) gross per hour, an increase by 5.7% from UKP 7.85. The amount is based on a cost-of-living calculation and is used by the GLA as a minimum pay rate for contractors. There are now 3,000 workers employed by companies with contracts with the GLA who are guaranteed the living wage. Other public institutions around London also apply the living wage in their countries, including most recently London Metropolitan University. On Friday 29 April, the PCS civil service union used the Royal Wedding and called for a living wage for cleaners at the Royal residences in London including Buckingham Palace. The union was posted outside the Palace gates with a giant 'fair pay for royal cleaners' card for members of the public to sign. PCS argued that the cleaners, employed by private contractors, just got UKP 6.45 an hour, slightly above the national minimum wage but below the living wage rate (See also this Collective Bargaining Newsletter Year 3 November 2010).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/422>; <http://www.epsu.org/cob/420>  
[http://www.unison.org.uk/news/news\\_view.asp?did=6823](http://www.unison.org.uk/news/news_view.asp?did=6823)  
[http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news\\_and\\_events/news\\_centre/index.cfm ...](http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/index.cfm...)

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