

# collective bargaining

Issue 3/2016 March

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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## European sources

## **Cross border campaign in transport leads to direct labour**

*March 30, 2016*

Cooperation of trade unions in the European transport sector pays. Joint action of Dutch trade union FNV and Polish trade union Solidarność against the exploitation of drivers and social dumping in transport linked to the potato industry resulted in safe rates in two trucking companies. FNV is now focusing on a third. Potato transport in Western Europe is dominated by three Dutch companies with sub-contractors in Poland. While the Dutch collective bargaining agreement (CBA) ensured wages of €13 per hour, drivers employed by the sub-contractors received only around €3. After a strike, media publicity and court pressure, one of the Polish sub-contractors has now closed and its drivers are contracted under the CBA with the Dutch parent company, which gives them social security and pension benefits, along with an extra €1,000 in pay per month. The second Polish firm will close later this year and the drivers will be employed by the German parent company and hopefully come under a CBA with German trade union Ver.di.

English: [http://www.itfglobal.org/en/news-events/news/2016/march/joint-union-organising ...](http://www.itfglobal.org/en/news-events/news/2016/march/joint-union-organising...)

## **Assessment of minimum income schemes**

*March 29, 2016*

The European Social Policy Network (ESPN) prepared a thematic report on minimum income schemes. The 35 country reports by independent experts highlight and assess the contribution of minimum income schemes to both preventing and alleviating poverty and social exclusion, and fostering an active inclusion approach to promoting social investment. Such schemes play a vital role in alleviating the worst impacts of poverty and social exclusion in many countries. However, in too many countries the schemes still fall short of ensuring a decent life for the most vulnerable in society. Progress in improving them in recent years has been disappointing. The most common weaknesses include inadequate levels of benefit, failure to cover all those in need, low levels of take-up and a limited impact in reducing poverty. The country reports and the related synthesis report are available from the ESPN web-page. Another assessment was produced by authors from the European Observatory of Working Life (EurWORK).

English: [http://ec.europa.eu/social/main ...](http://ec.europa.eu/social/main...)  
<https://www.socialeurope.eu/2016/03/crisis-minimum-wages-resume-growth-largely/>

## **EC presents social pillar and revision of posting rules**

*March 23, 2016*

After his installation as president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker promised to strengthen the social dimension of the EU. The Commission has now published a first draft version of the so-called 'European Pillar of Social Rights' (EPSR) that is used for a broad consultation. The EPSR has three sections: 'equal opportunities and access to labour markets', 'fair working conditions', and 'adequate and sustainable social protection'. The objectives are more than ambitious: it aims at re-establishing a 'social triple A' for Europe. It is also designed to help overcome the crisis and renew convergence within the Euro area. Despite these aspirations, the EPSR is not intended to be enshrined in law, e.g. as part of the European Treaties. Instead of amending the 'social acquis', the EPSR should 'complement' the legal status quo. The website Social Europe published a critical assessment of the EPSR. In parallel, the European Commission presented a targeted revision of the rules on posting of workers, as set out in the 2016 Commission work programme. The aim of the proposal is to facilitate the provision of services across borders within a climate of fair competition and respect for the rights of posted workers, who are employed in one Member State and sent to work temporarily in another by their employer. More specifically, the initiative aims at ensuring fair wage conditions and a level playing field between posting and local companies in the host country.

English (whole dossier Social Pillar): [http://ec.europa.eu/social/main ...](http://ec.europa.eu/social/main...)  
English (whole dossier Posting): [http://ec.europa.eu/social/main ...](http://ec.europa.eu/social/main...)  
Comments: [https://www.socialeurope.eu/2016/03/european-pillar-social-rights ...](https://www.socialeurope.eu/2016/03/european-pillar-social-rights...)  
[https://www.etuc.org/press/posted-workers-revision ...](https://www.etuc.org/press/posted-workers-revision...)

## **Quarterly figures on wage trends**

*March 18, 2016*

Eurostat, the statistical office of the EU, published figures on labour costs. Hourly labour costs rose by 1.3 % in the euro area and by 1.9 % in the EU-28 in the fourth quarter of 2015, compared with the same quarter of the previous year. In the third quarter of 2015, hourly labour costs increased by 1.1 % in the euro area and by 1.9 % in the EU-28. In the fourth quarter of 2015 compared with the same quarter of the previous year, hourly labour costs in the euro area rose by 1.2% in industry, by 0.5% in construction, by 1.3% in services and by 1.6% in the (mainly) non-business economy. In the EU-28, labour costs per hour grew by 1.7% in industry, by 2.5% in construction, by 2.0% in services and by 1.7% in the (mainly) non-business economy.

English: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Labour\\_cost\\_index ...](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Labour_cost_index...)

### **Investing in care: a gender equitable alternative to austerity**

*March 8, 2016*

A report by the UK Women's Budget Group for the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) shows that sustained investment of public funds in childcare and eldercare services is worthwhile and that it is more effective in reducing public deficits and debt than austerity policies. It would boost employment, earnings and economic growth as well as foster gender equality. The report indicates that investing 2 % of GDP in the caring industries would generate up to one million jobs in Italy, 1.5 million in the UK, and two million in Germany. The investment would raise women's employment rate given their greater concentration in the care industry: between 3.3 percentage points in Italy (660,000 jobs) and 1.1 million jobs the UK, and Germany (1.4 million jobs).

English: [http://www.equaltimes.org/investing-in-the-care-economy ...](http://www.equaltimes.org/investing-in-the-care-economy...)

The report: [http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/care\\_economy\\_en.pdf](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/care_economy_en.pdf)

### **Arguments in favour of a minimum wage**

*March 7, 2016*

The Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) published two policy briefs that deal with the impact of the application of a system of minimum wages. In the first paper, important advantages of a European minimum wage policy are listed, such as a minimum floor for wage earners and a minimum of wage protection for the low paid. The authors of the second brief find no evidence for the claim that minimum wage is a counter-productive measure as it increases labour costs, and therefore unemployment. In most cases, minimum wage has almost no effect on employment. In some cases, the effect on employment is even positive. Furthermore, a minimum wage tends to decrease wage dispersion and therefore is an efficient tool to tackle inequalities. As other labour market institutions, it can be argued that a minimum wage is part of a predistribution policy, aiming at tackling pre-tax inequalities. The case for a European-wide minimum wage is strong, according to the authors, as it minimises the adverse effects of social dumping induced by pro-competitiveness policies conducted simultaneously by most European countries.

English: [http://www.feps-europe.eu/assets ...](http://www.feps-europe.eu/assets...)

[http://www.feps-europe.eu/assets/e ...](http://www.feps-europe.eu/assets/e...)

### **The legal frame to act against severe labour exploitation**

*March 2, 2016*

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) has summarised a report that focuses on all forms of labour exploitation, which are criminal. The underlying research assessed different forms of severe exploitation and the related risks of workers moving within or into the EU, both EU-citizens and third country workers, not the form of labour recruitment. Article 31 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights recognises a worker's right to fair and just working conditions regardless of his or her status as an EU citizen or a third-country national and of whether the worker is in a regular or an irregular situation of residence.

English: [http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2015-severe-labour-exploitation\\_en.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2015-severe-labour-exploitation_en.pdf)

Summaries in different languages: [http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/severe-labour ...](http://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2016/severe-labour...)

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## **Austria**

### **Labour market trends 2015**

*March 23, 2016*

The Labour Force Survey carried out by Statistics Austria shows that 4,148 million people were employed on average in 2015. Compared to the annual average for 2014 (4,113 million), their number increased by 35,600. There also was a rise in the number of employees (+43,000) and a slight increase of self-employed people, while the number of unpaid family workers decreased (-16,100). The number of part-time employees increased (+31,900) as well as that of full-time employees, albeit to a smaller extent (+11,100). The German version provides detailed comparative data over 2015, 2014 and 2010.

English: [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_en/statistics/PeopleSociety/labour\\_market ...](http://www.statistik.at/web_en/statistics/PeopleSociety/labour_market...)

German: [http://www.statistik.at/web\\_de/presse ...](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/presse...)

## **Economic policy journal online**

March 18, 2016

The Chamber of Labour produces a quarterly that is available online. The Number 1 issue of 2016 writes about sustainable energy and the EU-emission policy. Also included are contributions on the transfer of undertakings, inequality and public procurement. One contribution deals with wage moderation (page 11-13). According to the author a serious increase of real wages is necessary; it will stimulate the consumption of households, improve the domestic demand and the perspectives for companies and contribute to growth.

German: [https://media.arbeiterkammer.at/wien/AK\\_Wirtschaftspolitik ...](https://media.arbeiterkammer.at/wien/AK_Wirtschaftspolitik...)

## **Trade union confederation opens advice service for migrants**

March 8, 2016

Trade union confederation ÖGB has opened an office that is specialised in the juridical assistance of labour migrants (mainly Bulgarian workers). The aim is to work towards fair and decent wages and working conditions. The union has engaged a legal assistant that speaks Bulgarian. The initiative was welcomed by the Bulgarian trade union confederation as a necessary activity 'especially in times of crises'.

German: [http://www.oegb.at/cms ...](http://www.oegb.at/cms...)

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## **Belgium**

### **High inflation activates automatic wage indexation**

March 31, 2016

The country's inflation rate for the month of March was as high as 2.24%, substantially higher than the average for the Eurozone. Under the automatic wage indexation system, this means that wages are to go up. Experts estimate that social benefits and salaries in the public sector will go up in July or August. Most private companies would follow in January 2017.

English: [http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/News ...](http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/News...)

### **Wages data for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2015**

March 25, 2016

In the fourth quarter of 2015, the index of gross wages and salaries in industry (excluding construction) stood at 121.7 (2010 = 100). This represents an increase of 0.3% compared with the fourth quarter of 2014. In the fourth quarter of 2015, the index of gross wages and salaries in construction was 114.0 (2010=100), i.e. a decrease of 2.2% compared with the same quarter of 2014.

English: [http://statbel.fgov.be/en/binaries ...](http://statbel.fgov.be/en/binaries...)

### **Job losses at former Volvo suppliers**

March 22, 2016

After 5 suppliers to the Volvo car factory in the city of Ghent lost their contracts to supply the factory 820 jobs are under threat. Volvo has decided that in future it will carry out the work that had been done by the suppliers in-house. The work carried out by the suppliers will be phased out between 2017 and 2019. Some of the work previously done by the suppliers will be carried out at Volvo plants abroad. The trade unions have the impression that Volvo doesn't intend to take on staff from the suppliers that will lose their jobs.

English: [http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/Economy ...](http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.english/Economy...)

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## **Bulgaria**

### **Protest against health system reforms**

March 28, 2016

General practitioners, private and municipal hospitals began protests in a show of dissent against reforms to the country's health care system due to take effect on 1 April. As part of the protest against the cabinet's reforms, practitioners in the cities and towns of Veliko Turnovo, Kyustendil, Razgrad and Yambol went on

strike. However, for patients in urgent need, there were doctors on duty at each medical facility. The medical practitioners are protesting against the framework contract by the Health Ministry and National Health Insurance Fund. The protest is also against a change to the system whereby access to services at hospitals, pharmacies and clinics will be possible only against fingerprint ID. Medical associations say that the changes will lead to problems in a system that remains under-financed, patients will not be able to choose where to be treated, and hospitals will be deprived of the opportunity to invest in innovation.

English: [http://www.balkaneu.com/bulgarian-gps-hospitals-protest-health-system-reforms ...](http://www.balkaneu.com/bulgarian-gps-hospitals-protest-health-system-reforms...)

### **Labour cost development in 2015**

*March 21, 2016*

Quarterly labour cost rose by 5.8% in October-December 2015 compared to the same period of 2014, statistics show. A breakdown by economic activities reveals that the highest annual growths in total labour costs were recorded in 'Administrative and support service activities' (14.2%), 'Real estate activities' and 'Construction' (11.0%). The lowest increase in total labour costs was observed in 'Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities' and 'Transportation and storage' by 2.3% and 2.5% respectively. In the structure of the total labour costs, the wages and salaries costs per hour worked grew by 5.9% in comparison with a year earlier, while the other (non-wage) costs rose by 5.2%.

English: [http://www.novinite.com/articles/173650/Bulgaria ...](http://www.novinite.com/articles/173650/Bulgaria...)

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## Croatia

### **Salary increase negotiated in public sector**

*March 20, 2016*

The government and public sector trade unions started negotiations on a collective agreement. Negotiating committees of the government and unions will negotiate about increasing the base salary by 6%, following GDP growth in two consecutive quarters by two or more percent, according to an agreement signed in 2009. The government does not deny that the employees are entitled to the raise, but for the fulfilment of the obligation it would have to find around 1.8 billion Croatian Kuna (240 million euro) a year. These funds are not included in the 2016 budget which is expected to be adopted soon, and have not been included in the budget projections for 2017 and 2018. The trade unions announced that they will not give up on the increase.

English: [https://www.total-croatia-news.com/politics/2995-government-and-public-sector ...](https://www.total-croatia-news.com/politics/2995-government-and-public-sector...)

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## Cyprus

### **Limassol Port workers go on strike**

*March 23, 2016*

Unions representing striking workers at Limassol Port will be meeting to discuss how to proceed, after the management of the company agreed to delay its discussion on port privatisation. However, at least one union, SIDIKEK-PEO, has indicated its members will continue their work stoppage. Port workers in Limassol have declared an indefinite strike in protest over privatisation plans (see earlier Newsletters). The transport ministry believes there is no basis for the strike and stated that in a worst case scenario, some port employees could be assigned different duties within the civil service.

English: <http://in-cyprus.com/port-strike-developments-anticipated/>

### **EAC workers go on strike**

*March 22, 2016*

Electricity Authority of Cyprus (EAC) worker unions have called their members to a long-term work stoppage starting on 6 April 2016 in protest to the state's ongoing plans to split the semi-government organisation. A cabinet decision on splitting the EAC into two entities was a precondition set by the Troika of international lenders for disbursing the next and final loan tranche of €400 million by the end of March 2016. Unions fear that splitting EAC into transmission and production and supply on the other, will make it easier in the future for the government to sub-contract part or even the whole company to a private-sector operators who can offer lower costs. Cyprus' electricity market was legally liberalised in January 2014.



English: <http://in-cyprus.com/eac-workers-strike-april-6/>

### **Hotel workers reject compromise**

*March 1, 2016*

Trade union DEOK representing hotel employees gave a resounding 'no' to a compromise agreement offered by the Labour Minister to avert strikes in the industry. The dispute between unions and hotel owners stems from collective agreements signed in 2013 providing a 15% cut in benefits. Now that the agreement has expired, employees want their benefits reinstated. A DEOK union representative said the offer bore no consideration for over 80% of hotel employees who received low wages (€600 to €700).

English: <http://cyprus-mail.com/2016/02/29/hotel-workers-reject-compromise-agreement/>

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## **Czech Republic**

### **Agreement on dismissals at mining company OKD**

*March 29, 2016*

The miners' trade union announced that, after agreement with the company management, about 250 workers out of the 345 that black-coal mining company OKD intends to lay off at the end of June are going to end their employment by mutual agreement. About 50 employees do not want to leave the company. The employees who will terminate employment by mutual consent and have been working for the company for at least two years are to receive severance pays equalling a sextuple of their wages. OKD is going to lay off employees from all its plants and considers that it does not have to announce a social programme. According to the union, a social programme has to be announced if over 200 employees from a single plant are dismissed.

English: [http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/about-250-out-of-345-employees-want ...](http://www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/zpravy/about-250-out-of-345-employees-want-...)

### **Gender wage gap discussed**

*March 29, 2016*

Women still make on average 22 percent less pay than men, which makes the country one of the worst performers in Europe. The wage gap is highest in the private sector, although to a lesser extent it is also present in the public sphere. The NGO Business & Professional Women held a conference at which they speed-mentored women in different areas of business on how to negotiate a higher salary.

English: <http://radio.cz/en/section/in-focus/why-do-czech-women-settle-for-less>

### **Mobility stimulus package and attracting migrants**

*March 22, 2016*

Labour offices are preparing a campaign with financial contributions towards travel expenses in order to encourage labour mobility. The ministry of social affairs first unveiled its plan to introduce financial compensations to boost labour mobility in October 2015. The finances will be covered from the state budget. Financial support towards travel expenses will be available to people who make less than an average salary; it can only be granted to those with a permanent work contract or a fixed-term contract exceeding one year. Besides, unable to find qualified locals, firms are keen to hire plumbers, welders, fitters and machinists from Ukraine. There is such a shortage in some areas that companies are willing to overlook the language barrier. A draft government project to attract Ukrainian employees so far only targeted at university graduates, but may be amended.

English: [http://www.radio.cz/en/section/business/czech-labour-offices-to-subsidize ...](http://www.radio.cz/en/section/business/czech-labour-offices-to-subsidize-...)  
[http://www.radio.cz/en/section/news/press-czech-firms-want-ukraine-workers-even ...](http://www.radio.cz/en/section/news/press-czech-firms-want-ukraine-workers-even-...)

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## **Denmark**

### **Basis indicators of the labour market**

*March 26, 2016*

Based on figures from Statistics Denmark this webpage summarises the main indicators on average monthly wages in the private sector. The highest wage increase in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of 2015 was signalled in the real



estate sector and the financial and insurance sector (2.3%). Manufacturing stayed just below 2%. The cultural sector hardly had any improvement of wages (0.1%). Total labour costs were (by far) highest in the financial and insurance sector, followed by the IT-sector.

English: <http://www.dst.dk/en/Statistik/emner/loen-og-arbejdsomkostninger#>

### **Plan for labour market integration of refugees**

*March 18, 2016*

After a tripartite 21-point plan was formulated in February (see our February Newsletter) the government concluded an agreement with trade union and business representatives that they say will help refugees get into the national labour force. The key point of the agreement is a new so-called 'integration basic education' scheme (IGU), which aims to put refugees in short-term jobs at an apprentice salary level of between 50 to 120 kroner per hour. The IGU jobs can last for up to two years and refugees will also be offered skill development or education courses of up to 20 weeks. Companies who hire refugees under the IGU scheme can qualify for a financial bonus of up to 40,000 kroner if the refugees are employed for two years.

English: <http://www.thelocal.dk/20160318/denmark-has-new-plan-to-get-refugees-into-work>

### **The trade union agenda for a tripartite pact**

*March 1, 2016*

The government and the social partners started the long-awaited tripartite negotiations. The negotiations aim to tackle some of the challenges facing the labour market. Trade union confederation LO expressed her content that the negotiations finally have been launched. Next to the first item on the agenda (integration – see the item above), there are three priorities on LO's agenda: education, health and safety at work and social dumping. According to LO, this is where action is needed in order to find solutions to ensure that in 10 to 20 years from now, the workforce is equipped to meet the requirements of the future labour market. LO is looking for agreements to make it more attractive for young persons to opt for vocational training - and provide them with a guarantee for an apprenticeship. The aim is also skills upgrading - for both skilled and unskilled workers. Finally, LO wants agreements that uphold the Danish model and the tradition for letting the social partners define the terms and conditions of the labour market through collective agreements.

English: [http://www.lo.dk/English ...](http://www.lo.dk/English...)

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## **Estonia**

### **Wages in 2015**

*March 4, 2016*

In 2015, the average monthly gross wages and salaries were 1,065 euro and the average hourly gross wages and salaries were 6.51 euro. Compared to 2014, the average monthly and hourly gross wages and salaries increased by 6.0%. The monthly gross wages and salaries were highest in the 4th quarter of 2015. Real wages, which take into account the influence of the change in the consumer price index, increased, due to the continued decrease in consumer prices, faster than the average monthly gross wages and salaries compared to the 4th quarter of 2014 (6.9%). Real wages have increased from the second half of 2011 for the eighteenth quarter in succession.

English: <http://www.stat.ee/277558>

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## **Finland**

### **Collective bargaining off the ground**

*March 23, 2016*

Collective bargaining has started in practically all branches. The broad labour market pact, or the so-called competitiveness pact, was drafted between employer's associations and trade union confederations at the end of February (see the 1 March item below). The trade unions have been busy deliberating over the pact and almost all of them have now agreed to open negotiations on their collective agreements in order to implement the changes agreed in the national pact. This means that the national pact covers more than 90% of the employees. The biggest unions to say no to the pact are the Finnish Construction Trade Union, the

Finnish Food Workers' Union and the Transport Workers' Union.

English: [http://heikkijokinen.info/en/trade-union-news-from-finland/983-unions-ready ...](http://heikkijokinen.info/en/trade-union-news-from-finland/983-unions-ready...)

### **Supreme court: district courts cannot ban strikes**

*March 17, 2016*

Employers cannot stop potential strikes by demanding that district courts impose conditional fines on unions when the collective agreement is valid. The Supreme Court made this decision in the case of a planned strike at the national flag carrier Finnair. In June 2012 Finnair salaried employees belonging to the Trade Union Pro and some other unions announced they were taking strike action due to planned personnel cuts and outsourcing. The company asked the Helsinki district court to ban the strike and impose a conditional fine of almost three million euro on the unions. The district court accepted the application on the very same day without hearing the defendants. In the event, the strike was called off but the case led to a juridical process lasting almost four years and went all the way to the Supreme Court. Now the Supreme Court has set an important precedent by ruling that the only court that has the competence to handle issues of possible breaches of collective agreements is the Labour Court. It also said that according to the Collective Agreements Act a court cannot prohibit industrial action.

English: [http://heikkijokinen.info/en/trade-union-news-from-finland/982-supreme-court ...](http://heikkijokinen.info/en/trade-union-news-from-finland/982-supreme-court...)

### **Social partners conclude competitiveness pact**

*March 1, 2016*

Social partners have agreed on a broad labour market pact. The 'so called' competitiveness contract pact is a result of a long negotiation process. One precondition for the pact becoming effective is that the government abandons its plans, announced in September 2015, to impose serious restrictions on collective bargaining rights, holidays and wages through legislation. The agreed pact will make the annual working time 24 hours longer on existing wages. The holiday pay for those working in the public sector will be cut by 30% for the next three years. Employees' pension insurance contribution will be raised by 1.2%. The unemployment insurance payment for the employees will also be raised by 0.85%. In addition, the pact will see the existing collective agreements last an additional 12 months and freeze wages for this period. Finally, the pact includes a new crisis clause to help businesses overcome extraordinary difficulties. The position of the unions regarding the deal is not homogeneous, as four major member unions of the blue collar union confederation SAK have walked away from the labour market deal. The board of SAK has provisionally accepted the pact and is hoping that government will now roll back its proposals for further spending cuts and tax hikes.

English: [http://heikkijokinen.info/en/trade-union-news-from-finland/976-a-broad-labour ...](http://heikkijokinen.info/en/trade-union-news-from-finland/976-a-broad-labour...)  
[http://yle.fi/uutiset/sak\\_gives\\_provisional\\_green\\_light ...](http://yle.fi/uutiset/sak_gives_provisional_green_light...)

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## France

### **Reputation of country dominated by strikes analysed**

*March 31, 2016*

Several observers question whether the reputation as the world champions of strikes is really deserved for French workers. When you look at the statistics of the number of days lost to strikes in each country over the last 100 years, then France is generally in the middle of the table. Other experts in the field also claim the number of days lost to strikes in France has decreased notably since the 1970s. Those kinds of stats are often used to debunk the myth that the French spend their lives on strike, but others have doubted the accuracy of these figures which often put countries like Denmark and Norway at the top of those rankings.

English: <http://www.thelocal.fr/20160331/why-are-french-always-on-strike>

### **Massive protest against government's labour law reforms**

*March 25, 2016*

The labour code (Code du Travail) has traditionally been regarded as untouchable, with successive governments making piecemeal amendments to it, lifting restrictions on layoffs and working hours, but without a comprehensive and total revision. The changes proposed by the current government are seen as a test of the reformist credentials of the government. The draft law aims to amend the 35-hour working week and relax other labour law rules. The 35-hour week would remain as the foundation, but the proposal would allow companies to organise alternative working times without industry-wide deals. Workers would also be able to put in a 48-hour week or 12-hour shifts. Seven unions and youth groups have been actively protesting throughout the country against the proposal and are demanding the complete withdrawal of the reforms. An

online petition against the proposals has already gathered the record of 1,000,000 signatures.

English: [http://www.dw.com/en/parisian-street-protests-greet-hollandes-labor-reforms ...](http://www.dw.com/en/parisian-street-protests-greet-hollandes-labor-reforms...)  
<http://www.france24.com/en/20160305-france-labor-reform-petition-hits-million-signatures>

### **Air France trims voluntary redundancy target**

*March 1, 2016*

Air France has communicated to the trade unions the new plan reducing the goals for voluntary redundancies. The plan softens restructuring plans and targets just over 1,600 departures by early 2017. The new voluntary plan involves shedding 1,405 jobs among ground staff and 200 among cabin crew, compared with previous targets of 1,823 and 890 respectively announced in December 2015. Pilots now face no voluntary redundancies, compared with a previous target of 280. In January 2015, Air France dropped a so-called 'Plan B' restructuring project with forced job cuts and tilted its plans towards growth in the wake of the slide in oil prices.

English: [https://au.news.yahoo.com/world/a/30939365/air-france-trims-voluntary ...](https://au.news.yahoo.com/world/a/30939365/air-france-trims-voluntary...)

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## Germany

### **Amazon dispute once again**

*March 22, 2016*

Workers at an Amazon warehouse are starting a new round of strikes in an attempt to pressure the online retailer to increase pay. Trade union Ver.di has organised frequent strikes at Amazon warehouses across the country since May 2013 as it seeks to force the retailer to raise pay for warehouse workers in accordance with collective bargaining agreements in Germany's mail order and retail sector.

English: [http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/mar/22/amazon-workers-go-on-strike ...](http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/mar/22/amazon-workers-go-on-strike...)

### **Gender wage gap nothing to be proud of**

*March 16, 2016*

Women workers in the country earn on average 21.6 percent less than men, according to government data. Only two countries in Europe recorded wage gaps between women and men that are higher. The wage gap between women and men is largely the result of differences in employment and promotion opportunities, patterns of employment and the role of women in society. Trade union confederation DGB cooperates with the government in a campaign 'What should a woman earn? Economic independence'.

English: [http://www.dw.com/en/study-german-wage-gap-between-men-and-women ...](http://www.dw.com/en/study-german-wage-gap-between-men-and-women...)

Website campaign (in German): <http://www.was-verdient-die-frau.de/>

Relevant links (in German): [http://www.bmfsfj.de/BMFSFJ/gleichstellung ...](http://www.bmfsfj.de/BMFSFJ/gleichstellung...)

### **Collective bargaining report 2015 online**

*March 13, 2016*

The editors of the Annual report on collective bargaining write that 2015 was characterised by a number of hard-fought industrial disputes. These took place in negotiations to secure a major upgrading of the status and terms of staff in social and childcare services, the conflict at Deutsche Post AG over the company's attempt to lower agreed pay rates for delivery staff in newly-established regional subsidiaries and the dispute between Deutsche Bahn AG and the train drivers' trade union GDL. Employees at the Berlin university hospital Charité went on strike to secure a collective agreement on staff appraisal. In addition, numerous strikes accompanied negotiations over pensions between the pilots' union Vereinigung Cockpit and Deutsche Lufthansa. Workers at Amazon undertook a number of strikes to secure union recognition and a collective agreement. Although the 2015 bargaining round resulted in lower nominal pay increases than in 2014, the very low rate of consumer price inflation led to a real increase in agreed pay of 2.4%.

English: [http://www.boeckler.de/pdf ...](http://www.boeckler.de/pdf...)

### **Again massive job cuts at Siemens**

*March 9, 2016*

Siemens plans to cut 2,500 jobs related to its oil, gas and mining businesses, with the bulk of the job losses (2000 jobs) in Bavaria. The Munich-based engineering giant blamed 'increasing competitive intensity' in the

commodity sector for the losses. In order to improve profitability, the new chief executive has worked (since July 2013) to simplify operations and reduced Siemens's workforce by roughly 13,000 jobs to around 348,000 employees. Trade union IG Metall criticised the massive cuts and reminded the company of earlier promises restoring calm.

English: [http://www.ft.com/fastft/2016/03/09/siemens-to-cut-2500-jobs ...](http://www.ft.com/fastft/2016/03/09/siemens-to-cut-2500-jobs...)

German: [http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/jobabbau-aufstand-der-siemens-blaumaenner ...](http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/jobabbau-aufstand-der-siemens-blaumaenner...)  
[http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/jobabbau-siemens-streicht-arbeitsplaetze ...](http://www.sueddeutsche.de/wirtschaft/jobabbau-siemens-streicht-arbeitsplaetze...)

### **Demand of 6 percent pay increase for public sector workers**

*March 2, 2016*

The head of country's second-largest trade union Ver.di has said that the union is ready to strike for higher public sector pay. Ver.di, Germany's second biggest trade union, representing over 2 million workers, demands a 6 percent pay increase for public sector workers. Ver.di had a combative 2015, calling strikes among post office workers, kindergarten teachers and workers at sites of U.S. online retail giant Amazon.

English: [https://global.handelsblatt.com/edition/380/ressort/politics/article/union-boss ...](https://global.handelsblatt.com/edition/380/ressort/politics/article/union-boss...)

### **Miners' union wants negotiations on the coal plant future**

*March 1, 2016*

The energy and mining trade union IG BCE said it is ready to negotiate with the government on the future of the most-polluting coal-fired power plants, an effort to prevent them from closing until near the middle of the century. IG BCE, representing about 650,000 workers in mining, power and chemicals, is ready to take up an offer to join 'roundtable' talks on the coal plants. The government is considering phasing out lignite from 2030 and hard coal from 2040. The cabinet is drawing up in 2016 a climate program for 2050. Ministers have sought talks with the union while hinting that a phase-out of coal-fired generation is part of their program. IG BCE announced that it won't support a 'unilateral exit' from lignite generation.

English: [http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-03-01/german-union-seeks-relieve ...](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-03-01/german-union-seeks-relieve...)

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## **Greece**

### **Pension and tax reform pending**

*March 3, 2016*

In February 2016, there were demonstrations against the governments' plans to reform the country's pension system and increase taxes. The opposition to the reforms is putting pressure on Prime Minister Tsipras, who was elected for his anti-austerity promises and firm opposition to further pension cuts. It is unclear when the bill will be introduced to the parliament. The opposition to the pensions overhaul has been unanimous, bringing together a disparate group of professions, including blue-collar and white-collar workers. Doctors, engineers and lawyers – many in their suits and ties – joined the protests alongside farmers, taxi-drivers, seamen and builders, an action that has become known as the 'necktie movement'.

English: [http://www.equaltimes.org/no-country-for-old-greeks? ...](http://www.equaltimes.org/no-country-for-old-greeks?...)

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## **Hungary**

### **Public discontent over refusal of dialogue with teachers**

*March 30, 2016*

Tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets in two public rallies in recent weeks, and union leaders are warning of widespread disruption if the government continues to refuse talks. While teachers are effectively denied the right to take legal strike action, support for an announced one-hour strike was growing. Several trade unions announced their support for the demands that the education system needs to be properly funded, and that the government's centralising of the education system and other changes it has introduced caused overall dysfunction, with serious overload for teachers and pupils, and a lack of basic materials in schools. Trade union MASZSZ reported increasing intimidation of union representatives and increasing anti-union actions by employers across the country. Teachers want to regain rights lost since the government tightened its grip on the sector, leading to administrative burdens and less flexibility.

English: [http://www.wsj.com/articles/hungarian-teachers-stage-strike ...](http://www.wsj.com/articles/hungarian-teachers-stage-strike...)  
<http://www.ituc-csi.org/hungary-public-discontent-rising>

### **Audi negotiations not very promising**

*March 25, 2016*

After the formation of a strike committee, Audi Hungary has placed two wage hike offers on the table but the workers' representatives rejected both of them. The proposals were for a raise of HUF 15 000-20 000 plus a HUF 95 000 increase of extra pays. After a strike committee was formed at Audi Hungária in Győr (northwest Hungary), the wage talks were reopened.

English: [http://www.portfolio.hu/en/economy/wage\\_talks\\_at\\_hungarian\\_audi\\_plant\\_flop ...](http://www.portfolio.hu/en/economy/wage_talks_at_hungarian_audi_plant_flop...)

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## **Iceland**

### **Increased gender gap in financial sector**

*March 21, 2016*

As the economy recovered, the gender wage gap increased within the financial institutions. A survey of men's and women's salaries within Icelandic finance companies showed the gender wage gap grew between 2013 and 2016. In fact, in 34 of 38 companies, men had considerably higher salaries than women, with a wage difference on average of about 12.9%. While the gender wage gap exists in many sectors of business, it has actually increased within finance companies during this three-year period.

English: [http://grapevine.is/news/2016/03/18/gender-wage-gap-increases ...](http://grapevine.is/news/2016/03/18/gender-wage-gap-increases...)

### **Rio Tinto undermines right to strike**

*March 16, 2016*

A labour dispute at a Rio Tinto aluminium smelter has escalated. The management has proposed that contractors be denied the right to strike. The company is also proposing to expand the use of lower paid contractors at the site. Rio Tinto's drive to increase the use of precarious labour and inflexibility in prolonged negotiations provoked workers that load the aluminium onto ships for export to begin an indefinite strike. The company has replaced the strikers with local management and management from France. Rio Tinto imported two more strike breakers from France. Both have a long history as Rio Tinto human resource managers and a reputation as being inflexible in labour negotiations.

English: <http://admin.industriall-union.org/rio-tinto-undermining-right-to-strike>

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## **Ireland**

### **Teachers' unions have many grievances**

*March 30, 2016*

Many teachers feel their profession has been under assault for too long and are determined to go to war on a number of fronts. Industrial action is looming on fronts ranging from lower pay scales for new teachers and extra working hours to junior cycle reform. The main backdrop to the potential industrial conflict in schools is that two teaching trade unions, the ASTI and the TUI, rejected the Lansdowne Road agreement on public service pay. The unions say that new entrant teachers will lose about €300,000 over their careers as a result of lower pay levels put in place by the government. The next few weeks will be critical if potentially serious industrial action by teachers and the closure of schools next autumn is to be avoided. Talks between the Department of Education and teacher representatives are expected to take place, but the time available of a securing a deal is short.

English: [http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/critical-talks-loom ...](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/critical-talks-loom...)

### **Luas strike disrupts Easter travel**

*March 28, 2016*

The labour dispute at light rail company Luas (see earlier Newsletters) continues. Strikes halted Luas trams on Easter 2016 after staff rejected a pay deal drawn up in a bid to resolve a lengthy industrial dispute at the company. The trade union Siptu had served notice of strike action at Luas on Easter Sunday and Easter



Monday, as well as on four other days in April 2016. Drivers and revenue protection grades working on the Luas system, who are members of Siptu, overwhelmingly rejected proposals brokered at the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC).

English: [http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/luas-strike-disrupts ...](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/luas-strike-disrupts...)

### **Posted road workers entitled to damages worth €1.5m**

*March 18, 2016*

A High Court judge has ruled 27 Portuguese workers who worked in Ireland on a road project are entitled to recover damages, estimated at some €1.5m, plus interest, over breach of their employment contracts with three Portuguese companies that traded as the RAC Éire partnership. The Court ruled that there should be no 'race to the bottom' where rights and conditions of workers are concerned. Among several findings, the firms engaged in 'systematic and deliberate' under-recording of hours of work, leading to underpayment of the workers. The Court also found the defendants were not entitled to deduct €17.50 daily (€520 monthly) from the workers' wages for accommodation of a 'deplorable, even dangerous' standard.

English: <http://www.rte.ie/news/2016/0318/775882-portugal-workers-pay/>

### **Au pairs must be paid minimum wage**

*March 11, 2016*

Employers of au pairs must comply with the law and make them aware of their rights and entitlements, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions has said. The union backed the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) which called for those employing au pairs in their home to abide by employment legislation, including payment of the minimum wage. This followed a ruling from the Workplace Relations Commission in which a family employing an au pair was found to be in breach of the National Minimum Wage Act and other labour laws. The Spanish worker was awarded €9,229 including back pay and compensation.

English: [http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/au-pairs-must-be-paid-minimum ...](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/au-pairs-must-be-paid-minimum...)

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## **Italy**

### **Job vouchers system leads to insecurity of workers**

*March 22, 2016*

Trade unions and labour experts are worried about the rapid spread of a payment scheme originally used only for seasonal farm labourers which they say is being abused by employers and undermining workers' rights. Under the system, workers are not paid directly in money but with vouchers which the employer buys online, or at a post office or tobacconist, for 10 euros, 20 euros or 50 euros each. Workers then cash their vouchers in and receive 7.5 euros for each 10 euros of face value, with 2.5 euros going to the state to cover insurance and pension contributions. There is no contract, so workers have no rights in areas such as sick pay, holidays or leave, with obvious advantages and savings for employers. Workers paid in vouchers can continue to claim what benefits they are already entitled to, but do not accrue any right to jobless benefits when their employment ends. The government has announced a revision of the voucher system.

English: [http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/english/189437/Labor-ministry-plans ...](http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/english/189437/Labor-ministry-plans...)  
[http://www.buenosairesherald.com/article/210519/italy-pushes-labour-flexibility-to-limit ...](http://www.buenosairesherald.com/article/210519/italy-pushes-labour-flexibility-to-limit...)

### **Almaviva to shed nearly 3,000 employees**

*March 21, 2016*

A mass lay-off of nearly 3000 Almaviva contact centre employees (1,670 collective redundancies in Palermo, 918 in Rome and 400 in Naples) was formalised, according to the information provided by the trade union representing workers in the telecommunications sector Uilcom. The redundancies account for 6% of staff currently employed by the group in seven countries. Almaviva explained the lay-offs by a direct margin that is well below target as a result of the delocalization of lowest-bid tenders and inadequate regulations governing telcom outsourcing. Almaviva employees in Palermo are to strike, with a demonstration in Piazza Indipendenza.

English: [http://www.ansa.it/english/news/business/2016/03/21/almaviva-to-shed ...](http://www.ansa.it/english/news/business/2016/03/21/almaviva-to-shed...)

### **Youth unemployment slightly lower**

March 3, 2016

The average youth unemployment rate fell to 40.3% in 2015 – the first time the rate for the year has fallen since 2007. The jobless rate among the country's 15 to 24 year was 2.4% lower last year than in 2014. The overall unemployment rate fell to 11.9% from 12.7% in 2014, also marking the first annual drop since 2007.

English: [http://www.thelocal.it/20160310/italys-youth-jobless-rate-falls-for-first-time ...](http://www.thelocal.it/20160310/italys-youth-jobless-rate-falls-for-first-time...)

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## Latvia

### Compensation pay for laid-off metal workers

March 21, 2016

Management of the metallurgical plant KVV Liepajas Metalurģs stated that, according to preliminary estimates, about 300 of the total of 402 workers currently working in the plant would have to be laid off. The layoffs will be effected in compliance with the legislation as regards the notice periods and compensations due to the workers. A personnel audit will be carried out at the company to determine the minimum personnel required for infrastructure maintenance during the idle time, and over 800,000 euro will be paid to the laid-off workers.

English: [http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/markets\\_and\\_companies ...](http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/markets_and_companies...)

### Necessary income per household surveyed

March 17, 2016

In a survey conducted in 2015 by the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) the population indicated that one household member needs at least 483 euro monthly. To pay for usual necessary expenses of one household member households needed 31 euro or 6.7% more financial means in 2015, compared to 2014. During the last years household disposable income has grown sharply, but the amount still is too small to make ends meet. In 2014, the population pointed out that one household member needs at least 452 euro monthly, while disposable income per household member was 14% lower and reached only 387 euro monthly. Data on income in 2015 will be compiled in a similar survey in 2016. The survey data show that the population assessment of ability to make and meet (i.e., pay for usual necessary expenses) has improved.

English: [http://www.csb.gov.lv/en/notikumi/population-claims-amount-needed ...](http://www.csb.gov.lv/en/notikumi/population-claims-amount-needed...)

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## Liechtenstein

### Labour market in charts

March 5, 2016

The statistical office updated a series of labour market data over the period 1990-2016. The current unemployment (2.5%) is very low, compared to neighbouring countries. The unemployment among youngsters (15-24 year old) is substantially higher (3.8%, February 2016 data). Meanwhile, almost one quarter of the unemployed belongs to the category long-term unemployed. In absolute and relative terms the labour market has not completely recovered; the lowest unemployment level was in May 2008.

German: [http://www.amsfl.li/ams/upload/downloads/entwicklung\\_arbeitslosigkeit\\_1990 ...](http://www.amsfl.li/ams/upload/downloads/entwicklung_arbeitslosigkeit_1990...)

[http://www.amsfl.li/ams/upload/downloads/entwicklung\\_arbeitslosigkeit\\_12 ...](http://www.amsfl.li/ams/upload/downloads/entwicklung_arbeitslosigkeit_12...)

[http://www.amsfl.li/ams/upload/downloads/factbox\\_arbeitslosigkeit ...](http://www.amsfl.li/ams/upload/downloads/factbox_arbeitslosigkeit...)

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## Lithuania

### Large segment of workers receives less than 325 euro

March 18, 2016

Statistics Lithuania has published updated data and graphs on the wage development (over the period October 2014-2015). The number of employees (including individual enterprises) with gross earnings of 325 euro and less stood at 212.1 thousand (19.2%). More than half of employees (127.8 thousand) earning 325 euro and less were working part-time. Over these twelve months, the number of full-time employees earning a minimum monthly wage decreased by 0.4 percentage points. In October 2015, the number of full-time



employees earning the minimum wage, against the total number of full-time employees of the respective sector, stood at 8.8% (84.3 thousand) in the whole economy, or 5.9% (19.1 thousand) in the public sector and 10.2% (65.2 thousand) in the private sector.

English: [http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/analytics ...](http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/analytics)

### **IMF interferes in wage debate**

*March 16, 2016*

At the end of an IMF-mission the IMF staff directly interfered in the current debate on labour market reform and wage development. The organisation welcomes the labour reform initiative (New Social Model). Unveiled about a year ago, its aim is to modernise labour relations, upgrade social benefits, and reform social security. However, with significant changes envisaged in each of these areas, the economic, financial, and social implications need to be carefully considered. The IMF is very much concerned about the improvement of the business climate and recommends that it 'would be prudent to pause minimum wage hikes, depoliticise the process of setting them, and start addressing legitimate concerns about income inequality through other means'. Based on the IMF's Dissemination Standards Bulletin Board (DSBB), the Central Bank updated all data and statistics.

English: [http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/analytics ...](http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/analytics)

The IMF-missions statement: [https://www.imf.org/external ...](https://www.imf.org/external)

The DSBB-data: [https://www.lb.lt/eng/statistics ...](https://www.lb.lt/eng/statistics)

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## **Luxembourg**

### **Unemployment stabilises**

*March 1, 2016*

The unemployment rate stabilised in February 2015, while the actual number of jobseekers fell by over 400. Compared to the same month a year ago, it marked a 6 percent fall, benefiting all age groups, particularly those aged 30 and under. The proportion of jobseekers in this age bracket fell 8.7 percent over a year, while the unemployment rate among the 50+ age group fell 2.7 percent. Another positive sign was the fact that the proportion of long-term unemployed (12 months and more) fell by 4.1 percent over a year.

English: [http://www.wort.lu/en/business/february-2016-luxembourg-unemployment-rate ...](http://www.wort.lu/en/business/february-2016-luxembourg-unemployment-rate)

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## **Malta**

### **Workers involved in talks on department reform**

*March 24, 2016*

Trade union GWU representatives met with planning parliamentary secretary to discuss rights of lands department employees and simplification of administrative processes. The General Workers' Union has stressed the importance of involving employees in the lands department in the reform of the department into a new authority. Although many of the employees were facing uncertainty due to the reform, they were also optimistic about the changes.

English: [http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national ...](http://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national)

### **Foreign contracts should be audited in parliament**

*March 19, 2016*

The Confederation of Malta Trade Unions demands that before final agreements on employees' working conditions are signed, any deals signed by the government with foreign entrepreneurs should be tabled in Parliament and independently audited. In a statement, the CMTU said it is supporting the stand taken by the UHM Voice of the Workers and the Medical Association of Malta on the privatisation of the Gozo Hospital, Karen Grech Hospital and St Luke's Hospital. The CMTU also called for an audit by the National Audit Office on the government's agreements – including those that have not yet been finalised – with Vitalis Global Healthcare, the winning bidder for the €200 million project.

English: [http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view ...](http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view)

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## Netherlands

### Agreement in metal sector

March 23, 2016

After a period of unsuccessful negotiations followed by a long series of strikes, the trade unions and employer representatives in the metal sector reopened the negotiations. At the end of February the delegations reached an accord in principle for a new collective agreement. The agreement, with a duration of 37 months (1 May 2015 till 1 June 2018), was sent to the members for approval. By the end of March it came out that the deal was overwhelmingly backed up by the union members. The agreement includes a nominal improvement of the youth wages, a general pay increase of 2.1% on 1 April 2016, a nominal bonus of 0.5% in July 2016, a general increase of 1.25% on 1 January 2017, a nominal bonus of 0.6% in March 2017, a general increase of 1% on 1 August 2017 and a general wage increase of 1.55% on 1 January 2018. Additionally, employers pay a levy to the sectoral social funds in 2016 and 2017 for training and education.

English: [https://www.fnv.nl/site/alle-sectoren/sectoren/fnv-metaal ...](https://www.fnv.nl/site/alle-sectoren/sectoren/fnv-metaal...)

**Special:** agreement journal (in Dutch): [https://www.fnv.nl/site/alle-sectoren ...](https://www.fnv.nl/site/alle-sectoren...)

### Increase of wealth gap in larger cities

March 22, 2016

According to the environmental assessment agency PBL, the number of jobs in the cities increased by 30 percent over the past 25 years, compared to 20 percent in non-city areas. Amsterdam and Utrecht in particular showed a strong growth in jobs. Cities also have many high paying jobs. However, the PBL-report *The divided triumph* reveals that, while the economy is improving, the gap between rich and poor in cities is also increasing. Over the past years, the wage difference between the highest and lowest earners increased by 3.5 percent in the larger cities, even by 4 percent in Amsterdam.

English: [http://www.iamexpat.nl/read-and-discuss/expat-page/news/dutch-cities-increasingly ...](http://www.iamexpat.nl/read-and-discuss/expat-page/news/dutch-cities-increasingly...)

[http://www.pbl.nl/sites/default ...](http://www.pbl.nl/sites/default...)

The report (in Dutch): [http://www.pbl.nl/sites/default/files ...](http://www.pbl.nl/sites/default/files...)

### Large home care agency goes bust

March 16, 2016

The large TSN home care agency was declared bankrupt with the loss of thousands of jobs. The company is making a 'structural loss' and management said there is no 'real prospect' of providing home help services in a financially responsible way. Some 4,500 of TSN's 12,000 workers have been taken over by other home help agencies but the fate of the remaining staff is unclear. Trade union FNV is worried that the partial takeover will lead to serious losses of workers' rights. The union announced strikes in case this would happen.

English: [http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives ...](http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives...)

An archive of the TSN-case (in Dutch): [http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/4516/Gezondheid ...](http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/4516/Gezondheid...)

### Romanian workers exploited at shipyards

March 7, 2016

Romanian workers at several shipyards are being paid just €1 an hour as their employers get round the rules on equal pay via staffing bureaus and other 'tricks'. The workers are employed by an intermediate which deducts taxes and pension premiums in Romania under the EU's A1 ruling. The workers are paid a living allowance while working, which is not subject to tax and premiums. This means it is far cheaper for the shipyards to employ them than ordinary workers. For trade union FNV, campaigning for decent wages, the Dutch and Romanian nationals at the shipyards are colleagues, not competitors.

English: [http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2016/03/romanians-are-being-exploited ...](http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2016/03/romanians-are-being-exploited...)

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## Norway

### Severance package to all 22,500 Statoil employees

March 29, 2016

Statoil posted a news-item on its intranet informing the employees that all employees would receive an offer

to apply for severance packages. Previous practice in complying with necessary workforce reductions has been severance packages to groups and departments within the company. Statoil is now offering severance packages to all employees. Statoil currently employs 22,000 people in 38 countries around the world. The aim is a reduction of 1,500 permanent employees and a reduction of 500 temporary employees by the end of 2016.

English: [http://norwaypost.com/index.php/business/general-business ...](http://norwaypost.com/index.php/business/general-business...)

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## Poland

### **Ban on Sunday shopping proposed**

*March 11, 2016*

Trade union Solidarity has proposed a ban on Sunday shopping and related businesses. The trade union is launching a signature collecting campaign with the aim of initiating relevant legislation on the matter. The idea of a ban on Sunday shopping has encountered mixed opinions among politicians, employers and employees, alike. The president of the Private Employers Confederation 'Lewiatan' is not in favour of the measure proposed by the union and considers that is better to give people a free choice and not force anyone to work on Sundays but at the same time not forbid it.

English: [http://www.thenews.pl/1/6/Artykul/244278,Shopping-to-be-banned-on-Sundays ...](http://www.thenews.pl/1/6/Artykul/244278,Shopping-to-be-banned-on-Sundays...)

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## Portugal

### **Lack of job security for teachers**

*March 31, 2016*

A report of the teachers' trade union Fenprof reveals that out of 200,000 teachers, 53,158 are working in a 'precarious situation'. The union highlighted some cases of teachers in higher education receiving wages of 500 euro and contracts of only four months. Insecurity is not only a problem for teachers; it is also a social problem and affects the organisation of schools and the quality of education.

English: [http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/no-security-for-teachers ...](http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/no-security-for-teachers...)

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## Romania

### **Management burden at national Post**

*March 9, 2016*

According to the leader of the postal trade union, the Post has had five general managers in the last seven years. Every time a new manager came, he brought his own team offering them management positions and this has led to some 400-500 low-productive managerial employees along the years. Also, the Romanian Post has 100 experts who are paid over 1,500 euro per month. They are in fact former managers who wanted to keep their positions, according to the union's representative.

English: [http://www.romania-insider.com/postal-union-the-romanian-post ...](http://www.romania-insider.com/postal-union-the-romanian-post...)

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### **Unions demand pay increase by a quarter in the health sector**

*March 1, 2016*

The Doctors' Union Federation Sanitas has asked the government to increase the salaries in the public healthcare sector by 25% in 2016, according to the negotiations from 2015. The salaries already rose by a quarter on October 1, 2015, through an emergency ordinance. The unions are now expecting the second growth of 25%.

English: [http://www.romania-insider.com/unions-salaries-in-romanias-health-sector ...](http://www.romania-insider.com/unions-salaries-in-romanias-health-sector...)

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## Serbia

### **Fiscal Council wants salaries kept frozen for 3 more years**

*March 2, 2016*

The president of the Fiscal Council - an independent state body reporting to the National Assembly – stated that fiscal consolidation and reforms are being halted without first achieving the objectives for the recovery of the economy. He pointed out that the three-year government's plan contains no credible measures that would reduce the current 3.7 percent deficit in order to reduce the public debt. According to him, the lay-off of more employees is not a measure that will bring success. On the contrary, it is necessary to keep salaries and pensions under control, that is: 'frozen them' in order to move toward the recovery of the economy in the next three years. He added that reforms of public enterprises had barely begun in 2015.

English: [http://www.b92.net/eng/news/business ...](http://www.b92.net/eng/news/business...)

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## Slovakia

### **Job losses at US Steel**

*March 24, 2016*

The Kosice-based company U.S. Steel will cut more than 20 jobs in administration and management due to the prevailing situation on the steel market. In addition to the abolished 20 jobs, a further 85 employees will voluntarily leave U.S. Steel in the course of 2016, partly based on a voluntary programme for early retirement. They will receive a severance payment for 10 months, amounting to some €19,000.

English: <http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20125095/steelmaker-in-kosice-cuts-jobs.html>

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### **Act on collective bargaining partly 'unconstitutional'**

*March 16, 2016*

The Constitutional Court ruled that the amendment to the law on collective bargaining from 2013 regarding the extension of the binding force of collective agreements of higher degree is unconstitutional. The amendment was attacked by a group of 32 opposition MPs, who complained that it entitled the government to extend the binding force of these collective agreements without having to consult the employers to whom it directly pertains. They argued that the law infringed upon the right to private property as well as the right to do business and that the law also did not guarantee a balance between public and private interests.

English: [http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20118417/2013-amendment-to-law-on-collective-bargaining ...](http://spectator.sme.sk/c/20118417/2013-amendment-to-law-on-collective-bargaining...)

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## Slovenia

### **General strike in energy sector**

*March 24, 2016*

The Energy Sector Trade Union is planning a general strike in the sector that would take place between 4 and 21 April. The union, which wants dialogue for the restructuring of the industry and a halting of layoffs, is ready to disrupt power supply if the government fails to respond. The government sees the move as unfounded.

English: <https://english.sta.si/2245971/general-strike-in-energy-sector-to-start-on-4-april>

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## Spain

### **Metal workers have an agreement**

*March 29, 2016*

The negotiation committee in the metal sector (AESM) finalised its work with an agreement for the metal workers. The national collective agreement (Convenio Estatal de la Industria, la Tecnología y los Servicios del Sector del Metal - CEM) covers directly 800,000 workers. Additionally, 200,000 workers are covered indirectly by company agreements. The trade unions have expressed their satisfaction with the outcome that

is built around five basic principles, including a minimum wage in the sector.

Spanish: <http://www.lavanguardia.com/vida ...>

### **Train strike called off**

*March 22, 2016*

A 23-hour strike that was announced for Wednesday 23 March has been called off by trade union CCOO. The trade union wanted to protest the failure by Renfe, the train operator, and Adif, the company in charge of the track network, to fulfil an agreement to hire more workers. According to CCOO, the situation involved not just the loss of collective bargaining rights but also a commitment to provide jobs with the creation of 930 new positions within Renfe and Adif. The union said in a statement that it has decided to cancel the strike following attaining agreement with Renfe and Adif.

English: <http://news.newsdirectory2.com/desconvocadas-the-two-strikes-planned ...>

Spanish: <http://www.elmundo.es/economia ...>

### **Striking garbage collectors come to an agreement**

*March 11, 2016*

Workers at Limasa, the company in charge of Malaga's rubbish collection service, have been striking for nine days. They were protesting plans to cut annual holiday leave as well as calling for all the conditions of the employment agreed upon in 2010 (the last time conditions were validated) to be reinstated. The City Hall had rejected the proposals from the Limasa workers and sent them a counter-offer, which included the stipulations that the workers must not strike in 2016 and 2017 and do away with the practice of hereditary job positions within the company. After long negotiations a deal was concluded that includes a productivity bonus and a retroactive pay due for last September.

English: <http://www.thinkspain.com/news-spain/27216/malaga-rubbish-collectors ...>

About the deal (in Spanish): <http://www.laopiniondemalaga.es/malaga ...>

### **Flexicurity nightmare for short-term worker**

*March 6, 2016*

The labour market reform adopted in 2012 has increased labour market flexibility but also led to a growth in 'precarious work'. The reform created a new open-ended contract which can be used by small and medium sized businesses for employees who are under the age of 30 which allows dismissals without justification during the first year of employment. It drastically reduced the amount of compensation that must be paid when workers are let go and allows for collective dismissals, even when a firm is not facing economic difficulties. The reform weakens workers' rights, such as a prohibition on unilaterally changing work conditions. Four years later the reform - which triggered a general strike - remains controversial.

English: <http://www.expatica.com/es/news/Flexisecurity-in-Spain-Dream-for-firms ...>

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## **Sweden**

### **Strike chaos averted after pilots sign agreement**

*March 1, 2016*

An industrial dispute with pilots centred on staff employed by an international recruitment firm which hires pilots for SAS, Scandinavia's largest airline. Global Employer Company (GEC) takes on workers for the British low-cost carrier Flybe, which in turns makes them available for SAS flights. The pilots' union, Svensk Pilotförening (SPF), announced that it had reached an agreement with the international recruitment firm. The deal struck includes an agreement on pensions and increased flexibility regarding scheduling and holidays. SPF stated that it's very important for its members' long-term health that there is a collective agreement which secures a good working environment. The agreement over pay and conditions for cabin crew has put an end to two days of strikes affecting more than a thousand passengers flying on domestic SAS routes as well as some services to Finland.

English: <http://www.thelocal.se/20160226/strike-chaos-averted-after-swedish-pilots-sign-deal>

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## Switzerland

### **More job cuts at Credit Suisse**

*March 23, 2016*

A further restructuring will lead to serious job cuts at the bank Credit Suisse, after the serious job cuts already announced in the autumn of 2015 (see our October Newsletter). The management said the problems with the investment bank's debt-trading operation became apparent only after the October strategy announcement. About 2,000 jobs will be cut in the trading, or global-markets unit (a substantial part of the cuts is planned in London and New York). Together with previously announced cuts, that brings the bank's total planned job cuts to 6,000. About 2,800 already have been implemented. Credit Suisse has about 48,000 employees, with roughly 11,000 in global markets.

English: [http://www.wsj.com/articles/credit-suisse-ramps-up-restructuring ...](http://www.wsj.com/articles/credit-suisse-ramps-up-restructuring-...)

### **Schindler starts outsourcing**

*March 1, 2016*

Elevator company Schindler announced that it will downsize its factory staff at Ebikon in canton Lucerne. It is likely that the jobs will be outsourced overseas. The company said that the strong growth in the Asian market and high production costs in Switzerland prompted the move. More and more orders are being processed abroad, according to Schindler, which meant that the workers were not being utilised to full capacity. The job cuts are expected to take effect by the end of 2017. The company plans to achieve some of the downsizing through internal transfers and early retirement but stated that redundancies cannot be excluded. Consultations with workers representatives have been initiated. Trade union Unia condemned the restructuring and demanded that the company stop relocating jobs abroad.

English: [http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/manufacturing-costs\\_elevator-company-schindler ...](http://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/manufacturing-costs_elevator-company-schindler-...)

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## Turkey

### **Renault fails to meet agreed workers representation**

*March 2, 2016*

Following an agreement made between IndustriALL Global Union, its affiliate Birlesik Metal-Is, representing the overwhelming majority of workers at the Oyak plant, and Renault management, workers at the plant were to hold elections on worker representation on 29 February. The agreement, which includes the composition and duties of a Social Dialogue Committee (SDC), was the result of discussions on employee representation and the right to hold elections. However, the Renault management cancelled the elections just days before they were scheduled to take place, hiding behind the argument of having pressure from the ministry of labour and social security who had labelled the elections illegal. In addition, the car giant immediately dismissed ten workers, including two spokespersons.

English: [http://www.industriall-union.org/turkey-renault-dismisses-workers-using-police ...](http://www.industriall-union.org/turkey-renault-dismisses-workers-using-police-...)

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## United Kingdom

### **UNISON calls for action to end homecare wage scandal**

*March 23, 2016*

Tens of thousands of care workers across England and Wales are still being paid less than the minimum wage because councils are not insisting that homecare companies pay the workers their travel time, a UNISON report is warning. More than three quarters (76 per cent) of councils in England don't stipulate in their contracts with homecare providers that firms must pay employees when they are travelling between appointments. This finding is based on a recent UNISON Freedom of Information request.

English: [https://www.unison.org.uk/news/press-release/2016/03/unison-calls-for-action ...](https://www.unison.org.uk/news/press-release/2016/03/unison-calls-for-action-...)

The report: [https://www.unison.org.uk/content ...](https://www.unison.org.uk/content-...)

### **Fairness of tax and benefit reforms assessed**

*March 21, 2016*



The Institute for fiscal studies has published an assessment of what has happened to living standards across the distribution and what has been the direct effect on incomes of tax and benefit policy. IFS formulated four conclusions. First, tax and benefit changes had little effect on pensioners and much bigger effects on those of working age, especially those with children. Second, as a result of various cuts to working age benefits, the measures led to significant losses for those of working age in the bottom half of the income distribution. Third, those from the middle of the distribution most of the way up (most people on average earnings and above, certainly up to £50,000 or so a year) saw very small changes in income, on average, as a direct result of tax and benefit policy. Finally the top decile, and in particular those on the very highest incomes, earning more than £100,000 a year, faced some tax increases.

English: <http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/8210>

### **Conciliation offer ends port strike**

*March 18, 2016*

Strike action at the Port of Grangemouth was suspended after Forth Ports agreed to lift their imposition on shift rotation changes and enter into conciliation. Arrangements are now being made with the conciliation services at Acas and talks are expected to commence. Members of the trade union Unite had initiated a fortnight of strikes after imposed changes by employer Forth Ports to shift rotations at the port affecting operative work, specifically: a 25% increase in weekend shift work with the removal of overtime pay rates, a decrease in night shift cover from one week in seven and one week in eight and an increase in the number of shift teams from seven to eight.

English: [http://www.unitetheunion.org/news/port-of-grangemouth-strike-suspended ...](http://www.unitetheunion.org/news/port-of-grangemouth-strike-suspended...)

### **Women have barely half the pension savings of men**

*March 1, 2016*

According to the report 'The Under-pensioned 2016', sponsored by the TUC, women have barely half the pension savings of men. The study, carried out by the Pensions Policy Institute, shows that women have, on average, £7,500 in savings in defined contribution schemes, compared to £14,500 for men. And women typically have £32,000 in pension savings in defined benefit schemes, whereas men have £62,900. The report reveals large pension disadvantages for women, ethnic minority workers, carers and the self-employed. The findings show that women, as well as having barely half the pension savings of men, also receive a far smaller state pension. Women receive 13% a year less than the average state pension and 25% a year less than men get from their state pensions. The 'Under-pensioned 2016' report says reasons for the disparities include workplace discrimination, job segregation and the lack of flexible working.

English: [https://www.tuc.org.uk/economic-issues/pensions-and-retirement/equality-issues ...](https://www.tuc.org.uk/economic-issues/pensions-and-retirement/equality-issues...)

Report: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/TheUnder-pensioned.pdf>

### **Choristers at English National Opera vote to strike**

*March 1, 2016*

Choristers at English National Opera have voted to strike during the first act of Philip Glass's Akhnaten in protest against a cut in contracts. Trade union Equity announced the action as the chorus sang Hail, Poetry from Gilbert & Sullivan's Pirates of Penzance on the steps of Arts Council England's headquarters in London. The national opera has been forced to make savings after the Arts Council [ACE] announced in 2014 it was cutting the opera company's annual funding by £5m – or 30%. It wants to reduce the size of the chorus from 44 to 40 and move it from a 12-month to a nine-month contract. Union Equity argues that the contract changes could mean a 39% reduction in chorus members' pay. Equity gave notice that the chorus would be taking action between 4 and 19 March 2016, which might include protests and refusing overtime. The strike action, for which the vote was unanimous, would be in the first act of Akhnaten, directed by Phelim McDermott.

English: [http://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/feb/26/choristers-english-national-opera ...](http://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/feb/26/choristers-english-national-opera...)

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