

collective bargaining

Issue 5/2017 | 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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European sources

Integrative and distributive bargaining

May 30, 2017

Living and working in Europe, the 2016 Yearbook of Eurofound resumes developments and trends as described in the research activities of Eurofound. Chapter 2 (Win-win workplace practices) is dedicated to several bargaining related developments. With collective bargaining increasingly decentralised to company level, Eurofound initiated research that sheds a light on what constitutes well-functioning social dialogue at this level, how negotiations are conducted and how that affects outcomes. To examine in greater detail how companies achieve win-win outcomes, Eurofound selected 20 companies of different sizes from different sectors and countries that had been through a negotiation process to tackle various challenges.

English: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default ...>

Interactive presentation: <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/yearbook/>

Labour productivity, growth and bargaining

May 25, 2017

The project Bargaining for Productivity aims to shed light on the reasons behind labour productivity slowdown or weak growth in 6 EU countries. It analyses public policies on labour productivity and their (in)effectiveness and focuses on the potential and effective implication of collective bargaining on labour productivity and the sharing of best practice. A special edition of the ADAPT International Bulletin presents initial findings of national case studies presented at a conference held at the University of Greenwich.

English: http://adapt.it/english_bulletin_nuovo/adapt-special-bulletin-issue-no-12017-2/

The European Semester Spring Package

May 22, 2017

The European Commission published the 2017 country-specific recommendations, setting out its economic policy guidance for individual Member States for the next 12 to 18 months. The economy in the EU and the euro area is proving resilient, but challenges remain, such as slow productivity growth, the legacies of the crisis, including persisting inequalities, and uncertainty arising from external factors. The Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, said that addressing inequality is firmly at the heart of the assessment. Productivity increases should be reflected by higher wages. The ETUC called it progress that the European Commission is calling for more public investment and higher wages in some countries.

English: <https://www.etuc.org/press/european-semester-spring-package-2017 ...>

The recommendations: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2017-european-semester ...>

European court's advocate general: Uber is a transport company

May 11, 2017

In his opinion on a case brought by the association of taxi drivers from Barcelona, the advocate general at the Court of Justice of the European Union considers that Uber is a transport firm, which requires a licence to operate. The decision is a set-back for the company that always argues it only provides technology to help drivers find passengers. If this opinion is endorsed by the Court when ruling in this case, it might mean Uber has to operate in the EU under the same conditions and safety rules as established taxi firms.

English: <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology ...>

<http://elpais.com/elpais/2017/05/11/inenglish ...>

Details: <https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/upload/docs ...>

Services e-card not a good idea

May 9, 2017

The social partners from several sectors (Construction, Industrial Cleaning and Insurance) have signed a joint opinion on the services e-card, identifying the social risks of this initiative. The partners point out that their industries (key targeted sectors in the proposals) have not asked for a European services e-card. They fear that the card will facilitate bogus self-employment, undeclared work and fake posting, all at the detriment of genuine companies and the rights of the workers involved.

English: <http://www.uni-europa.org/2017/05/11/workers-employers-jointly-criticise ...>

The opinion: <http://www.uni-europa.org/wp-content/uploads ...>

Austria

AUA social plan runs at least till 2023

May 24, 2017

Air company AUA has agreed on a job security and social plan for technicians and ground staff that will run (at least) till 2023. In return, workers have accepted a modest 0.9% pay increase for 2016. This is just enough to cover inflation. The workforce accepted the deal in a workers' meeting. The social plan aims to

settle decent smaller restructurings in the company.

German: [http://www.oegb.at/cms/So6/So6_o.a/1342578629871/home/kv-einigung ...](http://www.oegb.at/cms/So6/So6_o.a/1342578629871/home/kv-einigung...)
[http://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/wirtschaft/oesterreich/893976_AUA-gibt ...](http://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/wirtschaft/oesterreich/893976_AUA-gibt...)

Social partners still work on labour market pact

May 7, 2017

The social partners are still talking about a package deal that includes working time regulations as well as a new minimum wage policy. The negotiations started in February 2017. The partners announced after a new round of talks that a proposal can be envisaged before the end of June. The government will have to come up with own regulations in case the partners fail to come to an agreement. One of the key problems is the suggested introduction of a maximum 12-hour shift.

German: [http://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/oesterreich/politik ...](http://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/oesterreich/politik...)

Poverty in 2016

May 2, 2017

A report of the statistical office reveals that 18% of the population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2016. These persons had low household income, were severely materially deprived or lived in households with low work intensity. In total, the number of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion declined by 157 000 persons since 2008. According to the EU-Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, long-term unemployed persons face an especially high risk of social exclusion (79%). People who are in employment are relatively better socially secured (risk of poverty or social exclusion 10%). 8.3% of all persons in employment live in households with an income below the poverty line are considered as 'working poor'.

English: [http://www.statistik.at/web_en/press ...](http://www.statistik.at/web_en/press...)

Details (in German): [http://www.statistik.at/web_de/presse ...](http://www.statistik.at/web_de/presse...)

Belgium

Average wage calculated

May 25, 2017

According to research carried out by Leuven University, the average monthly earnings of workers is 3,401 euro (amount before tax). The latest average wages are 4.3 percent or 140 euro up on 2014. This rise is the result of the automatic wage indexation system under which pay is raised when life gets more expensive - in other words, when inflation has been up for some time, wages will follow. However, workers have hardly enjoyed pay rises given voluntarily by employers. Starting employees have to be content with 2,369 euro per month. The hospitality sector generally has poor pay, with 2,676 euro per month on average. The best paying categories (banks, chemical and pharmaceutical sector) deliver 4,279-euro gross per month.

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

Metal workers have a deal

May 19, 2017

The metal workers unions reached an agreement on pay for the period 2017-2018. The deal includes an improvement of the purchase power of 1.1% (as of 1 July 2017). Special attention will be paid to the minimum wages and the pay of youngsters. The supplementary pensions will be uplifted with 0.1%. The deal also provides an improvement of the individual vocational training rights.

French: [http://www.metallos.be/sites ...](http://www.metallos.be/sites...)

German: [http://www.metallos.be/sites ...](http://www.metallos.be/sites...)

Dutch: [http://www.metallos.be/sites ...](http://www.metallos.be/sites...)

Union proposal how to handle arduous jobs

May 8, 2017

The three trade union confederations ACV/CSC, ABVV/FGTB and ACLVB/CGSLB have formulated a joint proposal to make an early retirement possible for workers in hard, arduous jobs. So far, employers are not willing to discuss the proposal, although the social partners had reached an agreement on a common

definition. Hard work is work with physical constraints, mental or emotional pressure, higher safety risks and a complicated work organisation. The unions operationalised the four criteria in some 100 aspects. The employers have countered this with the argument of the 'administrative burden'.

French: [https://www.csc-en-ligne.be/csc-en-ligne/Actualite/communiqués-de-presse ...](https://www.csc-en-ligne.be/csc-en-ligne/Actualite/communiqués-de-presse...)

[http://www.lalibre.be/actu/belgique/on-reste-loin-d-un-accord-sur-la-penibilite-du-travail ...](http://www.lalibre.be/actu/belgique/on-reste-loin-d-un-accord-sur-la-penibilite-du-travail...)

Dutch: [https://www.acv-online.be/Images/170508-Zware-beroepen-vakbonden-leggen ...](https://www.acv-online.be/Images/170508-Zware-beroepen-vakbonden-leggen...)

Social fraud in transport

May 8, 2017

A large-scale investigation into social fraud led to a raid of 20 offices of the transport company Jost Group. Investigators suspect Jost to have evaded social security contributions worth millions of euros between 2014 and 2016. There are also allegations about human trafficking. Jost is suspected of establishing fake companies in Romania and Slovakia in order to employ over 1,100 drivers from these countries while systematically skipping social security contributions in Belgium. The same system is said to have been set up in Luxembourg, this time with Belgian drivers. The estimated costs are around 55 million euro. The transport unions have initiated in recent years several actions against this type of social dumping.

English: [https://nbcnews.com/2017/05/08/belgian-police-raid-offices-of-jost-group ...](https://nbcnews.com/2017/05/08/belgian-police-raid-offices-of-jost-group...)

French: [http://www.rtl.be/info/belgique/faits-divers/le-patron-de-jost-inculpé ...](http://www.rtl.be/info/belgique/faits-divers/le-patron-de-jost-inculpé...)

Dutch: <http://www.transport-online.nl/site/81170/eigenaar-jost-group-in-cel-na-inval/>

Bulgaria

High Administrative Court revokes minimum wage decision

May 17, 2017

The High Administrative Court has annulled the government's decree that set minimum wage at 460 BGN for 2017. The case had been initiated on complaint from employer associations: Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association, BCCI, and Confederation of Employers and Industrialists in Bulgaria. They claimed that the decision was taken without a preliminary discussion with them as required by law. BCCI said that given the importance of the minimum wage for both the employers and the workers, its establishment by the government with agreement only with trade unions is against the national and European rules and is not in the interest of the constructive partnership.

English: [http://www.novinite.com/articles/180398/High+Administrative+Court+Revokes ...](http://www.novinite.com/articles/180398/High+Administrative+Court+Revokes...)

Large majority of workers below the average wage

May 2, 2017

The Head of the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions has said that 70% of workers receive below the average salary. According to CITUB, real incomes should rise by a much higher percentage than what the government promises. It was also pointed out that the country has the lowest pensions and wages in the European Union, as well as low quality healthcare and education.

English: [http://www.novinite.com/articles/180051/70+of+Workers+in+Bulgaria+Receive+Below ...](http://www.novinite.com/articles/180051/70+of+Workers+in+Bulgaria+Receive+Below...)

Croatia

Social partners discuss recruitment of foreign labour

May 15, 2017

Despite a high unemployment rate, there are officially around 225,000 unemployed, companies are experiencing difficulties finding suitable employees. The problem has led to intensive discussions between social partners and the government on bringing in workers from abroad. The European Observatory of Working Life referred to a round table organised by the Croatian Chamber of Economy (HGK) on how to provide the necessary workers for the economy. The trade unions believe that the problem is being exaggerated and that it can be solved by increasing wages and improving vocational training. The unions argue that this will motivate citizens to actively seek work and to stay in the country instead of going to work abroad. The trade unions are not against bringing foreign workers into the country, but they fear this

approach could be used as an excuse for lowering wages and permitting poorer working conditions.

English: [https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/articles/croatia-increased ...](https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/articles/croatia-increased...)

Cyprus

Greek and Turkish Cypriot journalists' unions sign agreement

May 1, 2017

Global union IFJ has backed a joint agreement signed between representatives of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot journalists at a meeting in Nicosia. The Memorandum of Understanding – designed to promote cooperation between journalists from both communities, was signed by the Union of Cyprus Journalists and the Turkish Cypriot press workers' union Basin-Sen as well as the Association of Turkish Cypriot Journalists. Representatives of the three journalist unions agreed to mutual co-operation and solidarity on issues of journalists' safety, access to information, and adherence to professional standards. During the meeting, the participants also discussed issues such as ethics, good governance and self-regulation in their work.

English: [http://www.ifj.org/nc/news-single-view/backpid/1/article/greek-and-turkish-cypriot ...](http://www.ifj.org/nc/news-single-view/backpid/1/article/greek-and-turkish-cypriot...)

Czech Republic

Gender gap leads to campaign

May 16, 2017

According to a report published by Social Watch, women are twice as likely to be poor as Czech men. Single mothers are among those most likely to be living in poverty, along with female migrants and women over the age of 65. Women are solely responsible for 87% of the estimated 180,000 single-parent families. On top of that, single mothers are more likely to be in low-paid work, and twice as likely to be unemployed than the national average. In addition, a study by the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) showed that wages were on average 8.3% lower than in Germany in 1993; by 2015 that disparity stood at 30.9% lower, despite increasing levels of productivity. The trade union confederation Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (CMKOS) and affiliated trade unions have been leading an intensive campaign against cheap labour, which includes efforts to reduce and eliminate the gender pay gap.

English: [https://www.equaltimes.org/the-battle-for-gender-equality ...](https://www.equaltimes.org/the-battle-for-gender-equality...)

The social Watch report (also available in Czech): [http://www.socialwatch.org ...](http://www.socialwatch.org...)

Caritas poverty report

May 12, 2017

Every fifth family with dependent children is financially poorly off, according to a new Caritas survey. Many find themselves in debt traps they are unable to escape from. The biggest factor behind families falling in debt is income poverty. Another important cause is insufficient legal regulation of consumer loans making the customers unprotected. Financial literacy also has an effect but overall it is more about people taking loans because they just can't meet basic needs.

English: [http://radio.cz/en/section/marketplace/caritas-holds-conference-on-how-families ...](http://radio.cz/en/section/marketplace/caritas-holds-conference-on-how-families...)

Denmark

IKEA and the working conditions of drivers

May 25, 2017

In the union paper of trade union 3F an article is dedicated to the conflict between IKEA and the transport trade unions. In an upcoming trial at Copenhagen City Court a Romanian haulier employed by BRING Trucking has demanded to be paid a Danish salary and payment in arrears amounting to DKK 1.8 million. The haulage supplier risks the annulment of its contract with IKEA. The 3F Transport section underlines that this is a case of serious underpayment of salary and a breach of EU regulations.

English: <https://www.fagbladet3f.dk/artikel/ikea-supplier-risks-getting-fired>

The case (in Danish): [https://www.fagbladet3f.dk/artikel/ikea-chauffoer-fik-rumaensk ...](https://www.fagbladet3f.dk/artikel/ikea-chauffoer-fik-rumaensk...)

Social partners and the gig economy

May 19, 2017

The social partners have to adapt the labour market model to fit the sharing economy, driverless forklifts and other new labour market trends. If they don't, others will, experts warn. The government and the social partners have approached the task by establishing a new body: 'The Disruption Council'. The Council consists of the Prime Minister and a wide selection of government ministers, the social partners, business leaders and experts. The Council's task is to find out how many new trends like digitalisation, robots and artificial intelligence can make the country richer and improve welfare – and at the same time find out how citizens can safely face a future where many traditional jobs will disappear.

English: [http://www.nordiclbourjournal.org/i-fokus/in-focus-2017/sharing-economy-2017 ...](http://www.nordiclbourjournal.org/i-fokus/in-focus-2017/sharing-economy-2017...)

Union mobilises against financial cuts in education

May 17, 2017

The education trade union Gymnasieskolernes Laererforening strongly condemns and is mobilising against the financial cuts imposed on the public education sector. The government plans to cut its education budget by 2% each year over the next four years, with cuts having started in 2016. Last year, the reductions resulted in major layoffs, with teacher numbers down 1,000 out of a total of 14,000. In April 2017, the GL started its campaign of opposition to these measures, with additional campaigns planned for September and October. These will be timed just before the start of Parliament negotiations for the coming fiscal year in November.

English: [https://ei-ie.org/en/detail/15052/denmark-union-campaign-against-continuing-cuts ...](https://ei-ie.org/en/detail/15052/denmark-union-campaign-against-continuing-cuts...)

Estonia

Labour market participation increases

May 19, 2017

The labour force survey shows that the number of people in employment was 2.7% higher in the first quarter of 2017 than a year earlier. The share of the working age population in employment was 67.3%, which is the highest figure in recent decades. Statistics Estonia puts the unemployment rate at 5.6%, which is one percentage point lower than in the first quarter of last year. Low unemployment and a rise in the number of vacancies in the economy indicate that there is a shortage of labour in the labour market. Labour shortages are being eased by active participation in the labour market and by a positive migration balance. Besides, the number of people who were inactive in the labour market because of illness or injury fell throughout 2016 and at the start of 2017. The work ability reform that is being introduced makes the benefits received by those who are partially able to work dependent on their participation in the labour market.

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

Pay increase for health workers

May 1, 2017

Following five months of talks with the government and health officials, five trade unions of health workers have signed a collective agreement, agreeing to a pay-rise and abandoning plans to hold long strikes in May 2017. In accordance with the agreement, the new minimum hourly wages, in force retroactively from April 1, are 10.53 euro for doctors, 6.03 euro for nurses and 3.70 euro for carers.

English: [http://bnn-news.com/estonia-s-health-workers-agree-to-pay-rise-solution ...](http://bnn-news.com/estonia-s-health-workers-agree-to-pay-rise-solution...)

Finland

Labour exploitation uncovered

May 26, 2017

The labour inspectorate discovered a serious breach of working arrangements and pay during an inspection of a restaurant. The workers, all of them from a local asylum seeker reception centre, kept the establishment

operational for months and had been paid nothing. The working arrangement had not been set up through the national employment agency, but via an unofficial work-practice programme based on the Finnish Red Cross' temporary employment scheme aimed to help asylum seekers integrate more quickly. The inspectors found similar working arrangements at a few other restaurants, at a barber shop and at least one retail shop. The inspectorate fears these incidents could be just the tip of the iceberg of a broader problem.

English: [http://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/inspector_shocked_by_restaurant ...](http://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/inspector_shocked_by_restaurant...)

Employers advocate local bargaining

May 20, 2017

The battle about the future of the collective bargaining system continues with employers speaking out loud for a decentralisation. The chair of a lobby group for tech companies made a plea for more local pay bargaining. At present, most trade unions and employer groups agree industry-wide pay deals, which bind every firm in that sector to a minimum salary increase for every employee. As the economy picks up, expectations of higher wages after years of moderate pay deals evolve. However, the employers still talk about pay restraint and the finance minister said workers should wait for the positive situation to stabilise.

English: [http://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/finance_minister_orpo_rebuffs_talk ...](http://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/finance_minister_orpo_rebuffs_talk...)
[http://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/siilasmaa_dampens_expectations_of_higher_wages ...](http://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/siilasmaa_dampens_expectations_of_higher_wages...)

Retail managers strike to get collective agreement

May 3, 2017

Retail managers held a 12-hour warning strike right after May Day. The walkout was in support of the right to a collective agreement. The Federation of Professional and Managerial Staff YTN wants to negotiate a collective agreement for retail managers. The Employers' Finnish Commerce Federation absolutely refuses to have any kind of collective agreement or any other union level agreement. The retail employers' unconditional no to any kind of collective agreements for managerial staff is in line with the recent decision made by the Confederation of Finnish Industries EK. It unilaterally terminated all 22 confederation level national agreements it had with the trade union confederations. This has left some 30 000 managerial employees without any agreements on issues like collective representation.

English: [http://heikkijokinen.info/en/trade-union-news-from-finland/1240-retail-managers ...](http://heikkijokinen.info/en/trade-union-news-from-finland/1240-retail-managers...)

France

The future dialogue with Macron

May 23, 2017

Days after the election of the new president, several activists, unionists and students took the streets giving a clear signal to the start of Macron's presidency. A few weeks later, Macron invited employers and trade unions for a first meeting. His first major agenda item is the overhauling of the labour code, an item that led to massive street protests in 2016, resulting in the watering down of several measures. The reforms caused a deep rift within society, leaving the government to bypass parliament to ram through the law. Unions criticise a hasty reform and fear a rat race between companies resulting in social dumping practices.

English: [https://www.thelocal.fr/20170523/macron-opens-labour-reform-talks ...](https://www.thelocal.fr/20170523/macron-opens-labour-reform-talks...)

Car factory picketed

May 22, 2017

Workers at car component factory GM&S automobile in central France have occupied the plant and are threatening to strike in a protest against their managers as the site risks closure. They have told Renault and Peugeot that they are ready to strike if their demands are not met. Some 280 jobs at the site are under threat after the plant went into receivership back in December 2017. Workers accuse the two car giants of blocking negotiations for a takeover of the factory and of making too few orders. Negotiations with management over the last few weeks have failed and the closure of the factory is likely to be announced on May 2017.

English: <https://www.rt.com/news/388032-french-workers-threaten-blow-factory/>
[https://sputniknews.com/europe/ ... factroy-gms-strike/](https://sputniknews.com/europe/...factroy-gms-strike/)

Total shuts down production after strike

May 5, 2017

Oil and gas company Total said that it was gradually shutting down production at its 117,000 barrels-per-day Feyzin refinery and petrochemical platform near Lyon due to a strike. Some 190 workers at the refinery, which employs around 600, began the strike on 4 May 2017, after talks with management reached a deadlock over bonuses and other issues. Talks are ongoing with trade union Force Ouvriere, the dominant trade union at the refinery which called the strike, but it is unclear when the strike will end. The shutting down and restart of a refinery takes several days. Total said there was no risk of fuel and products shortage because it will continue to supply clients from other sources.

English: [http://www.reuters.com/article/total-refinery-strike ...](http://www.reuters.com/article/total-refinery-strike)

Germany

Strikes in retail announced

May 25, 2017

Negotiations for a collective agreement in the retail sector in several states are so far not very successful. Trade union Ver.di announced during a manifestation in Essen that the negative attitude of the employers towards the requested pay increase of 1 euro per hour, combined with an improvement of the training allowance (with a monthly 100 euro), easily can lead to strikes. A bargaining deal for the retail sector in Nord Rhine Westphalia is the reference for the wage of around 700,000 workers, although many workers (60%) are employed by companies that fall outside the scope of the agreement. The trade union, therefore, strives towards a generally binding deal. In Bavaria, with a workforce in retail of some 500,000 workers, the bargaining is also deadlocked. In Hamburg, the union started warn strikes after unsuccessful negotiations.

German: [https://www.welt.de/regionales/nrw/article164896781/Verdi-droht-mit-Streiks ...](https://www.welt.de/regionales/nrw/article164896781/Verdi-droht-mit-Streiks)
[https://www.welt.de/regionales/bayern/article164873959/Ueber-600-Teilnehmer ...](https://www.welt.de/regionales/bayern/article164873959/Ueber-600-Teilnehmer)
[https://www.welt.de/regionales/hamburg/article164827645/Verdi-ruft-zu-Warnstreiks ...](https://www.welt.de/regionales/hamburg/article164827645/Verdi-ruft-zu-Warnstreiks)

Court critical about Sunday shifts at Amazon

May 19, 2017

One of the long and ongoing disputes at Amazon has led to a court case; the judges at the Kassel court have limited the company's possibilities to work on Sundays. Trade union Ver.di worked in its campaign successfully together with church organisations as part of the 'Free Sunday Alliance' (which campaigns for a work-free Sunday and decent working hours). The court said that the permission given by the authorities in Kassel to work in the post-Christmas period of 2014 had been unconstitutional. There was, at the time, no legal underpinning for the given permission that can only be handed out in 'extraordinary situations'.

German: [http://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/wirtschaft/international ...](http://www.wienerzeitung.at/nachrichten/wirtschaft/international)

English (background information): [http://de.rosalux.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications ...](http://de.rosalux.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications)

IMF calls for wage increase

May 15, 2017

The International Monetary Fund says in a statement that the country should use its wealth to invest in infrastructure that will enhance its growth potential, and encourage employers to raise wages for higher consumption. The large and persistent current account surplus - 8.3% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2016 - reflected high domestic savings and better investment opportunities abroad. A sustained rise in wage and price inflation is needed to help lift inflation in the euro area and facilitate the normalisation of monetary policy.

English: [http://www.dw.com/en/imf-urges-germany-to-hike-wages-and-invest ...](http://www.dw.com/en/imf-urges-germany-to-hike-wages-and-invest)

The IMF statement: [http://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2017/05/15 ...](http://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2017/05/15)

Fast-food giants refuse to pay living wage

May 12, 2017

Since October 2016, fast-food workers have been in a conflict with employers over fair pay and a living wage. In collective bargaining with the food workers union NGG, the companies have offered a wage which is considerably below what the government calculates as the minimum needed to build for a decent retirement. Since the start of 2017, more than 1000 workers and supporters have participated in protest actions and

warning strikes at McDonald's, Burger King, Starbucks, Pizza Hut and Autogrill. The employers have shown no serious willingness to negotiate a living wage.

English: [http://www.iuf.org/w ...](http://www.iuf.org/w...)

NGG reaches Coca-Cola deal

May 1, 2017

Food workers trade union NGG carried out warning strikes across 36 Coca-Cola sites that lasted for a number of weeks. The difficult negotiations ultimately lead to a successful collective agreement signed by the union's bargaining commission. The NGG has been facing extensive restructuring at Coca-Cola, with the closure of many sites. The agreement brings a 2.2% pay increase for almost 8000 workers plus a training allowance. Furthermore, employees who left the company in 2017 due to restructuring measures will receive an increase of 100 euro and new trainees will receive a 50 euro increase. The NGG has also negotiated for some regions a further 100 euro increase from 2018 exclusively for its members. Efforts are under way to establish a nationwide standard remuneration framework agreement.

English: [http://www.iuf.org/w ...](http://www.iuf.org/w...)

Greece

Bus drivers back to work after 10-day strike

May 24, 2017

2,300 employees of the Thessaloniki Urban Transport Organisation returned to work on 24 May 2017, following a 10-day walkout after government officials reassured them they would receive some of their outstanding wages within the day. In a statement, the leader of the trade union said employees had gone back to work but would resume their action if the government fails to honour pledges to pay wages for March and April 2017.

English: [http://www.ekathimerini.com/218686/article/ekathimerini/news/thessaloniki ...](http://www.ekathimerini.com/218686/article/ekathimerini/news/thessaloniki...)

Municipalities workers rally for job stability

May 22, 2017

Municipal workers staged rallies outside city halls and other public buildings on the third of a four-day nationwide strike. The protest launched by union POE-OTA is aimed at putting pressure on the government to give permanent jobs to thousands of short-term workers after the Court of Auditors ruled that extending fixed-term contracts is a violation of the Constitution. The decision mainly affects cleaners, garbage collection and kindergarten workers who are often employed on successive fixed-term contracts to cover staff shortages, without enjoying the benefits of permanent status.

English: [http://www.ekathimerini.com/218588/article/ekathimerini/news/municipal-workers ...](http://www.ekathimerini.com/218588/article/ekathimerini/news/municipal-workers...)

Austerity measures lead to strikes

May 17, 2017

Hospitals, transport services and government offices have been severely affected by a general strike over new austerity measures. Thousands of people stopped work on 17 May 2017 and marched through Athens to demonstrate over new measures that will cut pensions and end tax breaks. The new cuts are being demanded by international lenders. A large number of professions, including teachers, civil servants, transport staff, journalists and doctors, were involved in the strike, organised by the biggest trade unions, the GSEE and ADEDY. The seamen's union extended their strike for four days, starting on 17 May 2017.

English: [http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe ...](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe...)

[http://greece.greekreporter.com/2017/05/17/greek-seamens-union-announce-extension ...](http://greece.greekreporter.com/2017/05/17/greek-seamens-union-announce-extension...)

Hungary

Employment data released

May 26, 2017

The Central Statistical Office (KSH) released data showing that 105,000 more citizens are currently working in the primary labour market than at this time in 2016, while the number of public workers decreased by 11,000, and the number of Hungarians working abroad dropped by 9,000. Employment statistics are often criticised for being inflated by the controversial public work program, whereby unemployed people undertake menial tasks such as digging ditches, sweeping streets, or service and delivery activities, often for less than minimum wage. However, recent data on public work released by the KSH suggests that the number of those engaging in public work is on the decrease. The increase in those workers in the primary labour market coupled with fewer public workers suggests actual job growth in 2016.

English: [http://budapestbeacon.com/news-in-brief/105000-hungarians-employed-year ...](http://budapestbeacon.com/news-in-brief/105000-hungarians-employed-year...)

Iceland

Equal pay and gender quota

May 23, 2017

The new so-called 'equal pay law' requires companies with 25 employees or more to guarantee that male and female employees are being paid the same wages for the same work. While the law was rife with grumblings and objections from some male MPs, it turns out that most citizens support the measure. According to a poll from Market and Media Research, 60.1% of those surveyed were either very supportive (36.3%) or rather supportive (23.8%) of the law. By contrast, only 20.8% were either rather against (8.4%) or very against (12.4%) it, with the remaining 19.2% decidedly neutral on the subject. However, another gender issue is still not satisfactory solved. The number of women sitting on corporate boards, or holding executive positions failed to increase between 2016-2017. Currently women make up 25.9% of board members. In 2013, a law was passed mandating all companies with 50 or more employees to have at least 40% of its board members female. The number of female executive effectively stood still during the period, increasing from 21.9% to 22.1%. There are no penalties for companies that fail to meet the gender quota

English: [https://grapevine.is/news/2017/05/23/no-increase-in-number-of-female-board ...](https://grapevine.is/news/2017/05/23/no-increase-in-number-of-female-board...)
<https://grapevine.is/mag/articles/2017/05/05/poll-most-icelanders-support-equal-pay-law/>

Ireland

Public-private pay difference debated

May 26, 2017

A widening pay gap that has been signalled by the statistical office between public and private wages has prompted warnings from business lobby groups. The latest earnings data from the Central Statistics Office show average weekly earnings rose 1.4% to 723 euro in the first quarter of 2017. They also reveal the differential in weekly pay between the public (916 euro) and private sector (669 euro) now stands at 247 euro, a rise of 4 euro on the corresponding period in 2016. The Small and Medium Enterprises Association (Isme) warned against 'unjustifiable' public-sector pay increases. The trade unions pointed out that the differential between public- and private-sector pay reflects the high number of poorly paid staff in the services and hospitality sector, and that the comparison is therefore unjust.

English: [http://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/weekly-public-private-sector-pay ...](http://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/weekly-public-private-sector-pay...)

Bus drivers' unions agree on pay cuts

May 22, 2017

Staff in Bus Éireann represented by the National Bus and Rail Union (NBRU) voted to accept Labour Court recommendations which include 10 per cent pay cuts for anyone on €60,000 or more and the closure of a maintenance garage in Dundalk. This decision ends the dispute which brought services at the State-owned transport company to a standstill for three weeks in March and April 2017. Workers at the company who are represented by the trade unions Siptu and Unite have already accepted the Labour Court recommendation.

English: [http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/ross-says-bus ...](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/ross-says-bus...)

Pay Commission report sets the tone

May 9, 2017

The Public Services Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) said, following the publication of the Pay Commission report, it was time to move swiftly into talks on accelerated pay recovery for public

workers. It said it noted the commission's conclusions that there was now near-parity between average public service pay and private sector earnings, and that average public service earnings were currently 8 per cent lower than in 2008.

English: [http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/pay-commission-report ...](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/pay-commission-report...)

The Pay Commission report: [http://paycommission.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/Report ...](http://paycommission.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/Report...)

Italy

Unions against reintroduction of voucher idea

May 26, 2017

Trade union confederation CGIL has announced fierce opposition against the idea to reintroduce work vouchers to pay for occasional work. The union will appeal in that case to the Constitutional Court. CGIL collected enough signatures to trigger a referendum on scraping the vouchers, a reason for the government to scrap the plans early 2017. A plan has been circulated to come up with a modified system with a French-style payment booklet and a new contract for occasional work for small businesses.

English: [http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/english/246126/constitutional-appeal-if-vouchers ...](http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/english/246126/constitutional-appeal-if-vouchers...)

Bank rescue could lead to massive job cuts

May 22, 2017

Intensive talks between the EU, management and the government might lead to a rescue plan for the troubled bank Monte dei Paschi di Siena. However, the social consequences can be enormously. The sustainable business plan for the bank could imply up to 10,000 job cuts, nearly half the workforce. Besides, there is a serious debate over how much senior managers will be allowed to earn. In 2016, the chief executive of the loss-making bank was awarded a salary of nearly 1.9 million euro, with bonuses on top of this sum. The trade unions declared that the plans for these giant redundancies will face a strong union opposition.

English: [https://www.ft.com/content ...](https://www.ft.com/content...)

Italian: [http://www.rassegna.it/articoli/mps-cgil-e-fisac-toscana-numeri-in-liberta ...](http://www.rassegna.it/articoli/mps-cgil-e-fisac-toscana-numeri-in-liberta...)

Modern slavery in agriculture

May 10, 2017

According to the trade union FLAI-CGIL around 420,000 workers are illegally employed and exploited in intensive farming across the country. Workers are by employed by gangs on a seasonal basis: summer means being in Puglia, where plants are heavy with plump, red tomatoes; during the winter, they move to Calabria to harvest oranges; and in the spring, workers move to Pachino, Sicily, to pick cherry tomatoes. Mbaye Ndiaye, a Senegalese founder of Ghetto Out/Casa Sankara, is fighting forced labour through a local organisation in Apulia committed to moving workers out of the ghettos and into its farmhouse. The organisation helps migrants find decent work with local farmers who are willing to pay fair wages.

English: [https://www.equaltimes.org/red-gold-and-blood-money-the-fight ...](https://www.equaltimes.org/red-gold-and-blood-money-the-fight...)

Latvia

Nurses at children's hospital in Riga refuse working overtime

May 22, 2017

The council of the Latvian Health and Social Care Workers' Trade Union (LVSADA) decided to call on healthcare workers to start a warning protest campaign in a way of refusing to work the so-called extended regular working hours or overtime in July 2017. As a result, around 100 nurses of the medical care personnel at the Children's Hospital in Riga will refuse working the so-called extended regular working hours or overtime for which they are not paid extra as part of a warning protest campaign. The same action was adopted by hospital staff before. The surgeons at the Children's Hospital stopped working the extended regular working hours already in February 2017.

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

Liechtenstein

Union calls for minimum wage and generally binding agreements

May 10, 2017

In two contributions, the trade union LANV has called for decent minimum wages and the conclusion of generally binding agreements. The first contribution was made by the LANV president during the traditional 1 May manifestation. LANV referred to the fact that in some sectors, like the transport sector, no agreements exist. In other sectors, for instance the hospitality sector, part of the employers' side resists the application of the generally binding procedure. In general, it was criticised that the employers stick to a neoliberal agenda.

German: [http://www.lanv.li/Portals/o/Mairedede ...](http://www.lanv.li/Portals/o/Mairedede...)
[http://www.lanv.li/Portals/o/Warum ...](http://www.lanv.li/Portals/o/Warum...)

Lithuania

Plea to improve the education system

May 18, 2017

A Danske Bank's chief economist stated that the country is too much relying on lower value-added production, trade and transport, but this model will not work for long. A quality education system has to be a key element of the necessary transformation. An IMF-mission came with a similar message; the country has to reform its education system, to merge institutions and create more flexible programs, in order to catch up with Western Europe.

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

Luxembourg

Campaign to tackle gender pay gap

May 11, 2017

The government published a brochure for companies that want to make sure they are in compliance with a law, which makes gender pay gaps an infraction. Based on the law that entered into effect in December 2016, fines from 251 euro to 25,000 euro can be issued to employers for every infraction. In the case of a repeated infraction within two years, the fine can be doubled up to a maximum of 50,000 euro. An infraction is given when a pay gap cannot be justified for objective reasons but is based on gender considerations.

English: [https://www.wort.lu/en/business/labour-law-gender-pay-gap-punishable-by-law ...](https://www.wort.lu/en/business/labour-law-gender-pay-gap-punishable-by-law...)
The brochure (in French): [http://www.mega.public.lu/fr/actualites/2017/05/egalite-salariale ...](http://www.mega.public.lu/fr/actualites/2017/05/egalite-salariale...)

Union criticises bank's policy

May 9, 2017

Trade union ÖGBL formulated a strong opposition statement against the increase in banking operation fees when visiting banks, plus the closure of some branches and post offices in the country. The big issue for the union is rises in costs for various banking operations, such as transfers and withdrawals when visiting branches. This creates difficulties especially for the elderly. The trade union subscribed a petition against the increase in the prices of banking operations at branches launched by the Consumers' Union (ULC). This document has already reached about 7,000 signatures in a bid to pressure banks to reverse the decision.

English: [https://www.wort.lu/en/business/ogbl-increased-luxembourg-banking-fees-meet ...](https://www.wort.lu/en/business/ogbl-increased-luxembourg-banking-fees-meet...)

Malta

Agreement on doctors' pay

May 25, 2017

The government and the doctors' trade union MAM signed an agreement on the working conditions of doctors at the hospitals run by Vitals Global Healthcare. Similar agreements have already been signed for

workers represented by the GWU and the MUMN. The agreement addresses discrepancies between the working conditions of health centres' general practitioners and those in hospitals, in line with an Ombudsman ruling. The doctors committed themselves to be more flexible in terms of the hours of duty mainly during afternoons and evenings.

English: [https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20170525/local/government ...](https://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20170525/local/government...)

Netherlands

Employment in the banking sector

May 23, 2017

The government jobs agency UWV published an analysis of the perspectives in the banking sector. After considerable job losses in recent years, a further 12,600 financial sector jobs are set to disappear in 2017 and 2018. Between 2012 and 2016, 27,000 finance sector jobs disappeared, as banks closed branches and switched to internet-based services. At the same time, UWV signals a shortage of finance sector specialists and IT technicians, with some 26,000 vacancies, but most are for people with university or college degrees. Low-skilled jobs will remain under pressure.

English: [http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2017/05/fewer-finance-sector-jobs-but ...](http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2017/05/fewer-finance-sector-jobs-but...)

Factsheet (in Dutch): [https://www.uwv.nl/overuwv/Images/factsheet-financiele ...](https://www.uwv.nl/overuwv/Images/factsheet-financiele...)

Council recommendations ask for less flexibility

May 22, 2017

In the latest European semester country recommendations, the European Commission urges the Dutch government to tackle the high increase in self-employment by reducing 'tax distortions' favouring self-employment. The recent employment growth can be largely attributed to an increase in the number of people employed on temporary contracts or as self-employed. In total, almost 800,000 people rely solely or mainly on income from freelancing. Self-employed are more often under-insured against disability, unemployment and old age. This could affect the sustainability of the social security system in the long run.

English: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2017-european-semester-country-specific ...](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/2017-european-semester-country-specific...)

Unions deal with troubled retailer

May 16, 2017

The retail sector trade unions are confronted with a restructuring in the Blokker group. Blokker announced the closure of 100 branches in the coming year. Sister company Marskramer will close another 100. A total of 1,900 jobs will disappear at Blokker, Marskramer and at parent company Blokker Holding. About 400 stores will remain after this restructuring. The company plans to sell the branches, maintaining the employment of some 13,500 workers. Blokker agreed to a social plan with the unions. The Central Work Councils of the individual companies will be consulted on the announced measures.

English: [http://nltimes.nl/2017/05/16/blokker-slash-2000-jobs-close-hundreds-shops ...](http://nltimes.nl/2017/05/16/blokker-slash-2000-jobs-close-hundreds-shops...)

Wages and labour market data

May 1, 2017

Statistics Netherlands (CBS) published several reports. A first report was on the wage development in 2015. It reveals that more than two out of ten employees were unhappy with their salary. However, the percentages strongly vary between sectors. Almost four out of ten persons employed by government institutions said they were dissatisfied with their income. On average, police officers and firefighters are most dissatisfied with their salary, as 37% survey respondents replied they perceive their pay to be too low considering the duties they perform. In a report with data on the labour market development in 2016, a year with few strikes, the office concludes that the gross wages, concluded in collective agreements, increased on average with 1.9%. The growth is for the 2nd year substantially higher than the inflation (of 0.3%). Over a longer period (calculated from 2010), the wage growth still lags behind the inflation (respectively 1.3% against 1.5%).

English: <http://nltimes.nl/2017/05/01/20-dutch-unhappy-salary-cops-firefighters-dissatisfied>
<http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2017/05/fewer-strikes-in-the-netherlands/>

Wage statistics: [http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication ...](http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication...)

Norway

Half a deal for oil workers

May 24, 2017

Energy firms operating offshore have agreed on a wage deal for 2017 with the two largest trade unions representing oil and gas workers, while talks with a smaller union will continue at a later stage under mandatory mediation rules. Industri Energi and Safe, representing some 87% of the oil workers, said the outcome of the talks was disappointing, but added they had nevertheless accepted it as they did not have the right to go on strike this year due to a clause in last year's agreement. Lederne, a third union representing some 13% of oil and gas workers or about 1,000 people, does have the right to go on strike, and said it had rejected the oil firms' offer. Under Norwegian law, the talks involving Lederne will now proceed to a state mediator, which must be conducted before any strike is allowed.

English: [http://uk.businessinsider.com/r-most-norwegian-oil-workers-agree ...](http://uk.businessinsider.com/r-most-norwegian-oil-workers-agree...)

Poland

Average wage 4.1% up in one year

May 25, 2017

The statistical office announced that average wages rose 4.1 percent in April 2017, compared to a year ago. The average monthly salary reached the level of PLN 4,449 (1,053 euro). Meanwhile, employment in companies increased 4.6 percent year on year. The registered unemployment rate ended at the level of 7.7%, the lowest level in more than 25 years.

English: [http://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/labour-market/working-employed-wages-and-salaries ...](http://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/labour-market/working-employed-wages-and-salaries...)
[http://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/labour-market/registered-unemployment/unemployment-rate ...](http://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/labour-market/registered-unemployment/unemployment-rate...)

Retail workers stage work-to-rule

May 2, 2017

Workers from large retail chains staged protests on 2 May 2017, calling for higher wages and a ban on Sunday trading. They launched a work-to-rule protest. According to the Solidarity trade union, workers in over 1,000 shops took part in the protest. The union said that over 10,000 employees joined in. Stores where workers were expected to protest included chains such as Auchan, Biedronka, Tesco, Decathlon, Dino, Makro Cash and Carry, an Amazon distribution centre in Wrocław, south-western Poland, and H&M.

English: [http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/305104,Retail-chain-employees-stage-worktorule ...](http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/305104,Retail-chain-employees-stage-worktorule...)

Portugal

One-day strike in public sector

May 26, 2017

Hundreds of schools and hospitals across the country were shut or offered minimum services as public sector workers went on a one-day strike to pressure the minority government for more wage increases than it has offered so far. The left-leaning government has reversed some of the austerity measures of the previous administration, trimming taxes and increasing wages and pensions in a bid to boost growth, but also kept up budget discipline and slashed the deficit in 2016 to its lowest mark in more than four decades. However, wages in the public sector remain low and workers end up working more and in long-hours shifts.

English: [http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/public-sector-strike-on-friday-will-hit ...](http://www.theportugalnews.com/news/public-sector-strike-on-friday-will-hit...)

Trade union bulletin assesses role of unions

May 26, 2017

Trade union SINTTAV publishes a regular information bulletin with news (in Portuguese) about negotiations and activities in different companies. In one of the May issues of the bulletin the role of trade

unions is assessed. Trade union activities find their origin in the unbalanced power relations in our economies. Without unionised workers, there would be no unions. Basic tasks are the defence of workers' interests, collective bargaining, trade union intervention at company level and collective representation and redress. The last task is also important because individual workers otherwise would face unbearable costs.

The bulletins (in Portuguese): <http://sinttav.org/joomla/index.php/menu-comunicados>

Romania

Ministry of finance workers strike over wages

May 15, 2017

Around 20,000 finance ministry workers went on strike to protest a move to cut their salaries. Finance ministry employees who staged a walkout are opposed to a draft law that trade union say will lead to salaries being slashed by 10 to 35%. The trade union said that strikes will continue after union leaders had unsuccessfully tried to resolve the issue for two weeks with government officials. The National Federation of Finance Trade Unions wants the government to maintain current bonuses that reflect 'the complexity and importance' of work performed by finance ministry employees and agencies subordinated to the ministry.

English: [http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/national-politics/article ...](http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/national-politics/article...)

Serbia

Workers at troubled glass factory ask for help

May 15, 2017

Workers at a glass company in Paracin, facing bankruptcy due to debts of around 50 million euros, are appealing to the government to help - and perhaps buy the firm. The trade union at the factory has been informed about a pre-bankruptcy procedure. The plant was sold in 2012 to Bulgarian businessman Tsvetan Vasilev whose extradition is sought by the Bulgarian authorities after his bank CCB collapsed in 2014.

English: [http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/vasilev-s-serbian-company-facing-bankruptcy ...](http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/vasilev-s-serbian-company-facing-bankruptcy...)

Slovakia

Social policy will be discussed with social partners

May 10, 2017

The government promised to discuss new social measures with both sides of the industry, according to Labour and Social Affairs Minister Jan Richter. This was said in an official reaction to criticism made by employer associations AZZZ and RUZ, which expressed earlier their reservations concerning the package of social measures proposed by the governing parties and the lack of real social dialogue. Richter stressed he is absolutely interested in continuing a high-quality social dialogue. The minister claims he has already discussed some measures about reforming the Labour Code with the social partners (both trade unions, employers) and that they might agree with some of them. The social package under preparation includes faster increase in the minimum wage, a ban on social dumping, an increase in bonuses for night and weekend work, the introduction of contributions for those commuting to work and a ten-day holiday for fathers after their child is born. A mandatory 13th salary is also foreseen.

English: [https://newsnow.tasr.sk/economy/richter-social-measures-will-be-subject ...](https://newsnow.tasr.sk/economy/richter-social-measures-will-be-subject...)

Slovenia

The country situated in international rankings

Ma 15, 2017

In an overview of the record in different international rankings, it is said that the country devotes 22.8% of GDP to the social sector, which is above the OECD average. Slovenia was ranked 20th out of the 133 countries

in the Social Progress Index and is the highest ranked country in Central and South-East Europe. The Gender Equality Index places Slovenia slightly above the European average.

English: http://www.slovenia.si/fileadmin/docs/15052017_Mednarodne_primerjave-ang.pdf

Spain

Workforce at Malaga airport asks for a decent profit share

May 26, 2017

A broad trade union front from UGT, CC.OO and USO unions released a joint statement warning that baggage handlers and other staff at the Malaga airport are prepared to organise a series of strikes should state airport manager Aena fail to discuss plans of staff cuts and a lack of pay rises with them. Several years of salary cuts and amendments to workers' rights are, in the union view, unacceptable given the airport's booming finances. According to official figures, Aena ended 2016 with a 1.16 billion euro net profit.

English: [https://www.rtnnewspaper.com/2017/05/stand-off-airport-staff-warn ...](https://www.rtnnewspaper.com/2017/05/stand-off-airport-staff-warn...)

Port workers' unions postpone strike

May 24, 2017

Dockers' unions have agreed to cancel the first five days of a planned walkout over a government reform package that deregulates the nation's ports sector. The strike was scheduled to begin on 24 May 2017, but the unions have reached a framework agreement with port employers association Anesco. They are hopeful that further talks will resolve the impasse without the need for full-day strikes. As part of the negotiations, the unions have agreed to accept wage cuts of up to 10 percent for almost all workers. They are willing to accept a national collective agreement and a reduction of wages, provided it guarantees 100 percent of employment. In return, Anesco agreed to continue representing the port sector in collective bargaining, a matter of some contention among its members. If it had decided to stop, the unions would have had to negotiate on a port-by-port, employer-by-employer basis. Collective bargaining negotiations will resume on June 1, and Anesco predicted a 'complex process' to forge an agreement that satisfies its membership.

English: <http://maritime-executive.com/article/spanish-longshore-unions-postpone-strike>

Sweden

Labour market in the 1st quarter

May 16, 2017

Statistics Sweden's Statistical Report presented data on the labour market situation for the population aged 15-74. The report shows that the number of employed persons increased by 113 000 to 4 924 000 in the first quarter of 2017 compared with the same quarter of the previous year. At the same time, seasonally adjusted and smoothed data shows that the number and percentage of employed persons continue to increase compared with adjacent quarters.

English: [http://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/labour-market ...](http://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics/statistics-by-subject-area/labour-market...)

The report (Swedish with graphs also in English): [http://www.scb.se/contentassets ...](http://www.scb.se/contentassets...)

Dock workers vote on industrial action

May 12, 2017

Gothenburg dockworkers will vote whether to go ahead with industrial action against APM Terminals after the company announced a six-week lockout at Scandinavia's largest container hub. The vote will take place as Atlantic Container Line considers leaving Gothenburg.

English: <http://247customsbroker.com/gothenburg-dockworkers-to-vote-on-apmt-lockout/>

Switzerland

Labour matters raised at Glencore shareholders' meeting

May 25, 2017

Trade union Unia expressed, together with IndustriALL Global Union and Workers Uniting North America (USW), serious concerns on the growing list of violations that continue to impact workers and communities at many of the Glencore operations during the 2017 annual general shareholders meeting in Zug. They called for transparency and meaningful dialogue with all stakeholders particularly, with trade unions at all levels.

English: [http://www.industriall-union.org/industriall-raises-labour-matters-at-glencore ...](http://www.industriall-union.org/industriall-raises-labour-matters-at-glencore...)

Union: no dismissals at Novartis

May 18, 2017

Trade union Unia has immediately reacted as the chemical group Novartis announced a planned reduction with 500 jobs of a segment of the workforce and the recruitment of 350 high-skilled workers. The union said that it wants job security for the workforce and the guarantee that the company will not move out of the country. It also claims that job cuts cannot be justified, given the extraordinary profits of the group. The new recruitment should be solved through training and retraining of the existing workforce. Discussions between Novartis and the unions have started. Novartis said it would offer full support to all affected employees, from help looking for a new job to early retirement packages.

English: [https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/pharma_novartis-to-shed-500-jobs-in-basel ...](https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/pharma_novartis-to-shed-500-jobs-in-basel...)

German: <http://www.unia.ch/de/aktuell/aktuell/artikel/a/13752/>

Turkey

Government bans glass sector strike

May 23, 2017

The government has banned trade union Kristal-İş from taking strike action against multinational glass manufacturer Şişecam. The strike action, which was due to commence on 24 May 2017, covers 5,700 workers at nine factories. The strike was banned on the grounds that it is 'prejudicial to national security'. The union said that the strike was over wages as the company Şişecam has increased its profits by 164 per cent, but offered a derisory pay increase. The government issued a decree under Act 6356 on Trade Unions and Collective Labour Agreement banning the strike. The decree is followed by a 60-day 'postponement period' for negotiations, where the parties have to agree. In practice, this means that there is no chance to continue the strike after the 60-day period. The union stated that strikes are a vehicle it will not hesitate to use when it is necessary to defend decent wages and working conditions.

English: <http://www.industriall-union.org/turkish-government-bans-glass-sector-strike>

Bargaining and negotiations discussed

May 8, 2017

The European and International Federation of Journalists (EFJ-IFJ) organised on 2 May 2017 a workshop for trade unionists from TGS (Journalists Union of Turkey) in Istanbul. In the training, the national trade union leaders debated various issues including collective bargaining, signing recognition agreements, recruiting members across all sectors, the impact of social media, producing stress surveys, distributing flyers, proposing legal services and planning activities in the country.

English: [http://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2017/05/05/sharing-practices-to-organise ...](http://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2017/05/05/sharing-practices-to-organise...)

United Kingdom

Real wages fall, while household debt sets to record highs

May 25, 2017

This year, household debt is set to be higher than ever before. TUC analysis finds that unsecured debt per household is set to reach £13,900 in 2017. In 2016, unsecured debt per household was already £13,200 – higher than at any other point since the financial crisis and only marginally below the peak of £13,300 in 2007. The expectations are that by 2020, it will exceed £15,000. Alongside the rise in debt and the use of credit, real wages are falling. Workers are still, on average, being paid £20 per week less than before the financial crisis a decade ago. The latest figures from the statistical office show that real wages recovered slightly between mid-2014 and early 2016, before stagnating and then beginning to fall again.

English: <http://touchstoneblog.org.uk/2017/05/real-wages-fall-household-debt-record-highs/>

Lecturers score pay victory with mass campaign

May 22, 2017

College Lecturers have scored a (second) victory in their long running pay equalisation dispute with further education (FE) managers. After a campaign of strikes and demonstrations, involving thousands of lecturers that maintained nationwide support, Colleges Scotland agreed to honour a deal made to level lecturers up to the same pay across Scotland – an agreement initially reached over a year ago. This is a significant victory for EIS-FELA unions members and it means that the employers will move immediately to implement the March 2016 pay agreement.

English: [https://www.commonspace.scot/articles/11008/two-row-lecturers-score ...](https://www.commonspace.scot/articles/11008/two-row-lecturers-score...)

Nurses ballot over action for wage increase

May 14, 2017

Nurses have voted overwhelmingly to pursue a ballot for countrywide strike action this summer in protest at below-inflation pay rises. Nearly four out of five members (78%) of the Royal College of Nursing who took part in the consultative vote backed a walkout, while 91% favoured industrial action short of a strike. The large majorities reflect growing dissatisfaction within the nursing profession over wages. Nurses say they have experienced a 14% pay cut in real terms since 2010 because of the government's cap on public sector pay. More than 50,000 of the RCN'S 270,000 members participated in the ballot. The union RCN has warned that low pay is partly responsible for tens of thousands of unfilled posts.

English: [https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/may/14/nurses-vote-support-ballot ...](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/may/14/nurses-vote-support-ballot...)

GMB celebrates Lidl victory

May 5, 2017

GMB, the trade union that organises supermarket distribution centre workers, scored a huge victory against Lidl after the low-cost supermarket's bid to deny its workers union representation failed. On 4 May 2017, the Court of Appeal has thrown out the company's attempts to overturn a ruling ordering them to allow staff trade union representation. Last year the CAC, the independent tribunal with statutory powers over trade union recognition, dismissed Lidl's attempts to block warehouse operatives employed at the company's Bridgend distribution centre from having a union represent their interests. The High Court then upheld the CAC's decision in August. And now the Court of Appeal again confirmed the right of GMB to ballot members for recognition within the company after the supermarket's objections were thrown out.

English: <http://www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/gmb-lidl-victory>

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