

collective bargaining

Issue 2/2017 February

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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Social dialogue and the reduction of inequality

February 24, 2017

The International Labour Organization (ILO) published, in cooperation with the European Commission, the report *Inequalities and the World of Work: What role for industrial relations and social dialogue?* According to the findings of the report, EU countries with coordinated bargaining systems have been successful at preventing the growth of inequalities on the labour market, while the erosion of collective bargaining in other EU countries has led to an increased number of low-paid jobs or increasing inequality among the workforce.

English: [http://ec.europa.eu/social/main ...](http://ec.europa.eu/social/main...)

The report: [http://ilo/EC ...](http://ilo/EC...)

The garment value chain and labour standards

February 24, 2017

The livestreamed conference ‘Sustainability efforts in the garment value chain’ aimed to shed light on several questions. Only 22% of garments are produced in Europe, meaning that the remaining 78% are produced in countries such as China, Bangladesh, Turkey and India. Major fashion brands decide to delocalise their production to the global south to take advantage of the cheap labour force and weak monitoring of the respect of fundamental labour standards. In this context, experts highlighted two main elements: 1) fashion brands are not too concerned about what goes on in the supply chain and are not very amenable to initiatives aimed at improving transparency; 2) the lack of awareness among consumers.

Livestreaming: [https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/infopoint-lunchtime-conference-sustainability ...](https://webcast.ec.europa.eu/infopoint-lunchtime-conference-sustainability...)

ETUC launches pay rise campaign

February 21, 2017

The campaign ‘Europe needs a pay rise – It’s time for our recovery’ was launched in an event in Brussels on 14 and 15 February 2017. ETUC General Secretary, Luca Visentini in his opening speech said: ‘Collective bargaining is the foundation of efficient social dialogue and democracy at work. It is the fundamental tool to make sure wage increases benefit labour and the economy’. He claimed that over recent years there has been a systematic dismantling of collective bargaining in most EU countries. Panellists from employers’ organisations admitted that bolstering collective bargaining has an important role to play in deepening and sustaining Europe’s economic recovery.

Dossier (in English): <https://www.etuc.org/issues/pay-rise>

Dossier (in French): <https://www.etuc.org/fr/issues/pay-rise>

Eurostat updates minimum wage data

February 10, 2017

According to Eurostat, the statistical body of the European Union, 22 out of the 28 member states of the EU have national minimum wages as of 1 January 2017. Only Denmark, Italy, Cyprus, Austria, Finland and Sweden do not have one. The 22 EU Member States that have national minimum wages can be divided into three main groups based on the level in euro. Ten member states, located in the east of the EU, have minimum wages below €500 per month. In five other Member States, located in the south, minimum wages are between €500 and €1 000 per month. In the remaining seven member states, all located in the west and north of the EU, minimum wages were well above €1,000 per month. The disparities in minimum wages across the EU States are considerably smaller once price level differences are eliminated.

English: [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained ...](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained...)

Eurofound reports on minimum wage development

February 9, 2017

Eurofound provides in an article information on statutory minimum wage levels, how the minimum wage has been determined for 2017 and minimum wage coverage across the EU. In 22 out of 28 EU Member States, a generally applicable statutory minimum wage exists; the level of this minimum wage varies greatly from one country to another. In the majority of EU Member States where there is no statutory minimum wage, the minimum wage level is de facto set in (sectoral) collective agreements. The data show that the

minimum wage grew more in 2016 than in 2015. The article investigates the statutory minimum wages in a given country and not limited to specific sectors, occupations or groups of employees.

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

Austria

Union agrees on minimum wage during tourism summit

February 16, 2017

The social partners in the tourism branch came during a tourism summit, initiated by trade union vida, with a joint recommendation to bring the monthly minimum wage in tourism to a level of 1500 euro (starting 1 May 2018). Trade union vida welcomed this important step forward. The union also wants more attention to be paid to the reconciliation of working and family life. Social partners will continue talks about possibilities to improve the mobility and the situation of seasonal workers.

German: <http://www.ots.at/presseaussendung ...>

Minimum wage report criticised

February 12, 2017

Trade unions vida and GPA-djp stated that there is enough evidence to invalidate the outcome of a study that claims negative effects of an increase of the minimum wage. Vida opines that one should not forget that the prognoses in the study are coming from a business-friendly association that is first and foremost concerned about profit maximisation. The trade union refers to several US studies, which state increase of minimum wages lead to an improvement of income and purchase power combined with job growth.

German: <http://www.oegb.at/cms ...>

<http://www.gpa-djp.at/cms ...>

The criticised study (in German): <https://www.agenda-austria.at/publication/mindestlohn ...>

Belgium

Negotiations lead to less redundancies

February 25, 2017

Last year the ING Bank announced a major restructuring with an estimated loss of 1700 jobs (see the CBN-Archive). After several rounds of negotiations, the trade unions and the ING management reached an oral agreement about a maximum of 890 redundancies, instead of the 1,700 previously announced. The agreement includes a goal of 400 redundancies. There will be between 400 and 890 redundancies. The main element of the agreement is an anticipated retirement plan for employees aged over 55 who have been at the company for more than 10 years. The bank will also keep the equivalent of 200 more full-time commercial employees than previously planned, by keeping open 20 extra branches (154 branches out of 650).

English: <http://www.brusselstimes.com/business/7589/ing-a-maximum-of-890-redundancies ...>

Caterpillar workers mobilised for social plan negotiations

February 23, 2017

Last September the management of Caterpillar announced at a works council meeting the plan to close its headquarters at Gosselies, Charleroi, in April 2017, and make all 2,200 workers redundant (see our CBN archive). The trade unions have started to mobilise the workforce in an attempt to negotiate a decent social plan. The unions participate also in talks about a future reconversion and regeneration of the premises and the current location at Gosselies. After a period of tough negotiations, a draft social plan that will be balloted was reached. The draft includes the conditions for dismissal as well as provisions that guarantee the continuation of production and delivery until the final closure.

French: https://www.rtf.be/info/regions/detail_caterpillar-le-referendum ...

Archive (in Dutch): <http://www.hln.be/hln/nl ...>

Archive (in French): <http://plus.lesoir.be/65856/free-tags/caterpillar#>

First nightshift agreement at shoe retailer Torfs

February 6, 2017

Shoe e-retailer Torfs is the first company to reach an agreement with the trade unions on night work since the introduction of new rules in January 2017. The agreement covers overnight hours in the chain's warehouses, where workers will prepare and dispatch online orders. The plan is to deliver orders made online by 22.00 the next day. According to the agreement – which has still to be signed – warehouse workers will finish work at 23.00, three hours later than they do now. The late hours will be paid at a bonus rate of 25% higher than the basic rate. The plan is that only those workers who want to work later will do so.

English: <http://www.flanderstoday.eu/business/shoe-chain-first-give-green-light-night-shift>

Pay deal approved

February 2, 2017

The Federal Government has approved the inter-professional salary agreement for the next two years. The agreement on rules that govern the amount wages can be increased over the next two years also includes measures that will prolong the system of pre-pension for another two years. The trade union members and employers' federations had already approved the accord. The agreement states that wages can rise up to 1.1% above the rate of inflation. The lowest benefits are also to be increased. The age at which people can take pre-pension will also be raised, but less quickly than the government had originally wanted.

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

Industrial action at Bombardier

February 2, 2017

The trade unions at Bombardier Bruges have created a joint union front that negotiates with the company and the local and regional authorities in an attempt to diminish as much as possible the consequences of a planned relocation and transfer of production. The unions fear job losses of half of the workforce (some 250 job cuts). The Bombardier management has denied the losses and announced an extraordinary works council meeting on 3 March 2017 about the plans. After two days of strikes the trade unions advised the workers to get back to work.

French: [http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.francais/Economie ...](http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.francais/Economie...)

Dutch: [http://kw.knack.be/west-vlaanderen/nieuws/samenleving/werknemers-hervatten-werk ...](http://kw.knack.be/west-vlaanderen/nieuws/samenleving/werknemers-hervatten-werk...)

German: [http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.deutsch/Wirtschaft ...](http://deredactie.be/cm/vrtnieuws.deutsch/Wirtschaft...)

Bulgaria

Plea for renewal of social dialogue

February 27, 2017

The Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB) has suggested that the country's president could help in the renewal of the dialogue between the employer organisations and the trade unions, after a meeting with the head of State. Earlier this month President Radev met with representatives of the Podkrepa Labour Confederation as well. At many sectoral levels the dialogue proceeds smoothly, collective agreements are being signed and there is partnership. CITUB recalled that the stagnation in the employer-unionist relations in the tripartite dialogue was prompted by controversies regarding the minimum working wage and the minimum social security thresholds.

English: [http://www.bta.bg/en ...](http://www.bta.bg/en...)

Gross monthly average wage reaches 1000 BGN

February 14, 2017

The average monthly wage reached 1012 BGN (517 euro) in December 2016, topping 1000 BGN for the first time ever, national statistics show. Its value was 974 BGN in November and 982 BGN in October. Year-on-year, public sector wages and salaries grew 5.1%, while those in the private sector grew by 9.4%. The highest wages (by far) are paid in the IT and communication sector, followed by utilities and financial services. The lowest in hospitality, followed by general services.

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

Press release 4th quarter 2016 with detailed figures: [http://www.nsi.bg/sites/default ...](http://www.nsi.bg/sites/default...)

Croatia

Taxi drivers against Uber

February 13, 2017

Taxi drivers from the Radio Taxi association in Zagreb will organise a peace protest against Uber if the Ministry of Sea, Transport and Infrastructure does not prohibit Uber. They consider that Uber drivers operate illegally. If the peaceful protest is not working, the taxi drivers are ready for a full blockage of Zagreb.

English: [http://www.total-croatia-news.com/business ...](http://www.total-croatia-news.com/business...)

Cyprus

Framework agreement in the public sector

February 8, 2017

The Minister of Finance and the Pancyprian Public Servants trade union signed on 7 February the framework agreement for the years 2017-2018. The minister said the agreement ensures the sustainability of public finances, while the union's representative noted that the union is satisfied with the agreement which was the product of social dialogue. The agreement provides for the introduction of a mechanism through which the percentage increase in salaries will not exceed the rate of GDP growth and an improved method for calculating overtime. They also agreed to promote a bill that would indefinitely extend the freeze on new positions, while excluding the freezing of promotions.

English: [http://famagusta-gazette.com/cyprus-government-signs-agreement ...](http://famagusta-gazette.com/cyprus-government-signs-agreement...)

Czech Republic

Wage increase at Lidl

February 22, 2017

Retailer Lidl has announced its plans to significantly increase employees' salaries. As of March 2017, the average monthly wage of cashiers in Lidl will reach 24,897 crowns (921 euro), which is an increase by 18%. The starting wage will increase by nearly a quarter, to 23,333 crowns. Prague will offer slightly higher salaries than the rest of the country, with the average monthly wage there starting at 24,000 crowns. Lidl is the only chain which makes its wages public. Other supermarket chains, including Globus, Kaufland and Albert, refuse to publish their employee's salaries.

English: <http://radio.cz/en/section/business/lidl-sets-store-by-above-average-sector-pay>

Healthcare workers planning strike

February 9, 2017

The Healthcare and Social Workers' Trade Union declared a nationwide strike alert in reaction to an unfortunate situation in the South Moravian emergency service. According to the union, the emergency service's staff have long been overloaded and bossed around by their superiors. The South Moravia Region as the operator of the emergency service wants to solve the situation with the aid of an independent intermediary who is supposed to reconcile the parties in dispute. Representatives of other trade unions have expressed support for the healthcare workers' union.

English: [http://praguemonitor.com/2017/02/09/healthcare-workers-trade-union ...](http://praguemonitor.com/2017/02/09/healthcare-workers-trade-union...)

Denmark

Agreement addresses grey area in holiday rules

February 16, 2017

An agreement between CO-Industri, the central organisation of industrial employees, and Dansk Industri,

the confederation of Danish industry, establishes new rules on holidays and care leave. The rules in the collective agreement will affect 230,000 employees working at 6,000 companies in the industrial sector. From now onwards, parents will be able to take the following day off should their child become ill whilst at day-care or school, and it will only count as one of their two annual childcare days. Besides, should a worker fall ill before his holiday, he will be able to subtract the days spent on sick leave on holiday from your official time off. In addition, the rules for time off in connection with children's hospitalisation will be expanded to also include hospitalisation at home.

English: [http://cphpost.dk/news/business/holiday-rule-grey-areas-addressed ...](http://cphpost.dk/news/business/holiday-rule-grey-areas-addressed...)

Regulation that could tackle Uber

February 10, 2017

A majority in the parliament has welcomed a taxi law that could end up being the ultimate barrier for Uber's activities. Among other changes, the law stipulates it will become obligatory for taxis to have seat sensors, video surveillance and taxi meters. Uber that has clashed with the taxi drivers, unions and authorities since hitting the streets of Denmark in 2014 thinks to circumvent the law by pointing out that it does not operate as a taxi company, but as a carpooling system using private cars.

English: [http://cphpost.dk/news/new-taxi-law-could-smother-uber-in-denmark ...](http://cphpost.dk/news/new-taxi-law-could-smother-uber-in-denmark...)

Job bonus for long-term unemployed

February 2, 2017

The government is offering long term unemployed a 'jobpræmie' – job bonus – equivalent to up to 10 percent of a person's income for no more than 18 months; a possible total of 45,000 Danish kroner (€6,000). The measure is planned to come into force on 1 April and will be valid for two years. It is targeted at some 164,000 citizens who have been unemployed and received benefits for a long consecutive period of time. However, observers are sceptical as such bonuses have been tried, both by the political left and right, with no discernible results.

English: [http://www.nordiclbourjournal.org/nyheter/news-2017 ...](http://www.nordiclbourjournal.org/nyheter/news-2017...)

Estonia

Baltic Workboats raises wages

February 16, 2017

At the beginning of 2017, the boat builder Baltic Workboats raised wages for the personnel in production by 25%. This surpasses the national average of a gross wage of 1,119 euro. The CEO of the company cited increased exports and production volumes as reasons for the raise. The company is growing and constantly searching for qualified personnel.

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

Finland

Union wants extra wage increase for women-dominated work

February 27, 2017

Trade union JHL is calling for a separate wage increase for public sector jobs dominated by women – on top of general wage hikes. The 225,000-member organisation says the two-fold pay hike is needed to help women working in low-wage jobs pull even with their male counterparts. JHL says that there has been no progress on wage equality. It has defended its proposal for an additional wage hike for women, noting that a tri-partite agreement involving the government as well as employer and employee groups ensures equal salaries for men and women, and that public salaries are being effectively cut by a decision to reduce holiday pay as part of the competitiveness deal.

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

Employers blow up the bargaining system

February 18, 2017

The Confederation of Finnish Industries (EK) has announced that it will terminate 22 of its contracts. The termination of nearly two dozen union contracts concerns the working conditions of low-wage job-holders especially, such as security guards and movie theatre employees. This also concerns agreements on the role of the shop stewards and procedural agreements on co-decision procedures. The result is that on top of the 'normal' collective bargaining the sectoral unions also have to agree anew on these issues.

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

Act should promote local bargaining

February 16, 2017

The Confederation of Professionals STTK is encouraging a reform of the Act on Co-operation within Undertakings. The act must be reformed completely, in seeking to strengthen co-operation between employer and employees at the workplace. In the last times, the act has become merely a law on redundancies. The original goals for employees to be kept informed and promote local bargaining at company level are not fulfilled by the existing act.

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

Once more about the basic income

February 8, 2017

Calls for a universal basic income have been growing in recent years, particularly with the rise of precarious employment in industrialised societies. Most current models of social security mean that recipients of out of work benefits are often penalised for taking on short-term or part-time work. But basic income is not without its critics. An economist at the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions, SAK, welcomes attempts to reform the social security system, but says basic income is not the best mechanism to do so because the model trialled now is economically unrealistic. It would increase the deficit by 5%. A cost-neutral basic income, on the contrary, would not incentivise to work, or it would lead to a reduction in the level of social security.

English: [https://www.equaltimes.org/can-finland-overhaul-its-social ...](https://www.equaltimes.org/can-finland-overhaul-its-social...)

France

Air France strike announced

February 28, 2017

Trade union CGT is mobilising its members in several parts of company segments of Air France for a strike. The union's main argument is the 'scandalous' pay rise for the leadership of the company (at first it looked like a 67% increase). The company has rectified earlier statements about the increase during a works council meeting and stated that the total amount is 4 million euro shared by 14 managers. The CGT reminds the management of the efforts made by the workforce to keep the company healthy (with wages freezes, shorter holidays, new employment patterns).

French: [http://www.lemonde.fr/entreprises/article/2017/02/28/plusieurs-syndicats ...](http://www.lemonde.fr/entreprises/article/2017/02/28/plusieurs-syndicats...)

[http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-eco ...](http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-eco...)

Union communiqué (in French): [http://www.cgtairfrance.com ...](http://www.cgtairfrance.com...)

Basic income discussed

February 20, 2017

In the forefront of the presidential elections, the notion of a basic income has popped up in the socioeconomic debate. Journal 'Le Monde' has collected and published different positions in an overview. The positions vary from 'unrealistic' to the 'ultimate' solution for our future labour market. The twenty contributions come from outstanding scientists.

French: [http://www.lemonde.fr/idees ...](http://www.lemonde.fr/idees...)

Rail workers on strike

February 1, 2017

Rail workers went on a national wide strike on Thursday 2 February 2017, forcing cancellations on services around the country. The strike was called by the CGT-Cheminots union over what its members consider to be low salaries and job insecurity.

English: <http://www.thelocal.fr/20170202/rail-workers-go-on-strike-across-france>

Germany

Unions and works council and the Opel/PSA talks

February 23, 2017

General Motors and the PSA Group are in advanced discussions to combine PSA with GM's European Opel activities. If concluded successfully, the talks lead to a going together of Opel with PSA. Information about the deal reached the workforce relatively late, after the talks were announced in the media. An Opel acquisition would see GM exit Europe, while transforming PSA Group into Europe's second-largest carmaker - behind VW - with a 16% share of the European market. The deal could have giant employment consequences (with losses up to 6000 jobs in Germany). PSA management has guaranteed that in the new configuration at least four plants in Germany will stay open and that there will be no dismissals till the end of 2018. Trade union IG Metall and the works council are relatively open for the deal, as they see more chances to go ahead after a separation from GM. The UK trade unions are less positive about GM walking away from the UK plants and workers, as the possible deal could lead to substantial job losses or even closures at the Vauxhall plants that are also involved.

English: [http://www.industrial-union.org/ig-metall-and-opel-european-works-council ...](http://www.industrial-union.org/ig-metall-and-opel-european-works-council...)
[http://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/feb/15/unite-leader-len-mccluskey-warns ...](http://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/feb/15/unite-leader-len-mccluskey-warns...)
[http://www.reuters.com/article/us-opel-m-a-psa ...](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-opel-m-a-psa...)
[http://www.bbc.com/news/business ...](http://www.bbc.com/news/business...)

German: [http://www.rp-online.de/wirtschaft/unternehmen/die-ig-metall-macht ...](http://www.rp-online.de/wirtschaft/unternehmen/die-ig-metall-macht...)
[http://www.welt.de/wirtschaft/article162195278/Opel-Deal-soll-in-drei-Wochen-stehen ...](http://www.welt.de/wirtschaft/article162195278/Opel-Deal-soll-in-drei-Wochen-stehen...)

Agreement for public service workers in the regions

February 21, 2017

Trade unions in the public sector reached an agreement with a real pay rise for around 800,000 workers in regional government. The two-year pay deal will see a 2% rise this year backdated to 1 January with a minimum increase of 75 euro on monthly salaries. This is slightly more than the current inflation rate of 1.9% but well ahead of the 0.5% inflation recorded in 2016. Regional government workers will also get a 2.35% pay increase from 1 January 2018.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/article/unions-deliver-pay-boost-public-sector-workers>
The details of the agreement (in German): [https://troed.verdi.de/tarifbeschaefigte ...](https://troed.verdi.de/tarifbeschaefigte...)

VW talks reopened

February 21, 2017

Trade union representatives and the Volkswagen management have reopened talks about future restructuring. A spokesperson of the works council said that representatives are in constructive talks with top management on the open questions regarding the future pact, dealing with issues like overtime work, efficiency gains and the influx of apprenticeships. Earlier on the trade unions argued that the chief executive, who established a reputation for cutting costs at BMW, sought to cut temporary workers more quickly and deeply than agreed in November 2016.

English: [http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/business/international/vw-unions ...](http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/business/international/vw-unions...)

Lufthansa agrees on substantial pay increase

February 16, 2017

The airline Lufthansa stated that it had agreed to boost pilots' salaries by 8.7% over four years, hoping to end years of disputes and costly walkouts by air crew. Pilots' first pay increase will be backdated to Jan 1, 2016 and the last is slated for Jan 1, 2019, while the agreement will remain valid until the end of 2019, Lufthansa said in a statement. Pilots will also receive a one-off bonus payment of between €5,000 and €6,000 under the deal, or 'around half a month of salary' per person.

English: [http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/business/international/lufthansa-agrees ...](http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/business/international/lufthansa-agrees...)

Pay and agreed working conditions dominate court work

February 8, 2017

The annual report of the Federal Labour Court, the instance that deals with disputes between employees and employers over employment rights, reveals that the Court finalised 2195 cases in 2016. In 30% of the cases the dispute was related to pay and collective agreement issues. Section 1.III of the report is dedicated to several minimum wage disputes. Section 2.II summarise a list of cases that are related to the interpretation and application of collective agreements and the functioning of general binding agreements.

The report (in German): http://www.bundesarbeitsgericht.de/download/jahresbericht_2016.pdf

Greece

Acropolis closed due to strike of state guards

February 21, 2017

The Acropolis and other ancient sites are closed to the public after state guards called a 24-hour strike over a pay and contract dispute with the government. The trade union representing the striking workers is seeking additional staff and overtime pay. The striking workers want more staff and overtime pay. The union said it hoped the dispute would be resolved by the Easter holidays and the peak of the tourist season.

English: <http://www.euronews.com/2017/02/21/greek-strike-shuts-down-acropolis>

Unions organise actions as workers face growing precariousness

February 21, 2017

While unemployment has fallen by three points in two years, new jobs are mainly part time or temporary. According to the Labour Ministry, over 22% of workers are employed half-time or part-time and earn less than €400 gross per month. The Ministry is in negotiation with the country's creditors (European Central Bank, EU, and International Monetary Fund) to release a tranche of the €86 billion. After making pressure on the government to increase VAT on food and on the hotel industry, adopt a pensions reform, and increase sickness insurance contributions, the creditors are demanding a law to facilitate collective dismissals and allow employers to temporarily close down their enterprise following an industrial dispute. The trade unions have been organising rallies and demonstrations for several months, and complain of the government's failure to consult on these issues. Meanwhile, thousands of people gathered in central Athens to protest against this latest round of austerity measures as the parties agreed to resume talks on new reforms.

English: [http://www.euronews.com/2017/02/21/thousands-gather ...](http://www.euronews.com/2017/02/21/thousands-gather...)
[https://www.equaltimes.org/greek-workers-face-ever-more ...](https://www.equaltimes.org/greek-workers-face-ever-more...)

Hungary

Audi workers come to a deal

February 13, 2017

The management of Audi Hungaria, the German car manufacturer's subsidiary, agreed with the Audi Hungaria Independent Trade Union (AHFSZ) on wage increases. Under the new collective agreement, the monthly base salary at the Audi Hungaria's local plant in Győr will be raised by HUF 30,000 (97 euro) retroactively from the start of 2017, while an additional 3% of variable pay will be built into the base salary. As of 2018, the base salary will be further increased by HUF 30,000, topped up with 3% of variable pay.

English: [http://bbj.hu/business/audi-agrees-to-raise-wages-union-says ...](http://bbj.hu/business/audi-agrees-to-raise-wages-union-says...)

Support for fired waste company trade unionists

February 12, 2017

European federation EPSU sent a solidarity message to the HVDSZ 2000 union, four of whose members, including its president András Király, have been summarily dismissed by the FKFzrt waste company in Budapest. The four were fired for presenting the company with a demand for better pay and conditions. EPSU, along with the International and European Trade Union Confederations, also sent a strongly worded

protest message to the chief executive of the company. The letter calls on him to reinstate the sacked workers and reminds him that his behaviour is in breach of the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights, the Council of Europe's Social Charter and the core International Labour Organisation's Conventions 87 and 98.

English: [http://www.epsu.org/article/epsu-supports-sacked-waste-company-trade-unionists ...](http://www.epsu.org/article/epsu-supports-sacked-waste-company-trade-unionists...)

Iceland

Fishermen back to sea after historic strike

February 20, 2017

After nine weeks of dispute in the fishing industry, the longest fishermen's strike in modern Iceland's history has finally come to an end. Although only 52.4% voted by ballot to accept the new terms, the fleet is already putting to sea. While some concessions have been made, it remains unclear whether the crews have won full tax free status for food and other at-sea payments. The effects of the lengthy strike were felt across Europe and brought warnings from UK retailers voicing fears that some fish products could temporarily disappear from supermarket shelves.

English: <http://www.fishupdate.com/iceland-back-to-sea-after-historic-strike/>

Ireland

Bus drivers on strike

February 28, 2017

Trade unions NBRU (National Bus and Rail Union) and SIPTU have announced that they will commence an all-out strike at Bus Éireann, after management announced cost-cutting measures will be imposed. The company has done this without going back to the Workplace Relations Commission. Bus Éireann management has told staff that the company has no option but to implement changes to work practices from 6 March that will result in 'immediate cost savings'. They have also warned that there will be redundancies and impact on pay - but says the moves are necessary to save the company.

English: [http://www.rte.ie/news ...](http://www.rte.ie/news...)

[http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/thousands-to-be-hit ...](http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/thousands-to-be-hit...)

Tesco strikes suspended

February 27, 2017

Trade union Mandate which represents staff employed by the retail giant Tesco called off its strike action as Tesco agreed to put contract changes on hold to allow a new round of Labour Court talks take place. Sales across Tesco's network fall significantly after picket lines were placed outside a small number of its shops. The dispute centred around proposed contract changes to about 250 long-serving staff. The union claimed the changes would result in the wages of staff recruited before 1996 falling by more than 15 per cent. After the two sides took part in talks under the auspices of the Labour Court they came to an agreement that involved Mandate immediately suspending all industrial action and Tesco issuing a statement in which it confirmed it would not make any changes to the pre-1996 terms and conditions while the talks are ongoing.

English: [http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/tesco-strikes-suspended ...](http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/tesco-strikes-suspended...)

[http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/tesco-strike-sales-down ...](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/tesco-strike-sales-down...)

Broken promises anger health service staff

February 20, 2017

A wage increase for nurses had been due in September 2016 under the Lansdowne Road Agreement but was brought forward to compensate public servants who did not benefit from a €50m Garda pay deal. Gardaí got an extra €4,000 added to their earnings due to the deal that was offered in a Labour Court recommendation to avoid an unprecedented strike in November 2016. The nurses' representative bodies are currently engaged with a Lansdowne Road Agreement Oversight Body and that was a condition for the wage increase being brought forward. Trade union SIPTU announced that health service support staff voted by 94% in favour of taking strike action, which will begin in selected hospitals on the same day as the nurses' industrial action, 7 March 2017.

English: <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/health/refusal-to-give-nurses-pay-rise ...>

Annual report monitoring economic inequality

February 16, 2017

The Progressive Post has pointed at the TASC's 2016 annual report monitoring economic inequality. It updates indicators for different dimensions of inequality such as income and wealth, social protection, education, childcare, etc. Separate chapters focus on economic inequality in relation to gender and to children. The country's economic model involves low taxation and one of the highest rates of low paid work in the OECD. Consistent child poverty almost doubled during the recession. Despite economic recovery, overall rates of material deprivation continue to rise.

English: <http://www.progressivepost.eu/inspirations/cherishing-equally ...>

The report: http://www.tasc.ie/download/pdf/tasc_inequalityreport_2016 ...

Italy

Lay-offs negotiated at steel group ILVA

February 27, 2017

The troubled steel group ILVA is close to a deal that could lead to 3300 lay-offs at two plants, including the Taranto plant in Puglia. The Taranto plant is undergoing a clean-up after it became clear that there are serious cancer risks for the surrounding localities. If it come to a deal the dismissals will be substantially lower than announced before. The management initially requested 5500 lay-offs.

English: <http://www.gazzettadelsud.it/news/english/234645/ilva-set-for-deal ...>

Collective agreement in insurance took 3 years

February 22, 2017

Three years after the expiring of the old agreement the trade unions in the insurance branch reached an agreement with the employers' organisation Ania. The draft agreement that has to be balloted among the membership concerns 48,000 employees and will applies until 31 December 2019. The agreement includes a 5% pay increase (on average 103 euro), but also has a substantial retroactive effect. Workers will receive, for the period 01 July 2013 and 31 December 2014 a gross payment of 400 euro to be paid by 30 May. For the period between 01 January 2015 to 31 March 2017 workers receive an additional gross payment of 720 euro.

The joint pamphlet (in Italian): <http://www.firstcisl.it/nazionale/documenti/finalmente ...>

Protest march banned by police

February 8, 2017

Police in Naples banned a protest march which had been planned by employees of archaeological site Pompeii. The UNSA and FLP unions, representing employees of the site, had asked for authorisation to hold a demonstration in front of the entrances to Pompeii. The protest was planned at the same time as the visit to the site by Italy's Culture Minister Dario Franceschini and European Commissioner Corina Cretu. Police said the reason for banning the protest was to 'protect public order'. There have been ongoing disputes between workers at the heritage site and the Ministry of Culture, both over pay and working conditions.

English: <http://www.thelocal.it/20170208/pompeii-protest-march-banned-by-naples-police>

Latvia

Wages in 2016

February 28, 2017

According to data of the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB), the rate of wage increase in 2016 (5.0%) was the slowest in the last three years. At the end of the year, in the fourth quarter, the gross wage grew 5.9%, year-on-year to a level of an average monthly wage of 859 euro. Slowdown in the rise in remuneration in 2016 was expected, for economic growth slowed down. For 2017, wage growth could remain similar. However, a faster

growth in wages has been approved in the budget in some areas of the public sector. The highest wages are paid in the finance sector, the lowest in hospitality services.

English: [http://www.csb.gov.lv/en/notikumi/wage-and-salary-increase-slowed-down ...](http://www.csb.gov.lv/en/notikumi/wage-and-salary-increase-slowed-down...)

Liechtenstein

Several collective agreements generally binding

February 14, 2017

In its journal, trade union LANV reports about the last bargaining round, with negotiations in 18 branches and sectors. The outcome is a pay increase within a range of 0.3 to 1%, except in branches that had already on a pay increase in 2016 or branches that failed to come to a deal. Social partners have requested the government to declare the agreements for carpenters, roofers, cleaning and private doorkeepers generally binding. They also asked for a generally binding effect of improvements in 8 other collective agreements (automotive, building and plasterwork, retail, electrical branches, IT, gardeners, tilers and cabinet makers).

German: [http://www.lanv.li/contortionist ...](http://www.lanv.li/contortionist...)

[https://apps.llv.li/amtsblatt ...](https://apps.llv.li/amtsblatt...)

[http://www.vaterland.li/liechtenstein/politik/Gesamtarbeitsvertraege-in-Abklaerung ...](http://www.vaterland.li/liechtenstein/politik/Gesamtarbeitsvertraege-in-Abklaerung...)

Wage statistics 2014

February 9, 2017

The statistical Yearbook 2017 includes a chapter on labour and employment. An analysis of the wage statistics (only available till 2014) reveals that the average gross wage increased with 2.2% compared to the year 2012. Wages in industry went beyond that level with a 2.7% increase, while services scored a modest 1.7%. The overall wage level was 1.5% higher than the level in neighbouring country Switzerland. The gender gap between men and women slightly decreased, but stayed substantial with 16.5% lower pay for women. The biannual report *Lohnstatistik 2014* provides details on wages with regard to sectors, gender, labour contract form, age, regions and nationality and company size.

Statistical Yearbook 2017 (in German): [http://www.llv.li/files ...](http://www.llv.li/files...)

Final wage statistics 2014 (in German): [http://www.llv.li/files/as/lohnstatistik ...](http://www.llv.li/files/as/lohnstatistik...)

Lithuania

Green light for more foreign labour

February 10, 2017

The government has given a green light to hiring foreign specialists of certain fields, however, some opposition politicians warn that this could pave way for cheaper labour force that will stop the increase of wages for Lithuanian citizens. One of the expectations is that more professionals from Ukraine will come now that it has become easier for businesses to hire third-country nationals in certain occupations. The government assured that while making employment of foreign experts easier, it has created sufficient guards for the wages of local residents.

English: [http://open4business.com.ua/lithuania-waiting-specialists-ukraine ...](http://open4business.com.ua/lithuania-waiting-specialists-ukraine...)

[http://en.delfi.lt/lithuania/economy/government-approves-easier-hiring ...](http://en.delfi.lt/lithuania/economy/government-approves-easier-hiring...)

Luxembourg

Quality of work index comes with alarming figures

February 15, 2017

The findings of a study drawn up by the Chamber of Employers and the University of Luxembourg show that 25-30% of workers complain of work-related exhaustion. Burnout at work is increasing at an alarming rate, reaching about 30% of the country's workforce. The first symptoms are loss of vitality and a feeling of

discouragement, indifference, boredom, cynicism, disorientation and lack of concentration. Temporary workers and workers with long working hours are less satisfied with their work.

English: [http://www.wort.lu/en/luxembourg/quality-of-work-index-burnout ...](http://www.wort.lu/en/luxembourg/quality-of-work-index-burnout...)

The report (in French): [http://www.statistiques.public.lu/fr/actualites/population/travail ...](http://www.statistiques.public.lu/fr/actualites/population/travail...)

Wage differences are substantial

February 2, 2017

Released STATEC data (for 2014) reveal that those who worked in the financial and education sectors earned the highest salaries up to 90,000 euros per year. The research shows that the housing and catering industries were heading in the opposite direction with the lowest salaries. STATEC explains the wage differences by worker profiles, taking into account factors such as educational level, age and seniority in the company. The average annual salary was 59.7 thousand euro; this could reach 90 thousand euro for workers in finance and insurance. In the catering industry, the average salary was little more than 30 thousand euro per year.

English: [http://www.wort.lu/en/business/statec-data-huge-divide-in-luxembourg-wages ...](http://www.wort.lu/en/business/statec-data-huge-divide-in-luxembourg-wages...)

The report (in French): [http://www.statistiques.public.lu/catalogue-publications ...](http://www.statistiques.public.lu/catalogue-publications...)

Malta

Medical association in dispute with ministries

February 14, 2017

The Medical Association of Malta said in a statement that in spite of numerous pending issues affecting all sectors of the medical profession, the MAM-Government collective agreement that expired at the end of December 2016 is not being discussed. This has serious implications on the optimum delivery of patient care. MAM said it has made it clear that it will not sign any agreement with the government about the privatisation without a proper audit report. The government is proceeding with privatisation regardless of this decision. Moreover, recruitment of specialists is being done without adhering to the current collective agreement. Therefore, MAM is giving notice of industrial action affecting all sectors of the medical profession if all pending issues are not satisfactorily resolved by 14 March 2017.

English: [http://www.independent.com.mt/articles ...](http://www.independent.com.mt/articles...)

Netherlands

Poor working conditions at Primark clothing chain

February 23, 2017

An investigation by trade union FNV at the 16 branches of retailer Primark led to complaints from hundreds of employees and former employees. The union launched the investigation into the working conditions at the clothing chain after workers in Groningen had complained about intimidation, heavy workloads, ignored health complaints and being watched in staff areas. Some 1,186 of the 4,800 Primark staff participated in the online survey and the results have prompted the union to initiate talks with Primark to improve working conditions. The complaints came from across all the 16 branches.

English: [http://nltimes.nl/2017/02/14/union-flooded-complaints-primark ...](http://nltimes.nl/2017/02/14/union-flooded-complaints-primark...)

[http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2017/02/primark-staff-belittled-and-intimidated ...](http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2017/02/primark-staff-belittled-and-intimidated...)

Agency guilty of human smuggling and fraud

February 22, 2017

In a decision that marked victory for Filipino seafarers who worked for inland shipping, a Rotterdam court ruled that officers of the employment agency Gyron Crew are guilty of human smuggling and fraud. A fine of €65,000 was imposed against the agency while 2 officers were meted with penalties of imprisonment of 5-15 months and 2 years' probation. The public prosecution service filed an appeal of the decision, asking that the additional charge of human trafficking be reconsidered by the court. While the court dismissed the charges for human trafficking for lack of sufficient evidence, it made a pronouncement that Gyron has taken advantage of the vulnerable positions of the seamen and the accused officers contributed to the unsuitable

working conditions of the seafarers. Gyron Crew recruited seafarers from the Philippines using two different employment contracts: one with a high salary in euro and another with a much lower salary in US dollars.

English: [http://interaksyon.com/article/137211/dutch-employment-agency-illegally-recruited ...](http://interaksyon.com/article/137211/dutch-employment-agency-illegally-recruited...)

Building sector wants own compliance control

February 14, 2017

Construction firms want their own 'pay deal police' to check if pay and collective agreement rules are respected. The industry employs some 118,000 people on freelance contracts and between 40,000 and 60,000 agency workers, often from abroad. Large building firms, which include Dura Vermeer, Heijmans and Bam, want personnel checks at the gate and independent inspectors who will carry out on site checks on personnel files. The unions are rather sceptical and refer to the subcontracting practices; big players often have little influence on subcontractors such as Rimec but they are legally responsible for fake contracts.

English: [http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2017/02/building-sector-wants-own ...](http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/archives/2017/02/building-sector-wants-own...)

Income and poverty data

February 8, 2017

Despite a decrease in the wealth gap, the number of households living in long-term poverty increased to 3.3% of households in 2015, according to Statistics Netherlands. In 2015 a total of 221,000 households lived below the minimum income threshold for more than four years, 27,000 more than in 2015. The low-income threshold is the minimum amount of income needed to achieve a level of consumption considered necessary. In 2015, that was 1,030 euro for single people and 1,930 euro for couples with two children. Of the more than seven million households, 626,000 live on an income below that limit. That is 8.8% of the households.

English: [http://nltimes.nl/2017/02/08/dutch-long-term-poverty ...](http://nltimes.nl/2017/02/08/dutch-long-term-poverty...)

Data, graphs and links to statistics (in Dutch): [https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws ...](https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws...)

Norway

Strike averted after ground crew deal

February 5, 2017

Negotiations with a national mediator between the trade union Junit and employers' organisation NHO Luftfart averted a strike by airline ground crews at four airports after an agreement was reached. Flights were thus taking off as scheduled on Sunday 5 February. According to the agreement, the employees of Widerøe Ground Handling will receive raises of 2.6 percent, while those with high seniority and experience stand to receive additional compensation.

English: <http://www.newsinenglish.no/2017/02/05/strike-averted-among-airport-ground-crews>

Responsibility for the wage setting

February 2, 2017

The social partners are responsible for wage setting and therefore they are responsible for solving the problem. That was the government's message to Efta's surveillance authority ESA. ESA believes Norway is in breach of the EEA agreement when demanding that businesses that post workers there must pay compensation for travel, board and lodging in line with existing collective agreements. The government's letter is unusual. It is a response to a so-called letter of formal notice, the first step in a process at the end of which ESA can take a country to the Efta Court.

English: [http://www.nordiclbourjournal.org/nyheter/news ...](http://www.nordiclbourjournal.org/nyheter/news...)

Lowest growth in earnings in the 2000s

February 1, 2017

The annual data for 2016 reveal that the average monthly earnings for all employees were NOK 42 600 as per September 2016. This was a year-on-year increase of 1.6%, and is the lowest growth in earnings Statistics the country has measured in the 2000s. Employees in the private sector had an increase in monthly earnings of 1.4% from NOK 43 200 in 2015 to NOK 43 800 in 2016. Monthly earnings in the public sector were on average slightly higher, with an increase of 1.8% for employees in central government and 2.3% for employees in municipal and county administration. The building and construction industry has the highest

growth of earnings among the industries. The average monthly earnings for women as a percentage of men's monthly earnings increased from 85.3% in 2015 to 86.1% in 2016. Both the private and public sectors saw a reduction in the disparities between women and men's monthly earnings.

English: [https://www.ssb.no/en/arbeid-og-lonn/statistikker/lonnansatt ...](https://www.ssb.no/en/arbeid-og-lonn/statistikker/lonnansatt...)

Poland

Rumours about blacklisting of employees

February 20, 2017

The labour ministry stated that some recruitment agencies are illegally exchanging personal data, creating 'blacklists' of unwanted potential employees. Though the problem is one that is hard to investigate, the ministry is considering different ways of preventing such activities. The ministry had also received reports of some agencies discriminating against women.

English: [http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/294564,Polish-recruiting-agencies-illegally ...](http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/294564,Polish-recruiting-agencies-illegally...)

Is Amazon evading strong unions?

February 20, 2017

U.S. online retailer Amazon announced to open its fifth logistics centre in Poland this year. The company seeks to benefit from the country's relatively low wages and proximity to the German market. Observers see the opening of the new centre as a step to help insulate Amazon's business from the risk of frequent labour strikes in neighbouring Germany. Germany has seen many strikes with trade unions demanding a pay raise for the warehouse workers, in accordance with existing collective agreements.

English: [http://www.reuters.com/article/us-amazon-com-poland ...](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-amazon-com-poland...)

Portugal

Bilateral agreement must protect workers' interests

February 20, 2017

After completion of the relevant constitutional and legal formalities, the Social Security Agreement (SSA) between India and Portugal, signed in 2013, will come into force on 8th May 2017. It is meant to protect the interests of professionals, skilled workers working abroad. Provisions include such issues as helping workers avoid making double social security contributions, and facilitating easy exportability remittances/benefits.

English: [http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-portugal ...](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-portugal...)

The agreement: [https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases ...](https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases...)

Labour costs data 4th quarter 2016

February 14, 2017

The Labour Cost Index (working days adjusted) increased by 1.2% in the 4th quarter of 2016, compared with the same period in 2015. In the previous quarter, it recorded a year-on-year increase of 2.8%. The two main labour cost components are wage costs and other costs (per hour actually worked). Both wage costs and other costs increased by 1.2% from the same period a year earlier. However, there were several sectors that saw a decrease of wages. In terms of the annual average, the Index increased by 1.6% in 2016, due to the rise of 1.8% in wage costs and of 0.9% in other labour costs. In 2015, the Index had recorded also an increase of 1.6% (corresponding to rates of change of 1.3% and 2.6% in the wage costs and other costs, respectively).

English (with links to data sheets): [https://www.ine.pt/xportal ...](https://www.ine.pt/xportal...)

Cleaners on strike

February 13, 2017

Workers from cleaning company ISS launched a 24-hour strike for higher wages at Lisbon airport. The workers want ISS to apply a special working conditions agreement to all workers and to increase wages and meal subsidies. They called for employers to 'respect the dignity' of the cleaning company's workers.

English: <http://www.theportugalsnews.com/news/lisbon-airport-cleaners-on-strike ...>

Romania

Labour market development analysed

February 6, 2017

A labour market analysis revealed that there were 4.9 million work contracts in 2015, and a working population of 8.4 million. The statistics confirm previous Eurostat data according to which Romania is one of the European countries with one of the lowest rates of employment by work contract. Alongside Greece and Turkey, Romania is one of the countries where the share of employees from the total active population stands below 75%, due to the high number of people working as self-employed persons. By contrast, the EU average stands at 84.6%, while in countries such as Denmark, Estonia, Luxembourg, Sweden and Norway the percentage of employees from the active population exceeds 90%. The main occupational groups that recorded increases in the number of individual work contracts were the low-skilled workers in the extractive industry, construction sector, processing industry and transports. The most significant decreases were registered among specialists in science and engineering, where individual work contracts went down by 25,992, and healthcare, where the number of contracts went down by 8,371.

English: <http://www.romania-insider.com/romanias-number-of-skilled-employees ...>

Serbia

Undercover journalist signals social dumping

February 21, 2017

Serbia and Slovakia have signed agreements concerning social issues that could be expanded in order to encompass cooperation and exchange information between their labour inspectorates. The decision comes in the wake of a recent report by a Serbian journalist who worked incognito for three months in allegedly dire conditions at the Samsung plant in Galanta (Slovakia). The reporter claimed that he had worked along with many other illegal Serbian workers at Samsung in Galanta without a proper work permit in what he called slave-like conditions and for a woeful salary. According to the labour ministry, there could be hundreds of Serbian nationals employed illegally in Slovakia.

English: <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20465004/inspectors-to-focus ...>

Slovakia

KIA bargaining stuck

February 22, 2017

The negotiations between the representatives of trade unions and management of Žilina-based Kia Motors Slovakia have not resulted in an agreement on salary raises. The trade unions said there is a deadlock in the negotiations and threatened protest actions, including a strike. The trade unionists associated in OZ KOVO have asked for increasing wages of some 3,600 permanent manual workers by 10 percent, while the salaries in administration should rise by 7 percent. They also want additional payment for night shifts to increase by €0.26 per hour.

English: <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20466045/kia-negotiations-stuck ...>

Unemployment rate keeps decreasing

February 21, 2017

According to officials of the statistics of the Labour, Social Affairs and the Family Centre (ÚPSVaR), unemployment rate keeps decreasing due to the positive development of the country's economy. Unemployment continued to decrease in January 2017. The registered unemployment rate stood at 8.64% in January, down by 0.12 percentage month-on-month and by 1.75 percentage points year-on-year. Wage data over 2016 indicate that the IT and communication sector has the highest wage level, followed by utilities.

English: <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20464095/unemployment-rate-keeps-decreasing ...>

Slovenia

Wage data 2016

February 15, 2017

Average monthly earnings for 2016 were higher than earnings for 2015 (in the private sector by 3.6%, in the public sector by 3.0%). Average monthly gross earnings for December 2016 amounted to 1,653.67 euro; compared to earnings for November they were lower in nominal terms by 2.0% and in real terms by 1.5%. Average monthly net earnings for December 2016 amounted to 1,074.27 euro; compared to earnings for the previous month they were lower by 1.2% in nominal terms and by 0.7% in real terms. The average monthly earnings for December 2016 decreased, mostly due to lower extra payments (13th month payments and Christmas bonuses). The highest wages are paid in the utilities sectors, the lowest in general services.

English: [http://www.stat.si/StatWeb/en/News ...](http://www.stat.si/StatWeb/en/News...)

Spain

Strike of Madrid metro workers

February 26, 2017

The metro machinists' trade union in Madrid is organising a strike, which will be extended in different sections, with plans to continue with this action from March indefinitely. The drivers ensure that they do not want more holidays or higher wages, but a professional homologation with the train drivers. The metro company representatives fear that this dispute is related to an incident in December 2016, when a driver was dismissed after asking the passengers to leave the convoy because his working day has ended.

Spanish: [http://www.abc.es/espana/madrid/abci-usuarios-metro-atrapados-huelga-sorpresa ...](http://www.abc.es/espana/madrid/abci-usuarios-metro-atrapados-huelga-sorpresa...)

Rising inequality and social exclusion

February 22, 2017

The European Commission's *Spain 2017 Report* praises economic progress, but is very critical about several social indicators. The report warns that the recovery is not automatically reflected in improved social indicators. Economic achievements have resulted in minimal drops in poverty and social exclusion rates. The levels of inequality, poverty and social exclusion are 'among the highest in the EU. The conclusions mirror similar studies by other international observers. According to the report, 13.1% of workers are at risk of slipping into poverty. Inequality was already an issue before the crisis, and it continues to be so now. The gap between the wealthiest 20% and the poorest 20% is one of the biggest in the EU.

English: [http://elpais.com/elpais/2017/02/22/inenglish ...](http://elpais.com/elpais/2017/02/22/inenglish...)

The country report: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2017-european-semester ...](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2017-european-semester...)

Dockers strike against new regulations

February 21, 2017

Dock workers have called nine days of strikes to protest government plans to allow ports to hire non-unionised labour, threatening to disrupt trade for up to three weeks from 6 March 2017. Dockers called off a planned three-day strike after the government said it would put its reforms on hold and open talks, but the decision to push ahead with a bigger strike came after the government signalled it would not change parts of the planned legislation on liberalisation of the sector. The legislation would allow companies operating in ports to hire staff that do not belong to unions, a move unpopular with union members but which would bring Spain in line with European Union regulations.

English: <http://www.idcdockworkers.org/es/>

[http://www.itfglobal.org/en/news-events/press-releases ...](http://www.itfglobal.org/en/news-events/press-releases...)

[http://www.maritimeprofessional.com/news/spanish-dockers-call-strike ...](http://www.maritimeprofessional.com/news/spanish-dockers-call-strike...)

Sweden

Pressure on IKEA's transport policy

February 27, 2017

Transport trade unions are putting pressure on IKEA to take responsibility for exploitation in its European road transport supply chain. Drivers in IKEA's contracting chain are working on the road for weeks and months on end, earning inferior wages, living out of their trucks and subject to the abuse of social, labour and safety rules. Actions by members of German trade union ver.di and the Swedish Transport Workers union came as another transport union, Dutch FNV, scored a victory in the courts against a transport company used by IKEA. The District Court of the Northern Netherlands exposed an IKEA contractor that uses foreign truck drivers from affiliated companies to cut costs. The Court found that the arrangement was set up to evade the Dutch Collective Labour Agreement, with drivers paid a basic wage eight times lower than that set in the agreement.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/en/news-events ...>

Growing wealth gap driven by capital income

February 16, 2017

A survey has exposed the country's growing wealth gap, with the number of houses in the middle-income bracket in the country falling in all but four of its municipalities between 2011 and 2015. Experts explained that the growing gap is being driven by earnings from capital, rather than a change in wages. The importance of capital income – mostly concentrated at the top end of wealth distribution – has increased. At the same time, the social security system has not followed general wage developments, which means that those at the lower part of wealth distribution lag behind. However, in terms of wage distribution – which is closely tied to the still relatively centralised collective wage negotiation model – things have hardly changed.

English: <http://www.thelocal.se/20170216/swedens-wealth-inequality-exposed ...>

Foreign born workers find more jobs

February 14, 2017

The Statistics Sweden's Statistical Report 4th quarter 2016 shows that the number of employed persons increased by 74 000 to 4 921 000 in the last quarter of 2016 compared with the same quarter of 2015. At the same time, seasonally adjusted and smoothed data shows that the number of employed persons continues to increase compared to adjacent quarters. On the other hand, the percentage of employed persons in the population has increased slightly. Among foreign born persons, the number of employed persons continues to increase – a development that began in the second quarter of 2010.

English: <http://www.scb.se/en/finding-statistics ...>

The report with graphs (in Swedish): <http://www.scb.se/contentassets ...>

Switzerland

No bright social plan at Sun Store

February 24, 2017

Trade union Unia has organised several activities since May 2016 to assist the workforce at Sun Store, part of the pharmacy network Galenicare in St-Sulpice, in their fight for a decent social plan. Aim is to mitigate the consequences of a restructuring with 100 workers involved. The plans are to locate the company 100 km from the actual site. The management has refused any direct dialog with workers' representatives and initiated a fake consultation with a committee that never contacted the workforce.

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

French: <http://www.unia.ch/fr/actualites ...>

<https://www.rts.ch/info/regions ...>

Evolution of middle income groups

February 23, 2017

The federal statistical office produced 2014 data on the middle-income group, the group that includes all persons living in a household with an equivalised gross income of between 70% and 150% of the median equivalised gross income of the year observed. The analyses are based on the results of two surveys: the

Household Budget Survey, which is more appropriate for longer time series and financial analysis, and the Statistics on Income and Living Conditions for the quality of life in the middle-income group. Overall, the percentage of the population belonging to the middle-income group remained relatively stable from 1998 to 2014. It was at its highest (61.3%) in 2009 and its lowest (56.8%) in 2013.

English (with graphs): <https://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/en/home/statistics ...>

Renegotiations lead to agreement in construction

February 3, 2017

Trade unions and employers in construction have finally concluded an agreement. However, they could not settle a deal on wage increase. The trade union members will have a final say in March. Over the last years, the negotiations have been complicated with many issues unsolved. In December 2015, the bargaining partners decided to keep the sectoral pension age at 60 years and to prolong the existing collective agreement. In the current round several pending provisions have been dealt with: the promotion to a higher wage scale (after 3 years in service), the joint payment of the contribution for sickness insurance, increased allowances for lunches and the restoration of the financing of the paritarian fund.

French: <http://www.unia.ch/fr/actualites ...>

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

Turkey

Public sector workers fired

February 22, 2017

The authorities have ordered, through a decree published on February 2017, the dismissal of nearly 4,500 civil servants in the latest wave of a purge after the July's 2016 attempted coup. The Official Gazette stated 4,464 people had been fired, including 2,585 employees of the education ministry, 893 members of the gendarmerie and 88 workers at the public television channel TRT. The dismissal included 330 academics who were members of the Higher Council for Teaching (YOK). Most of the recent dismissals are not covered by severance pay, and retirement bonuses have been cancelled. In addition, the state has transferred the money due to the workers to a state account. The dismissals in the public sector have initiated a fiercely protest. The global public sector union PSI started a solidarity campaign.

English: <http://www.world-psi.org/en/solidarity-dismissed-unionists-turkey>

<https://au.news.yahoo.com/world/a/34366291/turkey-sacks-another-4-500-civil-servants ...>

United Kingdom

Unpaid overtime worth £33.6 billion

February 24, 2017

UK workers gave their employers £33.6 billion of free labour in 2016 by doing unpaid overtime, according to analysis of official statistics published by the TUC. More than 5.3 million people put in an average of 7.7 hours a week in unpaid overtime during 2016. This is equivalent to an average of £6,301 they have each missed out in their pay packets. To mark the day, the TUC is asking workers to take a proper lunch break and leave on time. The TUC has designed a calculator at www.tuc.org.uk/unpaidovertime for workers to find out how much more they would get paid each year if their unpaid overtime was paid at their usual rate.

English: <https://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/work-life-balance/employment-rights ...>

The future of work inquired

February 24, 2017

At the moment that the number of people working without guaranteed hours or baseline employment rights has grown by 660,000 (27%) over the past five years, more and more questionable labour relations and methods to bypass the basic rights for workers are coming to the surface in court cases. The first results are that companies have to defend their contract models. For instance, food courier firm Deliveroo announced that it will remove a clause in its contracts that prevents its workers from disputing their self-employed

status at employment tribunals, after its legality was questioned by a group of MPs. However, companies like Uber, Hermes, Amazon and Deliveroo continue to defend their business model against criticism.

English: [http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england ...](http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england...)

[http://www.bbc.com/news/business ...](http://www.bbc.com/news/business...)

[http://www.personneltoday.com/hr/court-appeal-self-employed-plumber-worker-rights ...](http://www.personneltoday.com/hr/court-appeal-self-employed-plumber-worker-rights...)

[https://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/basic-rights-work/insecure-work ...](https://www.tuc.org.uk/workplace-issues/basic-rights-work/insecure-work...)

Naming and shaming of underpaying companies

February 16, 2017

More than 350 employers have been named and shamed as the government published the largest ever list of national minimum and living wage offenders. The list contains 359 businesses who underpaid 15,513 workers a total of £994,685, with employers in the hairdressing, hospitality and retail sectors the most prolific offenders. For the first time, the naming list includes employers who failed to pay eligible workers at least the current National Living Wage rate, which is £7.20 for workers aged 25 and over.

English: [https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/feb/15/debenhams-tops ...](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/feb/15/debenhams-tops...)

Press statement (with spreadsheet of employers): [https://www.gov.uk/government/news ...](https://www.gov.uk/government/news...)

Agreement over driver-only trains rejected

February 16, 2017

A proposed resolution between Southern rail and the train drivers' trade union Aslef to end their dispute over driver-only operated (DOO) trains has been rejected by the membership. Aslef had conceded a key principle that a train can run in certain circumstances with only a driver on board. On the other hand, GTR had reiterated an earlier offer – also made to trade union RMT – to always roster a second, safety-trained crew member but with conditions where they could operate trains without them if necessary. A series of strikes by drivers had brought trains to a halt, while an overtime ban closed branch lines and severely disrupted services from early December until talks began. Aslef said that it will try to find a solution in line with the members' expectations. The dispute with the RMT also continues. Trade union RMT, which represents conductors, who have been rebranded as on-board supervisors, was not involved in the talks.

English: http://www.aslef.org.uk/article.php?group_id=5345

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2017/feb/02/southern-rail-deal-reached-to-end-strikes-over-driver-only-trains>

The financing of later life

February 13, 2017

The Guardian is publishing an interesting series on retirement, looking at what it looks like for this and future generations, for the rich and the poor, for those looking at 30 years of leisure and others juggling caring responsibilities with their own advancing years. The nine contributions are published every Monday for eight weeks, and then one long, in-depth concluding article. The 1st article discusses opportunities an ageing population brings – and the challenges; the 2nd and 3rd describe the financial situation of pensioners and the necessity to continue work. With so few workers saving enough for their twilight years, retirement is in danger of becoming a thing of the past. That has huge implications for workplaces, and how older workers are treated. The 4th article gives a historical overview. Pensioner poverty began to improve only in the late 70s as the value of the state pension rose and an increasing number (mainly men) were able to benefit from occupational pension schemes, often negotiated by the trade unions.

English: [https://www.theguardian.com/membership/2017/feb/06/flexible-retirement-age ...](https://www.theguardian.com/membership/2017/feb/06/flexible-retirement-age...)

The series: [https://www.theguardian.com/membership/ng-interactive ...](https://www.theguardian.com/membership/ng-interactive...)

Working conditions at the National Health Service

February 8, 2017

The National Health Service (NHS), with its 1.5 million employees, ranks amongst the five largest employers in the world. What is remarkable about the NHS staff is that all 1.5 of them are covered by collective agreements at a time when fewer than 27.9% of UK workers are covered by collective bargaining. However, in 2016, things were no longer as rosy for NHS patients and staff due to government's tight controls on public spending to meet debt reduction targets at a time when demand for health services is rising while the social care system is struggling under years of successive cuts.

English: [http://www.global-labour-university.org/fileadmin/GLU_Column ...](http://www.global-labour-university.org/fileadmin/GLU_Column...)

Profile of the public services

February 6, 2017

The Reform think-tank published a 'work in progress' report dedicated to the public-sector workforce. The authors state that recruitment difficulty is experienced because the pay differentials between public and private-sector commercial directors are still too large. Public services also suffer from a skills deficit in key areas. According to the report, robots and computers could replace almost 250,000 public sector jobs over the next 15 years. Using websites and artificially intelligent 'chat bots' could improve efficiency and save billions of pounds - but at huge cost for workers who lose steady jobs. The changes could also affect around 30% of nursing tasks, including information collection and handing out non-intravenous medication, and even doctors. Reform argues that public services should embrace the 'gig economy' - with workers picking up jobs on an ad hoc basis through online platforms.

English: [http://www.reform.uk/wp-content ...](http://www.reform.uk/wp-content...)

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