

# collective bargaining

Issue 10/2017 October

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

### **Council agrees on posting and on the social pillar**

*October 26, 2017*

At the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council of 23 October 2017 in Luxembourg, EU Ministers of Employment and Social Affairs agreed on a general approach regarding the Commission's proposal to revise the rules on the posting of workers. The political agreement on the posting of workers confirms the Commission's key principle of equal pay for equal work at the same place, setting out that posted workers will generally benefit from the same rules governing pay and working conditions as local

workers. The ministers will have to seek agreement with the European Parliament on a final text. The Council also expressed an unanimous endorsement of the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Pillar will be proclaimed by the Parliament, the Council and the Commission at the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth, taking place on 17 November in Gothenburg.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **Collective bargaining and deregulation pressure**

*October 25, 2017*

Investigate Europe, a group of experienced journalists, comes up with a critical publication that was originally published in the German Tagesspiegel. The subject is the price of deregulating labour markets. According to the authors, European Commissioners and finance ministers of the euro group have systematically dismantled or weakened collective bargaining agreements, fought against trade unions and, by doing so, promoted inequality and job insecurity. With slogans as 'employment-friendly reforms' and 'flexibility', a decrease of the bargaining coverage or the extension of collective agreements was promoted.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **Wage inequality and collective bargaining**

*October 17, 2017*

A Global Labour Column is dedicated to the ILO Global Wage Report from a wage inequality perspective. Minimum wage legislation and collective bargaining have a central role to play to reduce inequality between and within enterprises, as various studies have shown. But differences in the way collective bargaining is organised have different effects. When collective bargaining is at the company or workplace level, the effect is restricted to wage inequality within enterprises. When collective bargaining takes place at the national, industry or branch level in multi-employer settings with coordination across levels, a larger proportion of workers is covered and inequality is likely to be reduced both within and between enterprises. The extension of collective agreements by governments to all workers in a particular sector can reinforce these effects.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **IMF publishes inequality report**

*October 11, 2017*

The latest International Monetary Fund's Fiscal Monitor report, *Tackling Inequality*, focuses on inequality and ways of reducing both its causes and effects. The report says that, while some inequality is inevitable in a market-based economic system, excessive inequality can erode social cohesion, lead to political polarisation, and ultimately lower economic growth. It also signals that, although increased global integration and technological progress are widely recognised as having generated widespread economic growth and falling global inequality and poverty, the rising inequality in advanced economies, in conjunction with job insecurity and stagnating real incomes for a segment of the population, has led to growing public backlash against globalisation.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **Bargaining for journalists**

*October 5, 2017*

The International Federation of Journalists published the results of a survey with several European respondents. Strong unions, supported by proper and implemented legislation and rights to collective bargaining are of great importance for journalists to secure fair and decent working conditions. There are still complications to overcome in order to achieve decent working conditions, such as a lack of collective bargaining and social rights, low wages and the denial of rights for freelancers. Respondents emphasise the advantages of union membership and collective action, when trying to overcome these challenges. The IFJ calls for a global commitment to respect the rights and freedom of association, collective bargaining and fair working conditions. It is necessary to ensure independent journalism and press freedom.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **OECD updates gender inequality research**

*October 4, 2017*

The OECD published an updated version of its 2012 report *Closing the Gender Gap Now. In the new report, The Pursuit of Gender Equality: An Uphill Battle*, the organisation signals that very little progress has been made since 2012. Gender gaps persist in all areas of social and economic life across countries, and the size of these gaps has often changed little in recent years. When women do work, they are more likely to do it on a part-time basis, are less likely to advance to management positions, are more likely to face discrimination, and earn less than men. The median female worker earns almost 15% less than her male counterpart, on average, across the OECD – a rate that has barely changed since 2010. Together with the full report, the OECD has made available individual country reports for France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, and the UK.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

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## Austria

### **Equal treatment of blue- and white-collar workers**

*October 25, 2017*

The parliament voted on a reform of the so-called *Angestelltenengesetz*. The reformed act will take away the different treatment of white- and blue-collar workers. This harmonisation is a long-standing demand of the trade union movement. The trade unions' aim was the introduction of labour relations between an employer and a worker based on unified private law contracts. The ÖGB asked parliament to decide on the proposals for the removal of existing differences before the elections. However, the decision came after. The union criticised the employers' organisation WKÖ that expressed restraint regarding the necessary harmonisation.

Read on: [in German ...](#) The Act, [in German ...](#)

### **Bargaining in metal sector pending**

*October 25, 2017*

The negotiations in the metal sector have not yet resulted in an agreement. The trade unions PRO-GE and GPA-djp organised regional meetings with the aim to put pressure on the employers' side. Some 1500 workers participated in the protest. The unions have planned to intensify the pressure with a series of regional meetings and manifestations. Their demand is an increase of the wages with 4%. So far, the employers have not offered any improvement of pay. The unions have opened a special website, dedicated to the current bargaining round.

Read on: [in German ...](#) Special website, [in German ...](#)

### **Concentration of capital assessed**

*October 2, 2017*

The national bank produces every year a database on the distribution of capital based on the so-called HFCS-system (Household Finance and Consumption Survey) of the European Central Bank, which calculates the financial situation of individual households. However, the financial situation of the superrich is not really captured by this method. In order to fill the gap, the Arbeiterkammer has assigned a team of researchers with the task to statistically analyse the inequality in capital ownership focusing on the top of the wealth distribution. The result is a working paper that reveals an undercoverage at the top of the distribution and a systematic underestimation of total wealth and wealth inequality.

Read on: the working paper, [in German ...](#)

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## Belgium

### **Agreement on early retirement in arduous jobs**

*October 27, 2017*

Negotiations between the federal government and the trade unions in the public sector have led to a memorandum with general principles. Workers that have carried out arduous and hard work for at least 5 years will have the opportunity to retire at the age of 60 years. Those that continue their career receive in return higher pension benefits. The conditional criteria that are taken into account are: inconvenient working time (night and shift work), hard physical work (lifting), psychological and emotional pressure, and high safety and health risks. The government is working on a draft act that will implement the formulated

principles. Earlier on, similar negotiations in the private sector ended in a dead-end street. The government is reflecting a proposal for the public sector.

Read on: [in Dutch ...](#) [in French ...](#)

### **Industrial action at FN-plant**

*October 27, 2017*

Workers at a plant in Herstal of weapon producer FN and Browning International have walked out in recent weeks for better working conditions and pay. Workers pushed for a return of the management to the negotiation table. Their demand is a better pay offer than the 1.1% that was settled in the sectoral agreement.

Read on: [in French \(1\) ...](#) [in French \(2\) ...](#)

### **Agreement settled at brewery AB InBev**

*October 17, 2017*

Trade unions and the management of brewery AB InBev, with plants in Louvain, Hoegaarden and Jupille, finalised their negotiations and concluded a collective agreement. The deal improves the job security and guarantees the pay level in case of future restructurings. In case of closures, workers have the right to receive their wage during a period of 36 weeks. During the negotiations, the trade unions had considered strike action, but with this deal they abstained from further industrial action.

Read on: [in French ...](#) [in Dutch ...](#)

### **Public sector in Wallonia strikes**

*October 10, 2017*

Trade union CGSP/ACOD organised a public-sector workers' strike in the French-speaking region. The union protested against the federal government's policies and budget cuts. The union said it was a warning to the current government, which has a majority on the right and thinks public services are not important. The sector is under-funded and workers have to defend not only their jobs but also the services they provide.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

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## **Bulgaria**

### **Rally for better pay**

*October 27, 2017*

The Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CITUB) is campaigning for higher incomes and the protection of fundamental workers' rights. CITUB's main demands are higher wages (an additional BGN 100 – 50 euro – to the monthly salary of every worker), decent pay for overtime and improvement of the rights of the workers. The union insists on a salary of at least BGN 700 for youngsters who graduated university, and who work in their specialty. The ultimate goal is a level of salaries closer to the average European level, a minimum wage that guarantees a normal living, normal payment of overtime and night work, a fair distribution of the burden between labour and capital and between rich and poor, enhanced enforcement of social and labour law, especially in the area of safety and health at work, working time, wages and social security, and a guaranteed access of every citizen to quality education and health care.

Read on: [in English \(1\) ...](#) [in English \(2\) ...](#)

### **Firefighters protest**

*October 14, 2017*

Firefighters have started their protest against the frozen income in the system and the inadequate policy of the government. The workers insist on a wage increase by at least 15% in 2018. The trade union of firefighters and rescuers stated that the planned BGN 55 million in the Ministry of Interior budget for next year's salaries in the sector is insufficient. If the request is not met, joint protests with the police are considered, during the EU presidency in 2018.

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## Croatia

### **Median wage below Chinese level**

*October 22, 2017*

By the level of median wages in some of its cities China has overtaken, according to the Forbes magazine, certain parts of Europe. The median salary in Shanghai (980 euro), Beijing (849 euro) and Shenzhen (810 euro) is higher than in Croatia, the newest member of the EU, where the median net salary is 766 euro.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **Poor pay leads to brain drain**

*October 5, 2017*

An article on Equaltimes reveals that there is a serious threat of a brain drain, notably in the care and medical sectors. Doctor are waiting for the 'right moment' to leave the country in search of better pay and working conditions. Since the country joined the EU in 2013, the National Medical Council has received more than 1300 requests for certificates to work abroad. At least 550 doctors have left the country, many fed up with dead-end jobs, forced overtime and abusive patients. Among junior doctors who decide to leave, many do so before starting the specialty training, leaving behind an ageing sector in dire straits.

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## Cyprus

### **Public sector strike looms**

*October 7, 2017*

Public sector unions said they considered to strike after talks about pay rises with the finance minister broke down. Unions were hoping to arrive at a consensual arrangement on the basis of the basic provision of the framework agreement linking nominal GDP with the sum of the demands. However, the finance minister's approach concerning the said provision did not help continue the dialogue and a deadlock emerged. The framework agreement, unions said, affects some 24,000 workers and pensioners. In a written statement following the meeting, the minister said granting pay rises on the eve of the elections would signal a return to the bad practices of the past.

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## Czechia

### **Legal battle with Uber continues**

*October 26, 2017*

Uber is back on the road in Brno after the Supreme Court temporarily overturned a ban on its services in the country's second largest city. It is the second time that such a ban has been invalidated by a higher instance court in a protracted battle between Brno's taxi drivers and Uber. The ban, which was in effect since mid-July 2017 was cancelled on the grounds that it was a preliminary measure adopted ahead of the final decision on the legal dispute between Uber and the Lido taxi service.

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### **Unions call for increase of minimum wage**

*October 15, 2017*

The trade unions have prepared a list of ten requirements for the future government to fulfil during its mandate. One of the requirements is to raise the minimum wage to 50 percent of the average wage within the next four years. According to the head of the Czech Confederation of Trade Unions, the unions will present the requirements in the coming days. The government decided in August 2017 to increase the



minimum wage by 11 percent to 12,200 crowns as of 2018. That should be about 40 percent of the average wage, which reached 29,346 crowns (1146 euro) in the second quarter of 2017.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **Doctors and specialists protest against poor funding**

*October 10, 2017*

General practitioners, specialists and dentists held a symbolic nationwide protest against inadequate financing and excessive bureaucracy that is driving many of them out of business. They warned that the symbolic protest would be followed by a one-day strike if the government fails to pay attention to their demands. According to the Union of Private Practitioners, the country will lack around 800 medical specialists and general practitioners by the year 2020. The union said that unless things change the whole network could collapse. It moreover points out that in supporting hospitals and neglecting small private practitioners the health ministry has been following the opposite trend of that in Western Europe where the authorities have recognised the importance of providing good and accessible outpatient care.

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## Denmark

### **Shared economy discussed**

*October 20, 2017*

Social partners are engaged in a debate about the integration of the so-called sharing economy into the legal codex so that companies like Uber and Airbnb can be absorbed into the Scandinavian welfare model. The government is putting forward a number of measures designed to fold the business concept into its tax and labour laws. It is estimated that about one-fifth of Danes have either offered or consumed the kinds of services provided by Uber and Airbnb, a proportion that is bound to increase. The social partners agree more needs to be done. According to the unions, the government's new sharing economy strategy says a lot about taxation and a little about workers' rights. The aim is to give the sharing economy room to grow.

Read on: [in English \(1\) ...](#) [in English \(2\) ...](#)

### **Nurses join doctors' protest**

*October 18, 2017*

A campaign by doctors to overturn a court ruling they see as landmark for the way patient care is conducted has gained the support of the Danish Nurses' Association (Dansk sygeplejeråd, DSR). The viral campaign, which uses the hashtag #detkuhaværetmig ('it could have been me') spread on social media as junior doctors and senior colleagues throughout the country oppose a court ruling convicting a junior doctor of negligence, due most probably to working pressure constraints.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

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## Estonia

### **Minimum wage up to 500 euro**

*October 26, 2017*

The Employers' Confederation and the Confederation of Trade Unions EAKL concluded a wage agreement, according to which the minimum wage will increase from the beginning of 2018 to 500 euro and the minimum hourly wage will be 2.97 euro. A union spokesperson said that the negotiations on agreeing on the minimum wage figures were more difficult than usual, as the prerequisite for an increase in minimum wage was to reach a joint understanding on the long-term methodology on how minimum wage should increase in the future. The deal is essentially a generally binding collective agreement at the highest level, which means that it is mandatory for all employers. From 2018 on, it is not allowed to pay a lower monthly salary to a full-time employee than 500 euro.

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## Finland

### **Human trafficking trial**

*October 19, 2017*

A berry entrepreneur faces human trafficking charges at Central Finland District Court in a criminal trial which is expected to last months. The head of the firm is accused of bringing Thai nationals in and forcing them to work under conditions which violated human dignity. The head of the berry company faces possible penalties of a three-year prison sentence and paying compensation of some 60,000 euro to the company's former workers. The berry picking company housed the visiting pickers in shipping containers or in buses and the pickers' passports were seized when they arrived. The workers were forced to pay for necessary items like accommodation, transportation and the required berry-picking tools.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **Electrical workers plan one-week strike**

*October 18, 2017*

The Electrical Workers' Union said it was planning a one-week strike at companies including steel makers and elevator firms due to a dispute over wage-setting and collective agreements in the industry. The union said about 1,000 workers would go on strike in companies including Caverion, Konecranes, Kone, Meyer, Outokumpu, Boliden and SSAB, Archtech, Ovako and Valmet Automotive. The strike is scheduled to begin on 1 November.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **Standstill in negotiations**

*October 12, 2017*

The negotiations for the paper industry collective agreement came to a standstill after the employers' organisation, the Finnish Forest Industries Federation, offered a zero-pay rise to the Paper Workers' Union. The union is the first industrial union to negotiate on a pay rise this autumn. Their collective agreement expired at the end of September. Although the union did not publish their exact demands for a pay rise, it is definitely not zero. The paper industry is doing much better economically now than in the past few years. The union's board made it clear that a zero level pay rise is a non-starter. It says that the employers' proposal shows disdain for employees. Preparations for possible industrial action have started.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

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## France

### **The crisis, ten years after**

*October 11, 2017*

In an extensive assessment of the economic development since the start of the economic crisis, published by the statistical office Insee, several paragraphs are dedicated to the role and impact of collective bargaining. The authors conclude that the institutionalisation of labour relations does not tip the balance of power in favour of employees, especially during an economic crisis when the social dialogue can be used by management for its own purposes. In the chapter on wage income during the crisis it is noted that, while employment and wage adjustments have frequently gone hand in hand with collective bargaining, the latter seems to have facilitated rather than hindered these adjustments.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **Public service workers on strike**

*October 10, 2017*

Public sector workers went on strike against President Macron's plans to cull jobs and toughen pay conditions, forcing airlines to cancel hundreds of flights and disrupting school activities. It is the first time in a decade that all unions representing more than 5 million public workers have rallied behind a protest call. Strike notices were lodged in schools, hospitals, airports and government ministries over plans to cut 120,000 jobs, freeze pay and reduce sick leave compensation.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

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## Germany

### **Pay hike at Tesla**

*October 18, 2017*

The US e-car pioneer has agreed to an improved salary structure and job guarantee until 2022 for the workers at Tesla Grohmann Automation. The engineering firm that was acquired by Tesla in 2016 supplies Tesla with critical components to Model 3 production including battery assembly lines for electric cars. Trade union IG Metall had planned to go on strike at a critical time when the California-based electric carmaker was scheduled to begin first production of the Model 3. Tesla quickly responded to the instability within the company by offering incentive packages to workers that can roughly lead to a 30% increase from current levels. The new remuneration structure, retroactively effective from 1 October, guarantees staff 'a fair and competitive salary' and includes a pay raise for apprenticeships.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **Collective bargaining leads to higher minimum wage**

*October 18, 2017*

In several sectors, the trade unions have negotiated improvements of the minimum wage. Trade union IG BAU and the construction employers signed an agreement that leads to an increase of the minimum wage in the sector. The agreement comes into force on 1 January 2018 and expires 31 December 2019. The basic minimum hourly wage for the whole country will increase to 12.20 euro. In agriculture and horticulture, the sectoral minimum wage is settled at 9.10 euro, starting 1 November 2017. The WSI-institute has prepared an update of the current minimum wage levels.

Read on: [in German ...](#) Overview, [in German ...](#)

### **IG Metall seeks shorter working week and pay increase**

*October 13, 2017*

Trade union IG Metall will push for shorter working hours and 6% more pay for the 3.9 million workers in the upcoming negotiations in the metals and electrical sectors. The unions seek a drive for a better work-life balance. The demand by IG Metall reflects growing self-confidence among trade unions as Europe's biggest economy is set to grow by roughly 2 per cent this year and unionists say employees should get a fair share of the success. IG Metall is campaigning for a right to reduce weekly hours to 28 from 35 — with a right to return to full-time work after two years — for shift workers and those caring for children or other relatives. An economic observer commented that the demand for better work hours instead of higher wages is part of a much bigger trend that shakes up economic assumptions and European monetary policy.

Read on: [in English \(1\) ...](#) [in English \(2\) ...](#)

### **Lufthansa strikes deal with pilots**

*October 11, 2017*

A deal struck between Lufthansa and the main pilots union should ensure significantly less labour turbulence in the years ahead. The formal signing of the agreement — which is valid until June 2022 — will end the prospect of strikes, which have affected the airline in recent years. The deal will reduce Lufthansa's pilot staffing costs primarily through pension benefit cuts, something the airline has been trying to achieve for years as it tries to compete with low cost European rivals such as Ryanair and easyJet. The deal paves the way for the hiring of up to 700 junior pilots at Lufthansa, its cargo divisions and its subsidiary Eurowings, previously known as Germanwings. The negotiation partners speak about a new beginning of social dialogue.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

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## Greece

### **Public and private wage differentials**

*October 13, 2017*

According to the Hellenic Federation of Enterprises (SEV), civil servants remain significantly better paid than private sector workers, with their average wages 38% higher than their counterparts in the private sector. The average monthly net wage in the public sector is 1,075 euro compared to 777 euro in the private sector, according to figures made public in SEV's bulletin, which underlined that the gap between the two is widening rather than closing. In a report conducted by the civil servants' trade union ADEDY an increase in permanent staff in the civil services is signalled over the 2017. An additional 1,293 staff were hired between August 2016 and August 2017, bringing the total number to 566,022. Another finding was that most civil servants – 80% of the total – take home a net monthly salary of less than 1,300 euro. Half earn up to 1,000 euro a month, 44% take home between 1,000 and 1,500 euro and 3.6% net between 1,500 and 2,100 euro.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

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## Hungary

### **Wages improve at retailer Auchan**

*October 12, 2017*

After talks with representatives of unions the management of the local unit of French supermarket chain Auchan Retail Hungary announced that it will raise wages of store staff by 13.6% on average from 1 November 2017. In recent months, the pressure for better wages has increased in several retail chains. Auchan, with almost 7000 workers, has also announced to engage more staff. The trade union of commercial employees (KASZ) said that new engagements should, first and for all, take away existing labour shortages.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **Telekom agreement foresees job cuts and pay increase**

*October 4, 2017*

The management of Magyar Telekom (MTel) reached an agreement with the trade unions on a reduction of staff and wage rises for 2018. MTel said it would lay off 350 staff under the agreement. Most of the layoffs are expected to take place by the end of 2017. A further 160 employees are expected to leave the company as a result of an ongoing restructuring. MTel estimated severance pay for staff made redundant would reach HUF 2.8 billion, most of which will be accounted in Q4 2017. Under the agreement, salaries will rise by an average 5% from the start of 2018.

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## Iceland

### **Bridging the gender pay gap**

*October 24, 2017*

Due to the gender wage gap, women across Europe will effectively be working without pay for a large portion of the year. According to data compiled from Eurostat on the gender wage gap, Iceland is in the top ten percentiles for largest gender wage gaps. Estonia ranked first, with women in that country effectively working without pay from September 23, with a gender wage gap of about 27%. Women in Iceland, where the gender wage gap is about 17.5%, will effectively work without pay from October 30. It bears mentioning that, according to Statistics Iceland, the gender wage gap is 16.1% in 2016, down from 17% in 2015.

Read on: [in English ...](#) The Statistics Iceland graphs and data, [in English ...](#)

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## Ireland

### **Pilots at Ryanair formulate demands**

*October 28, 2017*

The turbulence at Ryanair continues. The company's Stansted pilots voted to reject a pay deal offered by the management in a 60% to 40% majority. A pay and pension boost of up to £24,000 (€27,000) each had been on offer from management - but only if pilots continued to negotiate with the airline directly. It is believed a number of other bases have also rejected the improved terms and conditions. The European Employee Representative Committee, which is not recognised by Ryanair management, also threatened industrial

action and made a pay demand for pilots which is close to twice what the airline has offered. Moreover, the British Airline Pilots' Association (BALPA) that represents over 10,000 pilots in the UK launched a survey among Ryanair pilots in response to what it says is growing dissatisfaction with the company.

Read on: [in English \(1\) ...](#) [in English \(2\) ...](#)

### **Five days strike at Irish Rail**

*October 25, 2017*

Trade union members at Irish Rail have announced five dates of 24-hour all out-strike action after talks between management and unions at the Workplace Relations Commission broke down. The unions stated that they were confronted with a refusal by management at the State transport company to address a reasonable pay claim by staff. Representatives and officials of the five involved trade unions in the Irish Rail Group of Unions met and finalised an agreed campaign of targeted industrial action. The five 24-hour work stoppages are planned to take place on 1, 7, 14, and 23 November, and 8 December 2017. After the strike announcement, the management of Irish Rail expressed its hope to find a way to resolve the dispute and avoid disruption to the travelling public.

Read on: [in English \(1\) ...](#) [in English \(2\) ...](#) [in English \(3\) ...](#)

### **Sectoral Employment Order sets minimum rates of pay in construction**

*October 19, 2017*

Trade union SIPTU welcomed the enacting of a Sectoral Employment Order (SEO), which sets minimum rates of pay in the construction industry as an 'important first step' for workers in securing decent terms and conditions. The SEO establishes legally binding minimum rates of pay for the various grades of construction worker. These are for the craft grade €18.93 per hour, for technical operatives (Grade A/Category 2) €18.36 per hour, skilled and semi-skilled operatives (Grade B and C/Category 1) €17.04 per hour and for new entrants €13.77 per hour.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **Trade union SIPTU wants referendum on bargaining rights**

*October 4, 2017*

The country's largest trade union SIPTU has called for the Government to hold a referendum to give unions rights to engage in collective bargaining on behalf of their members. Under the current law trade unions have the right to organise workers, but, employers also have the right not to recognise unions for the purposes of collective bargaining. At SIPTU's biennial conference, in Cork, the delegates debated a motion calling for a referendum to be held to provide workers with a constitutional right to engage in collective bargaining. Outgoing general president Jack O'Connor criticised the fact that workers still do not enjoy a constitutional entitlement to participate fully in collective bargaining with their employers.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

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## **Italy**

### **Labour exploitation in tomato industry**

*October 24, 2017*

According to court documents, two of the country's biggest food companies have been implicated in labour abuses of migrant workers picking tomatoes bought by thousands of European consumers every week. Prosecutor Paola Guglielmi named food giants Mutti and Conserve Italia as benefiting from 'conditions of absolute exploitation' in the country's hugely lucrative tomato industry, as part of an investigation into the death of a seasonal labourer. Through a far-reaching investigation, the prosecutor checked telephone records, tapped phone calls and conducted aerial surveillance to link the exploitation of seasonal migrant workers to industrial giants. While workers make an average of €30 a day in the Puglia region, they can expect to lose up to half of that just to pay for food, transport, water and a cut to their gangmaster. A trade union spokesperson said that, next to transparency, stricter rules are necessary for the control of suppliers.

Read on: [in English ...](#) Details, [in Italian ...](#)

### **Observatory for temporary workers reports**

October 23, 2017

The observatory *Ebitemp* for temporary work reported on recent developments in the sector (with graphs and figures). The number of temporary agency workers in August 2017 was up by 6.8% on an annual basis. The number of temp workers in August 2017 reached 419,800 compared with 392,959 in the same period of 2016. The number of hours worked in August 2017 increased by 21.6% on an annual basis. *Ebitemp* was set up by the trade unions in the temporary agency sector and the three trade union confederations, together with the main employers' organisations in the temporary agency sector.

Read on: [in English ...](#) The Ebitemp report, [in Italian ...](#)

### **Steel workers at ArcelorMittal strike**

October 9, 2017

Workers at the troubled Ilva steel plant held a 24-hour-strike over plans to cut 4,000 jobs as part of its restructuring under a takeover by led by Indian steel multinational ArcelorMittal. Union members held a sit-in at Ilva's site in Taranto, Puglia, where 3,300 job losses are planned and also protested at Ilva's plant in Genoa where a further 600 jobs would go. The Am Investco takeover consortium intends to re-hire almost 10,000 out of 14,000 Ilva workers, according to a letter sent to unions ahead of government-mediated talks slated in Rome on 9 October 2017. The trade unions and the government want Am Investco to guarantee it will maintain Ilva employees' existing salaries, jobs and contractual benefits while the consortium has said it wants to re-negotiate these.

Read on: [in English \(1\) ...](#) [in English \(2\) ...](#)

### **FRONERI workers protests**

October 4, 2017

One year after the creation of the FRONERI ice cream joint venture by Nestlé and the French private equity firm PAI Partners, the company has launched a full-blown attack on workers throughout Europe. The attack targets factory workers, salesforce and office workers in Germany, Finland, Switzerland, and in Greece and Italy, factory closures have been announced. So far, some 850 workers risk losing their jobs so the company can reach a target of 20% operating margin. Workers at the former Nestlé factory in Parma were informed that the company intends to close the factory and dismiss 180 workers. The food workers unions have issued a joint statement demanding the withdrawal of the collective dismissal procedure and closure plans.

Read on: [in English ...](#) The statement, [in Italian ...](#)

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## Latvia

### **Increase of minimum wage budgeted**

October 27, 2017

The parliament has, in its first reading, accepted the budget framework with the main priorities for the period 2018-2020. In the budget the government announces among others efforts to reduce inequality and an increase of the minimum wage. The legislation also deals with budget surplus amounts, fiscal reserves, the proportions of personal income tax revenue going to the state and municipal budgets, and others.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

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## Liechtenstein

### **Union reports on bargaining experience**

October 26, 2017

The trade union confederation LANV published its monthly journal online. In the editorial, some quotes of employers' representatives are recorded that were made during the ongoing collective bargaining talks. With sometimes mocking statements like 'there is no need for statutory minimum wages, all workers are paid better' or 'the gender pay gap has disappeared in several branches'. The union seeks a real wage increase for workers, after a long period of austerity. This should take the form of structural pay increases, not of on-off payments and bonuses.

Read on: [in German ...](#)

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## Lithuania

### **Tripartite agreement on wage formation**

*October 17, 2017*

The government, business representatives and trade unions signed an agreement, declaring to raise wages, cut taxes on labour and encourage collective agreements. In the signed paper it is said that the principles will be implemented in accordance to good will, honesty, confidence and constructive dialogue, with another separate agreement to be signed on higher wages. The document envisages boosting 'a positive image of business' and ensure balanced participation of labour force from third countries in the country's labour market, with optimised terms and procedures of handling immigration formalities.

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## Luxembourg

### **Work, inequality and social cohesion**

*October 16, 2017*

Statistical office Statec provided the latest findings for work and social cohesion. The findings show a near €7,000 difference in the monthly average standard of living between the country's 10% most affluent (€7,891/month) and 10% least wealthy individuals (€984/month). And while 28% of those who were at risk of falling into poverty in 2013 are no longer in that situation, 30% of the citizens have experienced poverty at least once between 2013 and 2016. The age bracket which experienced the longest lasting poverty is between 18 and 24.

Read on: [in English ...](#) The report, [in French ...](#)

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## Malta

### **Teachers plan strike**

*October 26, 2017*

Teachers plan to strike on 8 November 2017 after discussions with government failed over a wage dispute. The Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) has declared that the negotiations over a sectoral agreement fell apart at financial package discussion stage. The trade union will issue around 50 directives culminating in a strike. The MUT is demanding a pay rise of over 20% for all state and church school educators, arguing that members of the profession are not being given a worthy financial package; what is being offered falls short.

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## Netherlands

### **Employers can live with pay increase**

*October 25, 2017*

An investigation among 1000 employers revealed that a large majority of the employers feel wages should now be rising. Trade union FNV said last month it would be looking for wage rises averaging 3.5% in the next pay round. In addition, the polled employers want the new government to cut taxes and support the proposed switch to two tax bands in the income tax system. Six in 10 also think moves to make the labour market more flexible have gone too far.

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### **Dispute on wages not solved for teachers**

*October 20, 2017*



Teachers' trade union AOb surveyed over 10 thousand teachers and other education staff about the current situation, after 95 percent of them took part in the second general strike of primary school teachers since the 1980s. 47 percent of respondents said that the new government's plans for primary education are completely insufficient. And 96 percent said they want the union to arrange further action, 63 percent suggested a national strike. The budget set aside by the new government for primary education in its government agreement, is not enough. Next to better wages, the teachers ask for less time on administrative tasks.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **Agreement with guidelines on fair pay and security for temporary workers**

*October 13, 2017*

Trade union FNV reached a deal for new rules under the ABU-collective agreement (temporary agency collective agreement), which includes guidelines on fair pay and security for temporary workers. Temporary work agencies are required to provide accurate and complete information on wages, surcharges and expenses as per the lender. And if the salary is not correct, temporary workers can claim money retroactively if the correct information is not provided. Temporary workers will also receive one more day of holiday (25 instead of 24). The ABU-agreement will run from 5 November 2017 until 1 June 2019 and applies to 700,000 temporary workers. A second temporary agency agreement (with the Association of Mediation and Employment Agencies NBBU) that applies to 70,000 other temporary workers also runs until 1 June 2019. The FNV tries to merge both agreements in future.

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## Norway

### **Union recognition at fish processor secured**

*October 16, 2017*

A strike launched by the Norwegian Foodworkers' Union NNN at fish processor Norse Production ended on 12 October 2017 with the company signing a collective bargaining agreement for the fish processing sector. With union recognition secured, the local union will now be able to negotiate additional improvements with local management within the framework of the sectoral agreement. Other trade unions prepared for support action in solidarity with the NNN as the company dug in and attempted to employ strike-breakers. Industri Energi gave notice of sympathy action to block delivery of shipping material. The transport workers' union made preparations to halt transport and the NNN was prepared to shut down all salmon production.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **The functioning of the bargaining model**

*October 5, 2017*

At the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Technical Calculation Committee for Wage Settlements (TBU), the country's coordinated wage formation was discussed. The basis for the collective bargaining model is a shared understanding of reality before the parties begin wage negotiations. The result has been few conflicts and narrow pay gaps. The TBU discusses the 'real financial situation' and identifies the room for manoeuvre ahead of wage negotiations, in light of competitiveness and a just division of incomes.

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## Poland

### **Nationwide doctors' strike**

*October 28, 2017*

Doctors around the country have been protesting. They demand better working conditions, shorter hospital waiting lists and less red tape. The doctors are seeking an immediate pay rise to 105 percent of the national average monthly wage of 4,600 zloty (€1,010) gross each month. The strikers have the public's support, according to a survey, which said 63 percent of respondents backed the doctors' initiative. The dispute started on October 2 when a group of 20 resident doctors started a hunger strike in the foyer of a Warsaw paediatric hospital. This was later repeated in other big cities. Last year, the government spent 4.4% of the country's GDP on health services. That puts it among some of the lowest-spending countries, according to



the intergovernmental economic organisation OECD - just above Turkey (3.4%) and Latvia (3.2%).

Read on: [in English \(1\) ...](#) [in English \(2\) ...](#)

## **Socio-economic data**

*October 24, 2017*

The statistical office produced an overview (with separate data in XLSX format) of the socio-economic situation during the first 9 months of 2017. Average paid employment in the private sector in the period of nine months of 2017 was by 4.4% higher than in 2016. The growth of the average monthly nominal gross wages and salaries in the private sector in the period of January-September 2017 was higher than a year before (in the 3rd quarter the dynamics strengthened). The purchasing power of wages and salaries increased to a lesser extent than in 2016, with consumer prices rising.

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## **Portugal**

### **National strike envisages public sector**

*October 27, 2017*

The coordinator of the civil servant unions (Frente Comum) said that all indicators pointed towards a large turnout for the strike organised on 27 October 2017. There have been hundreds or thousands of plenary meetings and workers on the public sector are complaining out a lack of response to their demands such as higher wages, the immediate unfreezing of promotions and a 35-hour week for all workers. The public services most affected were healthcare, education and social security.

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### **Website with wage statistics**

*October 26, 2017*

According to information collected by the website Pordata, run by the Francisco Manuel dos Santos Foundation, the medium purchasing power standard (PPS) in 2016 was 25,881 PPS, with the country in 18<sup>th</sup> place in a ranking led by Luxembourg (with 54,547 PPS). The average salaries of workers have increased in the last decade, but remain below the European Union (EU) average. Pordata said the EU average last year was 35,754 PPS. PPS, the Purchasing Power Standard, is a fictional currency used to compare levels of welfare and spending across countries, nullifying differences in price levels.

Read on: [in English ...](#) The report, [in Portuguese ...](#)

### **Consultative talks on budget started**

*October 7, 2017*

The country's president started preparatory talks with the social partners, after having consulted the political parties. The meetings are normally organised on a regular basis, but this time they are taking place before the submission to parliament of the state budget bill for 2018. At the end of last month, the president warned against the temptations of ever shorter electoral cycles and called for priority to be given to sustainable economic development and debt reduction. He also called in favour of good industrial relations.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

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## **Romania**

### **Effect of increased minimum wage questioned**

*October 28, 2017*

The gross minimum wage will increase by 31%, to RON 1,900 (413 euro), from 1 January 2018. The gross minimum wage currently amounts to RON 1,450 (315 euro). The net minimum salary will only increase by 4.3% or less than RON 50, as most of the social contributions that are currently being paid by employers will be transferred to employees starting 1 January 2018. However, most workers are afraid that their net salaries will even drop once the announced change according to which the whole social contributions will be

transferred to employees will come into force. The announced social contributions transfer has triggered protests, with the biggest ones being staged by the employees from the public health, police, and transport departments. However, the government said it would move on with the tax change.

Read on: [in English \(1\) ...](#) [in English \(2\) ...](#) [in English \(3\) ...](#)

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## Serbia

### **Wage increases debated**

*October 24, 2017*

The finance minister said at an economic summit not to expect increased fiscal risks from a planned hike of public sector salaries and pensions. The increase is covered 'with what has been achieved so far' - which could be the basis for one-off hikes in 2017, as well as a higher base for growth in 2018. For 2018, the ministry has projected a real growth of 3.5 percent, which, with the planned inflation, creates room for increase in salaries and pensions.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

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## Slovakia

### **Union demands lowering of retirement age**

*October 16, 2017*

Thousands of workers marched through the streets of Bratislava on October 14. They marched for earlier retirement, organised by the countrywide metallurgy and engineering trade union KOVO, pointing out that the current scheme does not cap the retirement age. Thus, those who today are 30 years of age may retire only after reaching 68 or even later. They see this as too late and call for capping the retirement age at 64.

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## Slovenia

### **Firefighters protest**

*October 5, 2017*

The Firefighters' Trade Union staged a protest rally in front of the Government Palace on 5 October 2017 as part of the continuing pay rise dispute with the government which the union indicated could escalate into a strike. The workers demand fair pay, for fair work. Firefighters are classified under 31 different workplace designations. Beginner firefighters start in the 17th pay grade, which is virtually the minimum wage, while top-level commanders are classified in the 48th pay grade. The government came up with proposals that only led to improvements for some categories.

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## Spain

### **Labour market data: rise of temporary jobs**

*October 26, 2017*

Official statistics show that seasonal work and temporary contracts boomed during the tourist summer in the third quarter of 2017. In the period from July to September 2017, unemployment went down from 17.2 percent to 16.4 percent, the National Statistics Office INE said, with the number of people out of work falling to 3.7 million at the end of September (3.9 million at the end of June). The third quarter is tourism season, and the hospitality branches (hotels, restaurants and other related services) created the most jobs. However, many jobs created are temporary contracts rather than permanent. The office also published a webpage dedicated to Quality of Life Indicators, with separate chapters on material living conditions and work.

Read on, [in Spanish ...](#) Quality of Life Indicators, [in Spanish ...](#)

### **A country that has no social contract**

*October 22, 2017*

In an open letter in the journal El País, it is said that the country misses a social contract between previously antagonistic forces. The social democratic parties accepted that the market economy was a valid instrument of wealth creation. For its part, classical liberalism accepted the creation of a social state. On the one hand, an educational system aimed at guaranteeing equal opportunities. On the other, a system of public insurance and social programs aimed at covering the contingencies of loss of income due to unemployment, illness and retirement. A social contract that reconciled market economy, social progress and democracy was enshrined in agreements, signed by the government, the main political and trade union forces of the left and business organisations. That contract began to crumble in the nineties with the fall of wages and the return of inequality, both social and territorial. The final blow was given by the austerity policy. It attacked the basic pillars of education, health, pensions and unemployment benefits.

Read on, [in Spanish ...](#)

### **Garbage collectors plan strike**

*October 20, 2017*

The trade unions UGT, CC.OO. and CGT are planning a strike of the garbage collection staff of the region Madrid from 6 November 2017 onwards. The workers' representatives of the garbage collection workers called for an indefinite strike due to the refusal of their employers to advance in the negotiation of a new collective agreement. In a press release, the three unions explain that the mediation held at the Labour Institute of the Community of Madrid ended without any agreement between the bargaining table of the collective agreement and the companies awarded the service. According to the unions' representatives the companies only want to cut back on the working conditions of the current collective agreement.

Read on, [in Spanish ...](#)

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## Sweden

### **Nordea bank announces giant job cuts**

*October 26, 2017*

Not only the trade unions, but also many labour market observers were taken by surprise as the Nordea bank launched new plans for 6000 job cuts. The decision of the Swedish based group has major consequences for the whole Nordic region. Denmark's financial workers union called the decision to lose well over a tenth of Nordea's workforce shocking and the Finnish bank union said it was a brutal move. Analysts challenged the credibility of management's cost guidance. The bank was already on the defensive after announcing it wanted to redomicile to Finland for regulatory reasons.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **Employment shortages become manifest**

*October 10, 2017*

Even after a record inflow of migrants over the past three years that boosted the country's population to above 10 million, businesses are having hard times finding skilled workers. The central bank stated that unemployment is at about the same level as before the global financial crisis while the number of job openings and job vacancies has doubled in that period. The labour shortage may also be good news for the central Riksbank, which is counting on faster wage increases to boost inflation. According to the National Institute of Economic Research, pay growth has been anaemic for years, holding at below 3% since 2012.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

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## Switzerland

### **Collective agreement at Coop**

*October 27, 2017*

The collective agreement that the trade unions settled with the retailer Coop leads to some interesting new provisions. Notably in the area of the promotion of a good work-life balance the improvements are important: maternity leave increase to 16 weeks paid leave, parental leave for fathers increases from 1 to 3 weeks, and additional child care provisions are introduced. The minimum wage varies from a basic 3900 Swiss Francs (3355 euro) to 4100 Swiss Francs (3527 euro) for skilled workers that have followed three years of vocational training.

Read on, [in German ...](#) The trade union pamphlet, [in French ...](#) The trade union pamphlet, [in Italian ...](#)

### **Wages under outsourcing pressure**

*October 27, 2017*

In an interesting Blog, the chief economist of the trade union confederation SGB/USS analyses the impact of outsourcing on the wage formation and on direct employment. Although, for instance, the employment data for cleaning services are increasing rapidly, this is not translated into direct labour. If workers were directly employed, instead of engaged under outsourced conditions, their payment would be substantially better. The author refers also to a study that was published in 2016.

The Blog, [in German ...](#) The 2016 study, [in English ...](#)

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## Turkey

### **Data on labour market and regional income distribution**

*October 16, 2017*

The statistical office published its latest labour market data and a report on the income distribution over the year 2016. The number of unemployed persons aged 15 years and older increased by 119,000 to 3,443,000 persons in the period of July 2017 compared with the same period of 2016. The unemployment rate stayed at 10.7%. In 2016 the annual average equivalised household disposable income was 19,139 TL (4,348 euro). Ankara was the region having the highest annual average equivalised household disposable income.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

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## United Kingdom

### **Wages still not recovered from the crisis**

*October 26, 2017*

Commenting on the latest data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), trade union TUC stated that the published figures show that UK workers are still significantly worse off than they were before the financial crash. The ONS figures show that for the year to April 2017 real wages in UK were £38 (7.9%) below their 2008 level. Inflation has overtaken wage growth for the last 6 months, so the TUC is concerned that next year could be even worse.

Read on: [in English ...](#) The data, [in English ...](#)

### **Low pay research comes with alarming data**

*October 19, 2017*

Low-paid workers are permanently stuck in low-paid jobs, and social mobility will stall without action. This is concluded in the 'Great Escape?' report of the Social Mobility Commission, carried out by the Resolution Foundation. It explores trends in low pay over recent decades and examines the factors linked to low pay and progression. Low pay is endemic in the UK and there has been little progress in the number of people managing to escape from poorly paid jobs. Just 1 in 6 low-paid workers (17%) managed to permanently escape from low pay in the last decade. Meanwhile, a quarter of low-paid workers remained permanently stuck in low pay and nearly half (48%) fluctuated in and out of low pay over the course of the last 10 years.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **Modern slavery in the shipping industry**

*October 13, 2017*

In a report from an inspection by the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) evidence is provided of unpaid wages, seafarer abandonment and other severe negligence of pay and working conditions. The shipping industry is relatively unique in its use of flags of convenience (FOC). An FOC ship is one that flies the flag of a country other than the country of ownership. By flagging out, ship owners can take advantage of minimal regulation, cheap registration fees, low or no taxes, and the freedom to employ from the global labour pool. The systematic and deliberate withholding of wages of seafarers amounts to a form of compulsion requiring workers to remain in abusive working and living conditions.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **Transport strike in Manchester**

*October 10, 2017*

On the 2 October 2017, transport workers went on strike in Manchester. First bus drivers went on strike to demand fair pay, after trade union Unite claimed that First reneged on standing agreements with the union. On the 3 October 2017 the rail workers of the trade union RTM took action. The rail companies plan to scrap train conductors from their services, which is causing safety concerns. Buying new rolling stock that does not require a conductor, is part of Northern Rails' modernisation policy. The regional organiser for RMT said that employers wish to cut standards and cut safety to boost the profit of shareholders. Negotiations between Northern Rail and RMT have stalled.

Read on: [in English ...](#)

### **Picturehouse threatens to sack striking workers**

*October 2, 2017*

Picturehouse Cinemas threatened to sack striking workers ahead of a planned walk-out over pay at five London cinemas. Workers represented by trade union Bectu announced plans to disrupt the British Film Institute's London film festival between 4 and 15 October, with nine days of strike action in a dispute over the living wage and other rights, including sick pay. However, as the dispute entered a second year, the cinema chain rejected the claim that the strike action is valid. The British Film Institute previously said it supported the Picturehouse workers' call for payment of the living wage, which it paid its own employees.

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