

collective bargaining

Issue 11/2017 | November

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

Working conditions for 'gig workers'

November 29, 2017

The Court of Justice of the European Union has ruled that workers can claim compensation for untaken

holidays. The ruling could have consequences for 'gig workers'. The dispute was over the employment contract of a salesman, which did not specify if he was entitled to paid leave. The salesman had been paid entirely on commission and his contract described him as self-employed. A UK employment tribunal subsequently found he should have been treated as a full-time worker. The CJEU has reinforced his rights.

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

Wage setting, income, inequality

November 23, 2017

A panel data analysis of 18 OECD countries between 1970 and 2007 examined the extent to which the relationship between the knowledge economy and income inequality is influenced by national labour market institutions. The authors found that the expansion of knowledge employment is positively associated with both the 90–10 wage ratio and the income share of the top 1%, but that these effects are mitigated by the presence of strong labour market institutions, such as coordinated wage bargaining, strict employment protection legislation and high bargaining coverage. The study provides robust evidence against the argument that industrial relations systems are no longer important safeguards of wage solidarity in the knowledge economy.

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

Persistence of large income inequalities

November 22, 2017

A draft 2018 Joint Employment Report by the European Commission, which uses data from 2016 and early 2017, reveals that income inequality has slightly decreased in the EU, after increasing in the aftermath of the crisis. The richest 20% of the population had a disposable income that was around five times higher than that of the poorest 20% in 2016, with large disparities across countries (and an increase in inequality in some). The persistence of relatively large income inequalities, often linked to unequal opportunities in access to education, training and social protection, and reflecting poor labour market outcomes, raises concerns in terms of fairness, social inclusion and sustainable growth. Spain, Greece, Bulgaria and Lithuania face a 'critical situation in terms of income inequality' according to the report.

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

The Paradise Papers and pay

November 16, 2017

The publications from the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), known as the Paradise Papers, highlight the failure of governments to stop the scourge of tax dodging and financial crime facilitated by offshore financial centres. For decades, wages have stagnated, public services have been squeezed and inequality has risen as workers have struggled to understand why globalisation's riches seemed to pass them by. The Paradise Papers help to show where a lot of that wealth was siphoned off. Workers pay twice: first through income tax and VAT to make up for the tax gap, and then again through wage cuts because of austerity. The European trade union federation EPSU has been calling for years to end austerity-led cuts in staff resources in tax administrations and enforcement units. The fight against white-collar crimes must be as tough as the fight against terrorism that breeds on global inequalities.

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

Pilots want European bargaining at Ryanair

November 14, 2017

The continuing disputes at Ryanair and the central management have entered a new phase. Ryanair Holdings made the company Europe's most valuable airline by being cheap, right down by even charging pilots for coffee on their own flights. Many crew members are employed as contractors on a month-to-month basis and must pay for uniforms, mobile phone use, ground transport and hotel costs when working from other bases as well as other costs typically covered by an airline. Now the workers are pushing back and seek direct negotiations with the company management. They are demanding more pay, better conditions and the ability to bargain collectively across Europe. However, observers note that most of the shareholders would rather Ryanair stop flying any planes for six months than having the workforce unionised.

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

The European Semester's impact on bargaining

November 8, 2017

This paper, written in the frame of the project DECOBA, analyses the impact of the policies implemented via the European Semester on collective bargaining over the period from 2015 to 2017. The paper treats the policies recommended by the European commission and the implementation by the national governments and takes stock of their impact on collective bargaining. Taking into consideration first the whole EU, then focusing on the five target countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and Spain. The conclusions shed light on the paradoxical discrepancy between the declared objectives the policies put in place and their effective results. The author underlines the need for restoring the respect of social partners' role and autonomy as well as for preserving and (re-)establishing sector collective bargaining at national level.

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

OECD bargaining webpage

November 3, 2017

The OECD launched a renewed webpage with information on collective bargaining across the OECD. Building on a rich set of survey and administrative data and using detailed information collected through OECD questionnaires that were addressed to Labour Ministries and social partners, the webpage provides an updated and comprehensive picture of collective bargaining systems and their different building blocks.

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

Austria

What collective bargaining can bring

November 30, 2017

The Chamber of Labour (AK) reveals on a special webpage the profits collective bargaining can bring. AK notes that collective bargaining contributes to the economic performance, a better distribution of wealth and social peace. The country is on top of the ranking of countries with high bargaining coverage (98% of the workforce). But, collective agreements settle much more, for instance provisions related to work-life balance or holidays payments. The AK-webpage provides detailed overviews of provisions for selected occupations and jobs.

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

Local community workers have an agreement

November 17, 2017

Trade union *younion-Die Daseinsgewerkschaft* could come to an agreement that will lead to a pay increase of 3.3% for local community workers. After a first overall agreement was reached, one region (Oberösterreich) refused to accept the deal. Union pressure, with a petition and the announcement of a large demonstration, against the region that wanted to break out the deal resulted in a settlement. The pay increase of 3.3% applies to wages up to 3,400 euro. Allowances and supplementary payments will increase with 2.33%.

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

Metal workers keep up coordinated agreements

November 17, 2017

The collective bargaining round in recent years in the metal sector has been framed by the decision of the employers to split the industry-wide negotiations into six subsectoral negotiations (see our CBN archive). The unions have always seen this as a strategy to weaken and separate workers. However, the trade unions PRO-GE und GPA-djp reached for the 5th consecutive time a coordinated agreement with the employers in 6 branches of the metal sector that will lead to similar pay increases and the improvement of other working conditions for in total 186,000 workers. The minimum wage will increase with 3% to 1,848 euro.

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

Belgium

Strike at Recticel plant ends with deal

November 17, 2017

The workforce at a Recticel plant in Wetteren went on strike as the company was not willing to come up with a substantial pay proposal. A majority of the workers had rejected the proposals for the collective agreement. The management refused to go beyond the sectoral norm of 1.1%. Workers were of the opinion that they had contributed in the last year with an increase of productivity (of around 6%) to a remarkable recovery. The trade unions backed up the workers and signed, later on, an agreement in principle that received an 83% yes in a ballot. In the deal, the management promises a pay increase and more respect for workers' rights.

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

Work pressure in education

November 14, 2017

Trade unions initiated one of the largest teacher gatherings ever organised, with up to a thousand educators participating. The conference in Liège heard teacher after teacher describe how difficult the profession has become. Their views were aired at a study day on 'Teaching, an increasingly difficult job', organised by a trade union common front, including the Centrale générale des services publics–Enseignement (CGSP-FGTB), the Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens de l'Enseignement (CSC-Enseignement) and the Syndicat Libre de la Fonction Publique (SLFP). The event aimed to both take stock of how the difficulties of the teaching profession impact staff health and to identify possible solutions.

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

Modern times dossier on workplace problems

November 10, 2017

A survey of trade union confederation FGTB/ABVV among some 15,000 respondents shows that more than half of all workers have serious worries about the future of their job. Moreover, 80,4% thinks that their current work organisation at the workplace will have consequences for their mental and physical health. The highest score is given to work stress (83.7), followed by fatigue (48,7%) and burn-out (47.7%). Two out of five workers indicate that they have serious doubts whether that can continue until their pension. According to the union, the results show that the limits of flexibilization have been reached.

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

Strike in graphical sector

November 3, 2017

A dispute in the printing sector on the freeze of night shift bonuses led to a strike across the country. The negotiations for a collective agreement ended without result. The unions speak about problems that date already from years, as night shifts become more and more important. The employers not only want to freeze the night shift bonuses, they also refuse to accept the 1.1% pay increase that was set as a norm for the 2017-negotiations. Workers picketed in front of the premises of the employers' organisation Febelgra.

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

Bulgaria

Cabinet comes with minimum wage proposal

November 16, 2017

The government has made a proposal to increase the monthly minimum wage to 510 leva (260 euro). The increase is announced as an 11% rise that will stimulate the labour market activity and improve both the incomes of low-paid and the purchasing power. In the same week, the government said that pensioners whose pensions are no more than 321 leva (the poverty line) will receive a 40 leva Christmas bonus. Statistical data show that around 1,243,000 pensioners will receive this Christmas allowances.

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

Minimum income and youth poverty

November 9, 2017

NGO Caritas has published a country report on youth poverty online. Incomes and minimum income schemes are inadequate to cover basic living costs for vulnerable young people. There is limited access to education and professional qualifications' training. In addition, young people experience limited access to minimum income schemes, many of which are highly insufficient. Salary levels often result in in-work poverty and income support through social transfers is insufficient.

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

Croatia

Excessive overtime tackled with foreign labour

November 10, 2017

Seventy foreign physicians will receive work permits in 2018. The permits will be given to medical specialists, doctors and dentists. Since the country has joined the European Union, many doctors have left. Getting and keeping physicians to work is problematic, as the monthly wages for physicians are between 1,000 and 1,500 euro, while the wages in Western Europe are two or three times more. The Chamber of Physicians welcomes the decision and says that there is an objective need, referring to the excessive overtime worked by doctors that is by far exceeding the legally permitted working time.

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

Worries about job losses at shipyards

November 10, 2017

Due to late payments, several subcontractors of shipyards in Pula and Rijeka have been confronted with financial problems. The risk is that they are no longer able to pay wages to the workers. This is a serious threat for 10,000 jobs. During a meeting between union representatives, shipyards' management and government representatives the fact that the shipbuilding industry is facing numerous problems will be discussed. The shipyards have many outstanding debts to subcontractors and suppliers.

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

Cyprus

Strike at electricity company averted

November 14, 2017

A dispute at electricity company EAC, which led to a strike announcement, has been settle by a compromise that made the trade unions call off the strike. In a two-hour meeting at the presidential palace between the facility's trade unions and government representatives the negotiators managed to come to an arrangement that will be worked out in common between the unions and the EAC's board. The unions' main demand was that EAC should remain a competitive concern and a strong business that constantly improves. Therefore, EAC has to continue operating as a single nationalised enterprise, moving away from any legal unbundling. However, one key dispute is not solved, which is that the government wants to make the Transmission System Operator – which monitors transmission and production at EAC – a fully autonomous agency.

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

Czechia

Workers at Škoda threaten with strike

November 23, 2017

The trade unions at Volkswagen's manufacturer Škoda Auto are threatening to go on strike, claiming that the company doesn't show enough interest in its employees. The main criticism is on working time and working hours. In negotiations between the unions and the company's management, the management wants to maintain weekend production, whilst the unions want to cut back on overtime work, claiming that the employees are working extra hours at the expense of their family life. The trade unions are not completely against overtime work, but it depends on how much the company is willing to pay. They also raised the problem of uneven salaries between plants in the Czech Republic and Germany.

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

Bank workers strike

November 15, 2017

Staff at 0043zech banks and insurance offices have declared a state of strike alert over their pay conditions. The OSPPP banking and insurance workers trade union announced the move in response to what they say is the unwillingness of their employers to agree to an acceptable collective agreement. A spokesperson for the union said protests would be held at individual banks and insurance offices. The OSPPP has around 8,000 members in a sector in which tens of thousands are employed.

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

Gender pay gap investigated

November 2, 2017

Women with university education have 29 percent lower salaries on average than their male colleagues, which means some 15,000 crowns less monthly, according to a study commissioned by the Labour and Social Affairs Ministry. The study suggests that the gender pay gap has been rising with increasing education levels. Overall, the country has the second highest difference in the average earnings of men and women (22%) in the EU. According to the authors, the gender gap is also caused by the prevailing stereotype seeing man as a breadwinner and woman as someone looking after the household. Other negative factors contributing to the gender pay gap are the lower employment rates among women, long maternity leave and low parental benefits that don't motivate fathers to participate in childcare, as well as lack of nurseries.

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

Denmark

Fewer jobs outsourced over the border

November 30, 2017

The statistical office produced an interesting overview of the evolution of outsourcing practices, and especially of outsourcing across the border. The data provide information on the occurrence of outsourcing in different sectors and occupations, as well as an indication of its impact. The figures show that 8,500 jobs were outsourced abroad in 2014-2016. This is a substantial reduction, compared to the 16,900 jobs that were outsourced in 2009-2011. The industrial sector accounted for the highest share of outsourced jobs, followed by information & communication and trade.

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

Labour shortages compared

November 13, 2017

The annually-published Hays Global Skills Index shows that Denmark's score in terms of the gap between available jobs and the number of people to fill them had increased from 5.8 to 6.4 from 2016 to 2017, while the average of the 33 countries mentioned in the index fell from 5.4 to 5.3. The index score of 1-10 is based on seven indicators: education flexibility, labour market participation, labour market flexibility, talent mismatch, overall wage pressure, wage pressure in high-skill industries and wage pressure in high-skill jobs.

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

Estonia

Statistics on national wages

November 29, 2017

The statistical office released statistics on the national wages, including sectoral data. Comparing the 3rd to the 2nd quarter wages seem to have decreased slightly, due to bonuses in the 2nd quarter of 2017. The average monthly gross wages in the 3rd quarter of 2017 were 1,201 euro, having increased 7.4% compared to the 3rd quarter of 2016. Real wages, which take into account the impact of the change in the consumer price index, continued to increase slower compared to the 3rd quarter of 2016 than the average monthly gross wages and salaries due to an increase in consumer prices. Compared to the 3rd quarter of 2016, real wages rose 3.7%.

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

Finland

Deal in IT-sector

November 26, 2017

Trade union Pro has reached an agreement for clerical employees in the ICT-sector just before a strike planned to begin. The deal covers 12,000 employees working in the Information and Communication Technology sector. The main reason for the dispute was the use of temporary rental labour. According to the collective agreement rental labour can only be used temporarily when there is a special need, but the unions signal that rental labour is more and more used to replace staff. The agreement between trade union Pro and the employers' association Palta was based on a proposal presented by the National Conciliator. It has been agreed that this will last for a period of 27 months. The pay settlement proposed is in line with other collective agreements settled so far at sectoral level, referring to the 3.2% pay rise set for the next two years in the collective agreement of technology industries by the Finnish Industrial Union.

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

Long pending negotiations finalised

November 24, 2017

The negotiations in several sectors were deadlocked in recent months. But, it looks as if an important breakthrough has been reached. The Paper Workers' Union concluded a collective agreement and the Finnish Electrical Workers' Union reached an agreement that ended their strike in the technology industry. The Finnish Industrial Union reached a two year pay deal with a 3.2% pay rise in the technology sector from the beginning of November. Several other collective agreements have been agreed offering a similar pay rise. The negotiations in the paper industry were long deadlocked and the situation tense after employers offered a zero-pay rise. The Paper Workers' Union responded by imposing an overtime ban. As paper mills are run by a minimal staff, this was an effective way to make a point. The employers came back to the negotiation table and an agreement was made. The agreement gives a 3.5% pay rise and is in place for two years. The electrical workers' collective agreement within the technology industry has also been solved.

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

France

Power plant strikes announced

November 30, 2017

The trade union CGT announced that it was calling for a 24-hour strike by workers in the gas and electricity supply industries over a pay dispute. It urged members to down tools so as to cause supply shortages and power plant outages. A union representative said proposals made by employers in pay negotiations were insufficient following salary freezes and tax increases that hit workers in 2017. The strike reduced electricity output by 1,000 megawatts.

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

Remuneration of temporary doctors maximised

November 26, 2017

The government has published the act that introduces a maximum gross salary for doctors provided by temporary firms. The maximum remuneration of temporary doctors at public hospitals that are recruited to

tackle shortages of staff will be set at 1,170.04 euro for a 24-hours period in 2020 (the maximum in 2018 will be 1,404.05 euro). Temporary employment agencies will have to provide information on healthcare providers about the qualifications, the authorised licenses and the non-accumulation of activities.

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

Budget airline Hop! strike looms

November 23, 2017

Pilots at Air France's budget airline Hop! have threatened to strike during the end-of-year holiday period if negotiations over working conditions remain blocked. The biggest union among Air France pilots, SNPL has voted in favour of striking if negotiations over the working conditions at its regional subsidiary company Hop! do not move forward. The ongoing debate between the management and Hop! pilots includes a dispute over working hours, particularly concerning whether pilots should be asked to work with less than ten hours of break between the last flight of the day and the first of the morning, known as the 'short nights' system.

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

New protest against labour reform

November 16, 2017

Disruption to planes, trains, public transport services - and even national radio programmes - have been reported around the country as workers joined a fourth protest against President Macron's labour reforms. A total 170 demonstrations were to take place. Mr Macron used executive powers to sign the reforms into law at the end of September and published in the Journal Officiel. This latest round of protests took place ahead of a debate in Parliament on a bill to ratify those laws, which was to begin on Monday, November 20.

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

Germany

Metal negotiations pending

November 18, 2017

Trade union IG Metal has created a webpage with detailed information on the ongoing negotiations. The union is demanding a 6% pay increase and reduction of working time. IG Metall's strategy reflects changing working preferences of workers. It is campaigning for a right to reduce weekly hours to a temporary 28-hour week when work-life balance makes it desirable, with a right to return to full-time work after 2 years, for shift workers and those caring for children or other relatives.

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

Amazon workers protest for better wages

November 24, 2017

Workers at Amazon distribution centres walked off the job during Black Friday, in a protest to demand better wages (see also the Italian news). A spokesperson for trade union Ver.di said approximately 2,500 workers were on strike at six different facilities. Ver.di has been pushing since 2013 for higher pay. According to the union Amazon employees receive lower wages than others in retail and mail-order jobs. Amazon insists that its distribution warehouses in Germany are logistics centres.

Read on: [in English ...](#) An overview of the actions, [in German ...](#)

Giant job losses at Siemens

November 16, 2017

Industrial conglomerate Siemens announced thousands of job cuts worldwide, most of them in its fossil fuels division. The trade unions have reacted immediately and received backing from (certain) politicians. A total of 6,900 workers are set to lose their jobs, around half of them in Germany, where Siemens also plans to close sites in the country's economically weaker east. Trade union IG Metall further has warned that site closures and layoffs will be met with 'creative forms of resistance', whilst the workers representatives have announced to resist job cuts, referring to the flourishing annual results.

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

Cleaners in Eastern Länder equally paid in 2020

November 16, 2017

It took more than 25 years after the unification, but a long-term aim of the trade unions and workers in the cleaning sector has almost been achieved. For the more than 100,000 workers in the cleaning industry in Eastern Germany, the roadmap is equal pay. After five rounds of tough negotiations, trade union IG BAU reached an agreement with the employer's federation for the coming 2 years. The wage wall will finally fall in 2020. The collective agreement provides for an adjustment in 4 steps with a term until 31 December 2020.

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

Variety in decentralised bargaining

November 8, 2017

This country report of the European Project DECOBA describes the experiences in the metal and retail trades with decentralised bargaining. While the metal industry fits at least partly to the model of organised decentralisation, retail trade represents a rather different story of mainly disorganised decentralisation and overall decline of the bargaining coverage. The authors conclude that the overall trends in collective bargaining can be characterised by a parallel development of both organised and non-organised forms of decentralisation with strong differences among sectors.

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

Greece

Metro traffic halted

November 17, 2017

Services at the Athens metro halted, as workers held a 24-hour strike in opposition to the government's privatisation plans. 'We will not allow urban transport to be put on the selling block of profit,' said the metro workers' union, SELMA. The union has also called for a meeting with the Finance Minister so it can present its demands, warning of more strike action if these are not met. The all-day strike is an escalation from the three- and four-hour stoppages that have been taking place over the past couple of weeks.

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

Hungary

Labour related irregularities on the increase

November 30, 2017

An inspection report has revealed that labour related infringements were found at more than 70% of the inspected workplaces in the first 9 months of 2017. The authorities inspected 14,000 employers and 60,000 employees, respectively. According to the findings, the rate of illegal hiring has grown from 11.6% in 2016 to 16% in 2017, mostly in construction, agriculture and security companies. In most cases, the employer does not register the employee and does not pay legal taxes. Another tax-avoiding practice is registering the employee as part-time, while he or she works full-time.

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

Opel promises to maintain plants

November 10, 2017

Plans of automotive manufacturer Opel to harness synergies with its new owner, France's PSA Group, will neither involve plant closures nor layoffs. Opel has a big engine plant in Szentgotthárd, at the westernmost point of Hungary. However, a spokesman for the local unit confirmed earlier in November that some contract labourers had been let go and that a further reduction in their number was expected in 2017 because of changes to production volumes.

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

Iceland

Wage study reports 60% increase since 2012

November 23, 2017

In the years between 2012-2016, wages increased 60%, reports the news agency VB.is. The wage increase has slowed down recently, but it still remains far above the countries that the island does most trade with, where the increase was 6-8% in the same period. Although the current unemployment is very low, according to figures from Iceland Statistics it stood at 3.8% in October, and labour market participation was at 84.9%, making it the highest in the OECD countries, one can wonder who the people are whose paycheques have increased with 60%.

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

Ireland

Union wants an end to insecure work

November 14, 2017

Retail workers trade union Mandate has initiated a petition campaign to make an end to insecure work. The union launched the 'Secure Hours – Better Future' charter which would end zero hours and 'If and When' contracts. Mandate said that tens of thousands of workers have no security over their income and do not know from week to week what hours they will be working. Two authors of the University of Limerick Report 'A Study on the Prevalence of Zero Hours Contracts among Irish Employers and their Impact on Employees' addressed the launch of the charter that also asks for an improvement of the calculation systematic of working hours and a decent 'band of hours' into which a worker is placed.

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

Strike at Irish Rail suspended

November 11, 2017

A rail strike that threatened to affect football fans travelling to a World Cup play-off match has been suspended. Staff at the railway network Iarnród Éireann had planned to go on strike as part of an ongoing dispute. The date clashed with the national team's play-off tie against Denmark. Earlier strikes have brought train services to a halt twice since 1 November. Iarnród Éireann staff demands a 3.75% pay rise, which the company has argued it cannot afford as it is already financially vulnerable. The Labour Court is involved in talks and has recommended that staff should receive pay increases worth 2.5% per year for the next three years as well as a once-off 'goodwill' gesture voucher worth 500 euro. A ballot is planned.

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

Union publishes guide on employment equality law

November 7, 2017

Based on research carried out in 2015-2016, the trade union confederation ICTU has published a comprehensive guide to employment equality law, in light of the 2015 Workplace Relations Act. The guide reflects changes in procedures and processes affecting both the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court. It was published with the support of the Irish Human Rights & Equality Commission (IHREC). The guide has sections on several aspects, for instance, discrimination, employers' liability, equal pay, victimisation and redress.

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

Italy

Dispute at Ikea over sacked mother

November 29, 2017

Home store retailer Ikea is confronted with a dispute after one of its employees complained that she was sacked for refusing early morning shifts because she had to care for her disabled son. Despite giving her unwritten assurances that she would be given a more flexible schedule, management was not willing to help out. The trade unions have reacted furiously and said that this is a clear message to employees: they want everyone to know that they're the ones who decide and, regardless of whatever problems anyone might have, either you agree or you're out. The retailer workers' union Filcams CGIL called two hour-long strikes at the Corsico Ikea store and plans a protest there on 5 December.

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

Agreement in the telecom-sector

November 23, 2017

The bargaining partners in the telecom-sector, the employer organisation Assotelecomunicazioni-Asstel and the trade unions Slc-Cgil, Fistel-Cisl and Uilcom-Uil, signed a transitional agreement for the sector. The deal includes a continuation of some provisions of the existing collective agreement until 30 June 2018. The agreement has set out the procedure for the next bargaining round; the unions will have to table their proposals before 31 March 2018. The agreement has three wage related components: an average pay increase of 40 euro in two steps (on 1 January and 1 July 2018), an additional 10 euro on average monthly wage component, called an 'Elemento Retributivo Separato', and a 120-euro nominal welfare benefit in 2018.

The agreement: [in Italian ...](#)

Black Friday strike at Amazon

November 23, 2017

The trade unions at Amazon are demanding pay rises to match the company's growth. They complain that workers find themselves forced to do mandatory overtime, to work night shifts or sometimes for six days without a break to keep up with increasing demand. Workers have called a strike over pay to coincide with the online shopping giant's Black Friday sale. Workers at Amazon's distribution centre in Castel San Giovanni in Piacenza, in the north of Italy, walked out for the whole of Friday 24 November. Workers also voted not to accept any overtime from now until after Christmas – which, along with the Black Friday promotion, is typically retailers' busiest time of year.

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

Youngsters and minimum income schemes

November 9, 2017

According to a report, published by NGO Caritas, young people have limited access to minimum income schemes and benefits. Young people have free access to the social protection benefits system, but only if they fall within the restricted access criteria of the various measures. In addition, generally, these minimum income schemes are inadequate to elevate youth to a threshold of decent living. The report also discusses the provisional minimum income measure (entitled SIA – Active Inclusion Support) that was introduced in September 2016.

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

Transformation of collective bargaining?

November 8, 2017

This country report in the frame of the European Project DECOBA analyses the development of the system of industrial relations. State interventionism has posed a serious challenge to the traditional primacy of multi-employer bargaining and has exacerbated an insidious process of segmentation with regard to labour standards and protections. The fragmentation of the employers' organisations raises the problem of so-called 'pirate' agreements, signed by ambiguous associations, risks to undermine the whole system, fostering fraudulent strategies and downward contractual dumping. At firm-level, decentralised bargaining has not taken off, and in spite of all the legal and fiscal pushes, coverage remains very limited and strongly linked to their size and unionization. Nevertheless, social dialogue remains fairly lively and reactive, as clearly indicated by the inter-confederal agreements on representativeness and collective bargaining.

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

Latvia

Average gross earnings increased by 7.5%

November 29, 2017

The Central Statistics Bureau released data on the national average gross wages for fulltime jobs. Compared to the third quarter in 2016, workers earned 7.5% more in 2017. The consumer prices have increased too, thus this had a negative effect on the purchasing power of the employees. Real wages grew only by 3.7%. Workers in the professional, scientific and technical branches experienced the highest increase in wages.

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

Liechtenstein

Flexible working hours should contribute to better work-life balance

November 7, 2017

The employers are working towards an increase of the flexibility, often combined with on-call duties. Trade union LANV has criticised this unilateral approach. The union signals that the country belongs, together with Switzerland, to the European countries with the longest working week. LANV pleads in a position paper for flexible working hours that serve the workers and contribute to a better work-life balance. The union takes a firm stand against the watering down of existing legal provisions on working time and collectively agreed working hours.

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

Lithuania

Minimum wage increase

November 14, 2017

The government took a stand in the debate on the necessary increase of the minimum wage, in a statement that said that the minimum wage will grow moderately in 2018. According to the prime minister, the minimum wage will increase consistently by around 5%. He referred to an agreement at the Tripartite Council that this would not be a political decision, that the minimum wage would be tied to the average wage and would not exceed 50% (of the average wage). The government decided in October 2017 to increase the minimum monthly wage by 20 euro to 400 euro in January 2018. In July 2017 it was last raised to 380 euro.

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

Luxembourg

Quality of work surveyed

November 13, 2017

A representative sample of 1,522 employees took part in the fifth national survey on the quality of work. The results show that 72% of the respondents said they have an 'average' or 'high' quality of work; an increase compared to 2016 (68%). However, the outcome is quite unequal if the results are analysed per sector or per different aspect. For instance, satisfaction with pay has decreased. Also, the workers possibility to influence companies' decisions is on the decrease. The work-life balance is worsening and respondents report on increased work pressure. For the first time the survey looks at the impact of digitalisation, which affects 89% of employees, whilst 7% is afraid of losing their job because of digitalisation within the next ten years.

Read on: [in English ...](#) The Webpage with the reports, [in German and French ...](#)

Malta

Teachers' disputes continue

November 30, 2017

Teachers at the Malta College of Arts Science and Technology (MCAST) organised a series of strikes, but so far, their industrial dispute is not solved. The Malta Union of Teachers announced another one-day strike because of lack of adherence to agreed deadlines in which the MCAST had to provide counter financial proposals for the collective agreement being negotiated. In correspondence with the MCAST management, the MUT had noted that it is clear that whilst the union is taking agreements seriously, with all the necessary commitment towards its members, MCAST is instead dragging its feet and finding excuses to refrain from adhering to commitments to the detriment of educators and ultimately students.

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

Collective agreement at Air Malta

November 24, 2017

Air Malta and the Association of Airline Engineers (AAE) have signed a collective agreement. The deal includes a pay increase for all workers, of in total 19% that will be spread over five years (5%, 1.5%, 5%, 1.5%, 5%). The majority of the association's members supported the agreement after they were assured throughout the negotiations that the sector would remain a vital part of the company's operations. This is the first collective agreement to be signed, with other separate agreements with GWU (concerning the hiving-off agreement of Ground handling services), an agreement with the Pilots Association, and an agreement with the Cabin Crew Union (UCC) still pending.

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

Netherlands

ABN Amro bank quits bonus system

November 30, 2017

ABN Amro bank is planning to overhaul its current bonus structure for the 17,000 members of staff who are covered by the bank's collective agreement. The move is being discussed between unions and the bank in the ongoing collective bargaining for 2018. Part of the talks is to initiate a complete new structure with neither performance assessments nor performance-related bonuses. The plans would cover all workers who are paid according to the collective agreement. Around 100 specialists, including traders and corporate bankers, will still be eligible for a bonus. Trade unions and the management are about to agree on a 9% pay increase to compensate the end of the bonus system.

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

Unions shocked by Siemens closure

November 17, 2017

The announcement of a planned closure of a Siemens plant in Hengelo will threaten 600 jobs. The unions said they were completely taken by surprise as the news came out. Workers at the Hengelo branch were informed about what is happening at a meeting at stadium Grolsche Veste, with the CEO of the division explaining the closure via a video link. The unions want to know why Hengelo has to close, as they had the impression that after a difficult period, the company was running smoothly again.

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

Gender pay gap under fire

November 3, 2017

Trade union FNV criticised the wage gap between men and women on the Equal Pay Day. The union organised a debate with Dutch politicians and companies on the differences in salaries between male and female employees. According to the FNV, it is high time for companies and politicians to close the gender wage gap (currently 16.1%). A FNV-survey, among over a thousand of its members, showed that 96% of respondents do not find the differences in salaries between the genders reasonable. On Equal Pay Day women symbolically lay down their work on the day from which they start working for free. If you were to follow the principle of equal pay, women are therefore only paid for 84 percent of the year.

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

Norway

Increase of poverty

November 14, 2017

A report, published by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, provides evidence that, from 2011 to 2015, the proportion of poor increased from 7.7 percent to 9.3 percent of the population. By using the EU poverty line (those who earn less than 60 percent of the media income), the report 'Poverty and living conditions in Norway' describes that the proportion of low income is increasing over time and income differentials increase, with the rich getting richer. The report shows that real income for the poor in practice stood still in the period 2012 to 2015, so the gap between the wealthiest and the rest of the population has increased.

Read on: [in English ...](#) The report with graphs and data, [in Norwegian ...](#)

Central agreement signed

November 10, 2017

The trade union confederation LO and employers' organisation NHO concluded the collective negotiations for a framework agreement (hovedavtalen). The central agreement, that originates from 1935, is the main reference for sectoral agreements and regulations and is reviewed every four years. The agreement affects some 345,000 employees in 12,000 companies and expires in 2021. It does not settle salaries but defines, for instance, the procedures to undertake in cases of disputes and redundancies, and especially provisions related to workers representation. The negotiators made 'small but significant' changes to conditions related to the union representative mandates and to rules on the signing of written protocols.

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

Poland

Unions support law on Sunday rest

November 28, 2017

If lawmakers approve a bill under consideration in the national legislature, this could gradually end Sunday shopping in the next three years. The bill was initially supported by trade unions and received support from the Law and Justice Party, the ruling party. The lower house, the Sejm, passed the bill by a vote of 254 to 156. It still requires approval from the Senate and the President. The bill would allow Sunday shopping only on the first and last Sunday of each month through the end of 2018, then allow shopping only on the last Sunday of the month in 2019. The total ban of all Sunday shopping is planned from 2020.

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

Job losses in education disputed

November 13, 2017

According to the Teachers' Union (ZNP), some 6,500 teachers have lost their jobs as a result of the education reform, which the government launched amid protests. The union said that a further 12,700 teachers have seen their working hours cut and pay reduced, and 5,300 have been forced to work in several schools to keep their income from shrinking. These figures were denied by the government. The education ministry stated that one of the objectives of the government's education reform was to protect teachers' positions and that any loss of jobs in schools has been a result of demographic trends. ZNP arguments that the worst is still ahead; some 35,000 teachers and school administration employees may still lose their jobs over the next three years as a result of the reform.

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

Portugal

Union blames management for crisis at Altice

November 28, 2017

The Telecom's workers trade union (STPT) has accused the management of Altice of being responsible for the crisis in which the group is plunged and says there is no longer any room to have 'the best prospects' regarding PT Portugal. In a statement sent to the media, STPT claims that 'the management that the owners of the group apply everywhere they operate, based on cost cuts, reduction of organizational structures, reduction of workers, etc., are having a negative effect on the quality of the service provided'.

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

Teachers' strike followed by intense talks

November 16, 2017

Teachers started strike activities against activities they consider not to be included in their job descriptions, such as the extra tuition given to students. Their nationwide strike, which unions described as 'the biggest of the decade', saw thousands of teachers stay away from the classroom, forcing hundreds of schools to close. The action is to protest against successive freezes placed on teaching careers, spanning almost a decade, from 31 August 2005 to 31 December 2007, and again from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2018. These freezes have seen teachers stopped from following what would otherwise have been an automatic career progression, organically climbing the ranks with time and experience, and losing out on pay rises.

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

Romania

Shifting social security costs to workers protested

November 26, 2017

Protests engaging many thousands across the country took place during November 2017. The protests started as a response to the announcement of an overhaul of the system of taxation. The measures proposed by the Government plan the rise of the minimum wage, but contributions to a compulsory private pension fund scheme will be limited (see also our October issue). Employers will have to pay a 2.25% tax on their overall wage fund and small businesses with annual turnover below one million euro will have to contribute only 1% tax on turnover instead of the current 16% tax on profit, thus lowering social security contributions by employers and shifting their entire burden onto employees.

Read on: [in English \(1\) ...](#) [in English \(2\) ...](#) [in English \(3\) ...](#) [in English \(4\) ...](#)

Poverty and social exclusion among youngsters

November 16, 2017

An investigation by NGO Caritas on the income position of youngsters, finalised in September 2017, is now online. The report describes the main challenges related to poverty and social inclusion among young people and provides recommendations for policy makers to address these challenges, based on an analysis of practical experiences and official data. Half of all children (51%) are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Social benefits frequently do not ensure a sufficient level of basic income for a decent living. The in-work poverty rate is very high (up to 21.4%, against a EU-average of 9.5%). Young people coming from low-income families risk not being able to continue their studies, and so perpetuate their poverty status within their own families.

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

Serbia

Labour market data 3rd quarter 2017

November 24, 2017

The statistical office published the labour market data for the first nine months of 2017. In the third quarter of 2017, employment rate of the population (aged 15 and over) was 48.2%, the unemployment rate 12.9%,

and the inactivity rate 44.7%. By the end of September 2017, average gross and net salaries and wages had increased by 3.5% in nominal terms and by 0.7% in real terms, compared to the situation in 2016. The average gross monthly wages paid in October 2017 amounted to dinars 64 602 (543 euro). The average net wages (tax and contributions excluded) paid in October 2017 totalled 46 879 dinars (394 euro).

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

Slovakia

Night shifts, weekend work and holiday pay discussed

November 15, 2017

The Parliament discusses surcharges and other work-related measures from the so-called 'social package', the ruling coalition's social proposals and draft bills. The package features, for instance, 13th and 14th month payments, an increase in minimum wage, exempting working pensioners from the payment of income taxes and an increase in bonuses for night and weekend work. In a draft revision to the Labour Code some MPs propose to increase surcharges for night work from the current 20% to 50% of the minimum wage, i.e. from €0.50 extra per hour to €1.25 per hour as of May 2018. According to the government, about 250,000 people work night shifts, which, when compared to the size of the population, is an absolute record. The revision of the Labour Code will also include a ban on social dumping.

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

Labour market indicators rather positive

November 10, 2017

The employment situation is still improving in the country. In the first nine months of 2017 (compared with the same period of 2016) the employment increased, for instance, in sale and repair of motor vehicles by 8.4%, in food and beverage service activities by 8% and in accommodation by 7.3%. The monthly wage increase was on average the highest in food and beverage service activities (8.9%, reaching 429 euro), retail trade (7.5% - 670 euro), transportation and storage (7.3% - 895 euro), industry (4.7% - 1,017 euro), sale and repair of motor vehicles (4.6% - 959 euro). Meanwhile, a total of 45,900 foreigners were officially working in Slovakia at the end of September 2017. Compared to the same date in 2016, this means an increase of 12,700 people. Workers are coming from Serbia, Romania and the Czech Republic. Every fourth labour migrant is working in the district of the capital Bratislava.

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

Slovenia

Teachers will ballot for strike

November 30, 2017

The executive board of the education trade union SVIZ unanimously passed a resolution regarding a strike in the education sector, foreseen for February 2018, if the employers do not meet the union demands. The union is asking for an increase of the basic pay of teachers and other educators from kindergarten to the university level, as well as better compensation for classwork and 1200 euro of gross holiday allowance for all employees whose pay is lower than or equal to the minimum wage, as well as the right to take part in collective bargaining in the field of education. A ballot for strike is planned in December 2017.

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

Collective agreement in retail

November 29, 2017

The trade unions and employers in the retail sector have signed a collective agreement. The agreement prescribes that store workers may not work more than two Sundays per month. Moreover, they will earn double-time pay on Sundays, and the hourly rate must not fall below 5.4 euro on Sundays. Moreover, stores will remain closed on certain holidays. The agreement also includes provisions for a better work-life balance, for instance for persons raising children, for pregnant women and women who have giving birth.

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

Spain

Massive actions against alternative taxi platforms

November 30, 2017

Taxi drivers' organisations have organised a 24 hours strike on 29 November 2017, against the activity of the Rental Vehicles with Driver (VTC) that operate through platforms such as Cabify or Uber. From 06.00, calling a taxi was impossible in large cities, except for services in hospitals, emergency, airports and stations. Fedetaxi, the Caracol Association, Antaxi, Elite Taxi (FETE) and Plataforma TNT are organising an additional demonstration in Madrid, which could gather more than 20,000 people.

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

Boom in temporary jobs

November 23, 2017

The temporary agency sector expects that more than 1.08 million temporary work contracts will be signed in the three months from November 2017 to January 2018, an increase of 14.7% compared to the same period in 2016. The Adecco group published regional and sectoral data that refer to longer contracts, with the majority of contracts in the consumer goods sector, customer service and sales. Hiring is also expected to pick up in the logistics and transport sector, banking, retail, food, hospitality and distribution.

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

Wage data 2016 published

November 8, 2017

The statistical office INE announced in a press statement its wage data report 2016. The average gross wage in 2016 decreased with 0.8% to a monthly 1,878 euro, compared to 2015. In the lowest wage categories women are overrepresented (40.3% of all women earn less than 1,229 euro, against 20.7% of all men). The monthly average earnings for men reached 2,075 euro (lower than the average in 2012), for women 1,661 euro (with an increase in recent years, starting in 2012). In the wage distribution, the position of temporary workers stays very problematic, with more than 50% of all temporary workers earning less than 1229 euro.

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

Sweden

Social partners agree on jobs model

November 23, 2017

The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) have reached an agreement in principle to make it easier for refugees and long-term unemployed to find jobs. If the deal is approved, depending on acceptance by the affiliates and the state, the employee will be paid the equivalent of the normal collectively agreed minimum wage after tax, but the employer will pay only 8,000 kronor (809 euro) while the rest will be covered by the state. The new employment form would be available for newly arrived who have been granted residence permit in the past 36 months, young people under 25 who have been unemployed for at least six months and people over 25 who have been unemployed for more than a year. During the contract, which can last up to two years, the employees have the right to study Swedish during working hours without having their salaries docked. After two years, the employment should be turned into a rolling contract.

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

Switzerland

Jura region decides on minimum wage

November 23, 2017

After four years of debate, the Jura cantonal parliament voted to adopt a minimum hourly wage of 20 Swiss francs (17 euro). This brings the canton a step closer to realising a project that started in 2013 when the citizens of the Jura voted in favour of an initiative proposing a minimum wage. Jura is the second canton in the country to adopt a minimum wage after Neuchâtel settled in 2013 on 20 francs an hour. The Neuchâtel decision was held up by litigation after it was challenged in the country's highest court by a group of private organisations and individuals. In August 2017, the Federal Court rejected the challenge, saying a 20-franc minimum wage conformed to federal law.

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

Richer than ever but wealth inequality persists

November 13, 2017

The Global Wealth Report 2017 and an accompanying data, published by Credit Suisse, reveal that the average household is 35% richer than it was at the turn of the century, but there has been no reduction in wealth inequality. The country has achieved no reduction in wealth inequality since the year 2000, the only country among those with developed economies not to do so. A combination of high average wealth and relatively high wealth inequality results in a large proportion of the Swiss population being in the upper echelons of the global distribution. Switzerland accounts for 1.7% of the top 1% of global wealth holders, which is remarkable for a country with just 0.1% of the world's population.

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

Turkey

Garment tags indicated unpaid wages

November 15, 2017

Workers attached tags on garments that were sold in shops of fashion retailer Zara. The tags indicated that workers had not been paid for the merchandise, saying 'I made this item you are going to buy, but I didn't get paid for it'. The desperate notes drew shoppers' attention and put pressure on Zara's parent company, Inditex, for the solving of outstanding wage payments. The workers were employed by subcontractor Bravo Tekstil that served as a supplier for Zara, along with other European-based labels like Mango and Next. The manufacturer closed down overnight, took all the money the fashion companies had paid and disappeared. He left the workers with three months of unpaid wages and severance allowance. The action had success as it came out that Zara was willing to create a fund for the reimbursement of unpaid wages, severance pay and unused vacation time.

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

United Kingdom

Low pay, social mobility and regional disparities

November 27, 2017

The Social Mobility Commission, an advisory non-departmental public body, published a report on regional disparities and social mobility. The report finds that access to good jobs is a key driver for social mobility and recommends that local authorities should all become accredited Living Wage employers and encourage others to do the same. Major changes on the labour market over recent decades have imprisoned more than five million workers – mainly women – in a low pay trap from which few find escape: only one in six of those workers who were low paid in 2006 had managed to find a permanent route out of low pay a decade later. Although low pay is pervasive throughout the country, low-paid jobs, such as in retail and food services, are concentrated in particular regions, with more than 30% of residents in 71 largely rural areas earning below the voluntary living wage: average earnings in West Somerset are £312 a week but £670 in Wandsworth.

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

Two decades of no earnings growth predicted

November 23, 2017

The country's leading financial thinktank, the Institute for Fiscal Studies, has warned workers to expect an unprecedented two lost decades of earnings growth and many more years of austerity as a result of the

marked slowdown in the economy announced in government budget. The Institute said in its post-budget analysis that forecasts slashing productivity, earnings and growth in every year until 2022 made ‘pretty grim reading’, and predicted that even by the middle of next decade, the public finances would still be in the red. The Institute has a special webpage with videos, graphs and other resources that detail the analysis.

Read on: [in English \(1\) ...](#) [in English \(2\) ...](#) The Institute’s Autumn Budget 2017 webpage, [in English ...](#)

House of Commons reflects on workers’ status

November 20, 2017

The Work and Pensions Committee and the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee of the House of Commons published a report that deals with the workers’ status and the wage development. The report reflects on court cases that have exposed a pattern of companies using ‘gig workers’ with a bogus self-employed status as a route to cheap labour. Achieving ‘worker’ status, however, is not enough to alleviate insecurity at work. The volatile availability of paid work is a pressing concern for many workers. The employer has no obligation to provide work and the risk of low demand is borne by the worker. The report suggests that a wage premium above the National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage on non-guaranteed hours could potentially help rebalance the benefits, and might prompt employers to consider offering more stable work: for example, by providing shift details and staff rotas in advance. The report proposes to pilot such an approach to tackle the abuses perpetrated by some companies.

Read on: [in English ...](#) The report, [in English \(2\) ...](#)

No bargaining rights for Deliveroo workers?

November 13, 2017

The Central Arbitration Committee, a body that resolves worker disputes, said in a key legal ruling that the food delivery Deliveroo riders were self-employed contractors as they had the right to allocate a substitute to do the work for them. By law, anyone with the right to do this is classed as self-employed, and self-employed workers aren’t entitled to collective bargaining rights. As a consequence, riders are not entitled to basic employment rights because they are not ‘workers’. The case was brought by the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (IWGB) to force the firm to accept the collective bargaining rights of its members.

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

Teachers at Scottish schools to strike over pay

November 10, 2017

Teachers in Scottish schools are striking over pay, increasing pressure on Scottish ministers to offer public sector workers a pay rise. The strikes followed warnings from the civil service trade union PCS that it would call for strike action unless the government offered an above-inflation salary increase in December’s budget. PCS said that 99% of its members supported holding a strike ballot in a consultative vote last in October, on a record 49% turnout. The union, which has 8,000 members in Scottish government-funded posts, wants UK, Scottish and Welsh ministers to offer significant pay rises in their respective budgets. Trade union NASUWT said teachers at Scottish primary schools would strike in the new year. Its members had not had any pay awards since April 2016 and this year’s award was six months overdue.

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

For more information, please contact Jan Cremers or Nuria Ramos Martin, Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies (AIAS) cbn-aias@uva.nl or the Head of communications at the ETUI, Willy De Backer wdebacker@etui.org. For previous full issues of the *Collective bargaining newsletter* please visit www.etui.org/E-Newsletters/Collective-bargaining-newsletter or consult the archive with all articles in our database at www.cbnarchive.eu.

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