

collective bargaining

Issue 2/2018 February

This newsletter presents up-to-date information on collective bargaining developments across Europe since February 2008. It aims to facilitate information exchange between trade unions and to support the work of the ETUC's collective bargaining committee.



AMSTERDAM INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED LABOUR STUDIES
UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM



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European sources

Court of auditors advises on free movement of workers

February 27, 2018

The European Court of Auditors say that better targeting of EU funds would aid worker mobility. The auditors assessed how the European Commission ensures the freedom of movement of workers, and the effectiveness of EU action on labour mobility. They visited the five Member States with either the largest inflows of non-national workers or the largest outflows of workers to other countries, i.e. Germany, Luxembourg, Poland, Romania and the United Kingdom. They found that the Commission provides useful information on workers' rights through several channels, but awareness could be improved.

Read on: [in 22 languages ...](#) The report: [in English ...](#)

Minimum wages in 2018

February 22, 2018

A Eurostat update illustrates with data and graphs how minimum wage levels vary considerably across the European Union Member States; it also provides a comparison with the situation in the candidate countries and the United States. The office publishes the national minimum wages twice a year; reflecting the situation on 1 January and 1 July of each year. As a consequence, modifications to minimum wages introduced between these two dates are only shown for the following bi-annual release of data. In January 2018, 22 out of the 28 EU Member States (Denmark, Italy, Cyprus, Austria, Finland and Sweden were the exceptions) had a national minimum wage, as did all of the EU candidate countries (Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Serbia and Turkey). As of 1 January 2018, monthly minimum wages varied widely across the Member States, from 261 euro in Bulgaria to 1,999 euro in Luxembourg.

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

Decentralised bargaining assessed

February 16, 2018

In a blog, the social effects of (uncoordinated) decentralisation of bargaining are treated, referring to labour market reforms, which have fostered decentralised bargaining. Social partners are thereby encouraged to negotiate company-based agreements though the new legislation does not embrace the majority principle of the most representative unions as the ones entitled to negotiate at the decentralised (company) level. The result is an open door in principle for negotiation with organisations of workers that are not necessarily signatory parties in the sectoral (national) negotiation. This has led to 'pirate' contracts with salaries that undermine the usually agreed wages. According to the author, uncoordinated decentralisation, particularly if combined with a lack of clear rules regarding the most representative trade unions that negotiates agreements at company level, may reinforce the worsening of working conditions, increase inequality between (and within) companies by fissuring workplaces and thereby generate precariousness for workers.

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

Labour costs documented

February 12, 2018

In a first Review of 2018, DG Employment assesses the socio-economic development with detailed charts on employment, labour market participation and labour costs. The review highlights the economic growth in the EU combined with a positive economic outlook and with general improvements in the labour market. Chapter 5 (on income) signals that financial distress for low-income (lowest quartile) households appears to have continued to ease since 2015, but remains high when considering a longer period. In Chapter 6 (on labour costs and productivity), it is revealed that nominal compensation per employee (as measured in national currency) continued to grow at a moderate rate in most EU Member States. Bulgaria, Lithuania and Romania recorded the highest growth (8 % or more), while it was negative in Croatia and Finland.

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

Precarious jobs in the EU

February 9, 2018

Eurostat came up with data on precarious labour; 2.3% of the workers in the EU had a precarious job in 2016, meaning that the work contract did not exceed a duration of three months. The share of precarious employment has slowly increased over the last 10 years, coming from 2.0% (in 2009) to 2.3% (in 2016). Precarious work contracts are most common in agriculture, forestry and fisheries affecting 8.1% of the employees in the sector. The highest share of precarious employment among the EU Member States was found in Croatia (8.4%), followed by France (4.8%), Spain (4.7%), Poland and Slovenia (both 4.5%).

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

Report on statutory minimum wages

February 6, 2018

A report with first findings, published by Eurofound, focuses on generally applicable statutory minimum wages. 22 out of the 28 EU Member States apply a binding statutory minimum wage. The authors conclude that there is a huge variation in the statutory minimum wage rates valid at 1 January 2018 across EU Member States. The full report will be available soon.

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

Austria

PROPAK and GPA-djp agree on higher minimum wages and salaries

February 25, 2018

In the fourth round of the negotiations, representatives of the Private Employees' Union, Printing, Journalism, Paper (GPA-djp) and representatives of the Association of Industrial Manufacturers of Paper and Board Products (PROPAK) agreed on higher minimum wages and salaries for the approximately 9,200 employees in the industry. With an increase of 2.7 percent employees will effectively earn 50 euro a month more. Besides the minimum wages and salaries further agreements have been made on travel expenses and vacation for handicapped employees analogous to the regulations in the collective agreement.

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

Bargaining in small transport finalised

February 14, 2018

Collective bargaining for workers in the small transport and delivery industry was completed successfully, resulting in higher wages. As part of the minimum wage agreement reached in 2017, workers in the carrying industry will see their incomes increase from 3% for the higher incomes to as much as 5% for the lower incomes. The wage increases apply with retroactive effect from 1 January 2018 with a term of 12 months. Next target of trade union Vida is a collective agreement covering the entire bicycle delivery industry.

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

Belgium

Mobilisation against pension reforms

February 27, 2018

The proposed pension reform, which will introduce a point system to calculate pensions is met with protest. Following a large demonstration organised by the trade unions in Brussel in December 2017, teachers stopped their work for an hour on 1 February in response to a call from education unions to denounce the pension policy. One of the demands of the teachers is that their job will be recognised as a difficult job so

they could retire earlier than at age 67. Only in jobs that are recognised as hard jobs, employees are allowed to retire earlier. The pensions minister had declared in December that mental or emotional hardship alone may not qualify as hardship. This could exclude teachers from early retirement. Another issue of concern is how the new point system will work out for female teachers: the unions demand a more equitable pension for women who may have lost work time to raise their children at home. Public transport workers and other public service workers protested against the pension reforms with a national 24-hour strike on 27 February.

Read on: [in English \(1\) ...](#) [in English \(2\) ...](#) [in English \(3\) ...](#) More on the pension reforms: [in English ...](#)

Teachers in Flanders have a pay deal

February 23, 2018

The Flemish education ministry and the trade unions concluded a draft collective agreement. The deal includes a wage improvement, a demand that was crucial for the unions, as the last pay increase dates from 2003. Wages will be increased stepwise with 0.3% on 1 September 2018, resulting in 1.1% on 1 January 2021. The aim is to have a pay increase that is similar to the private sector. Besides, other provisions have been concluded to make the jobs in education more attractive for starters. Several leading persons in education had called in recent months for a campaign to be launched to the teaching profession among graduates.

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

Massive job cuts at Medtronic

February 16, 2018

The closure of a logistic plant, part of Medtronic - one of the largest medical technology companies, will lead to a loss of almost 400 jobs by mid-2018. A spokesperson of the company said that an effort is made to relocate the workers to another plant in Heerlen, in the Dutch neighbouring region. Currently, information and consultation procedures take place that are based on the so-called Renault-Bill (referring to the notorious closure of a Renault plant at Vilvoorde). The announcement did not take the unions by surprise, but nevertheless, they see the company's decision as the 'worst case scenario'.

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

Pilots at Brussels airlines demand better wages and less work pressure

February 1, 2018

Following actions in January where pilots decided to take off with a delay of 15 to 20 minutes Brussels airline pilots increased their actions in demand of better wages, pensions and work pressure. They asked full runway length at Brussels Airport and took additional fuel. The pilots are supported by the trade unions. Later on, the pilots declared that for the time being they won't be taking industrial action.

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

Bulgaria

Large part of the population below minimum standard of income

February 21, 2018

An economist of the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Bulgaria (CITUB) stated, in reaction to recently released survey data, that 71% of the citizens receive an income below the minimum standard of living. The economist noted that although there is an economic upsurge, the majority of the population does not benefit from it because economic inequality continues to increase. For a year, the standard of living has gone up by between 5% and 7% and average wages by 12%. However, the prices of goods have risen more and this increases inequality between individual social groups. According to research, 27% of the working households receive incomes lower than the poverty line, which is currently BGN 314 and the remaining 45% earn income between the poverty line and the minimum subsistence.

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

Unions against easier access for third country workers

February 19, 2018

The Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB) and the Podkrepa Labour Confederation have joined together in protest of proposed revisions to the labour migration legislation that would make it easier for non-EU workers to enter the labour market. The unions believe that it is unnecessary to attract foreign skilled workers and that instead measures are needed to attract skilled workers back home.

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

Prison workers' dispute continues

February 16, 2018

Trade unions of prison guards and judicial guards have prepared letters to the ambassadors of the EU Member States. The reason is that the problems in the sector remain unresolved for years, and the demands of their protests, which last for months, remain outstanding. Workers have organised protests at the Courts of Justice in 10 cities in the country. Recently, the trade unions decided to reject a proposed 5% increase and continue the protest action until the demands were fully met. The unions insist on a 20% increase in wages, a levelling of payments for harsh working conditions with those of police officers and solving staff problems.

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

Croatia

Unions meet with management of Sisak Oil Refinery

February 10, 2018

The three unions covering the Sisak Oil refinery initiated a meeting with the management of Sisak. They wanted to discuss the planned shutdown of several units of the oil refinery. The planned shutdowns might result in the dismissal of up to 40 workers. The unions saw the meeting as a first step in preserving these jobs and demand that workers will be informed on any further decisions.

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

Industrial action at Croatian Airline suspended

February 10, 2018

Airline trade unions are in the process of discussing new collective bargaining agreements at Croatia Airlines. The unions already deferred industrial action in the summer of 2017 to allow for negotiations. Now Croatia Airlines is in the process of getting a new management, the unions have agreed with the government that they will not organise any industrial action before the new management is named.

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

Cyprus

Garbage collectors want clustering instead of outsourcing

February 17, 2018

Municipal garbage collectors together with their trade unions are trying to convince municipalities to cluster garbage collection services among neighbouring municipalities instead of outsourcing the work to private companies. In this manner cost can be reduced without losing jobs now and in the future. Trade union Peo does not rule out industrial action if the demands of garbage collectors are not met.

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

Work stoppage at hospital seems to pay off

February 15, 2018

Trade unions Sek and Peo initiated a 12-hour work stoppage at Nicosia's Archbishop Makarios hospital to protest understaffing. Understaffing has been a problem since the beginning of 2017 and is not only putting the employees under pressure but is, according to the unions, also posing health risks to patients. The strike was announced at the end of January. The work stoppage that started at 6.30 am was broken off early when health minister Pamboridis promised to help resolve the problem. After consulting with the finance minister, she said she will propose the cabinet to hire 10 more people.

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

Czechia

Negotiations at Škoda Auto pending

February 21, 2018

Since the start of 2018, unions and management of the country's biggest car maker, Škoda Auto, have been bargaining on wages. The unions demand a pay rise of 18 percent and rejected the latest offer of a 15 percent pay hike over the next 27 months. They are not satisfied with the spreading out of the pay raise over such a long period. The unions also reject the additional demand of Škoda management for changing the system of shifts at its flagship plant. The unions also spoke of possible industrial action. The carmaker recorded its best monthly result ever in January 2018.

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

Denmark

Fatalities at work at record low level

February 12, 2018

The working environment authority Arbejdstilsynet published a report that shows that last year 25 people died in work related accidents. This is the lowest number of fatal work-related accidents since the beginning of the registration of fatal work-related accidents in 1979. Despite fluctuations from year to year, the employment minister said that the development is going in the right direction with considerable declines of fatal work-related accidents in the last decade.

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

Ryanair opens talks that could lead to return

February 11, 2018

On 8 February, Ryanair paid a visit to the Danish Flight Personnel Union (FPU) for a first meeting on the topic of collective agreements for pilots and cabin crew. When Ryanair opened up a base in Denmark in 2015 the company was not interested in agreeing on collective agreements for its local workers. The FPU brought the case before the Labour Court that decided that the union had the right to demand a collective agreement for the workers they represent. Ryanair did not comply with this outcome but instead walked out and closed both its bases. Ryanair changed its position and is now willing to meet the FPU's demand for negotiating a collective agreement.

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

Estonia

Strike at meatpacking plant Rakvere

February 22, 2018

Workers at meatpacking plant Rakvere are holding on to their demands for a 16% wage increase from 1

February 2018 and an additional 16% increase in basic wage from 1 July 2018 (see our January Newsletter). The trade unions met with heads of HKScan Estonia in a final attempt to negotiate the pay demands of the workers, but negotiations failed. The union stated that the management of HKScan Estonia did not respond to the wage proposal and only repeated what they had said previously. In reaction to the failed negotiations employees of the plant began an open-ended strike. Earlier workers at the Rakvere plant were threatened by their employer to prevent them from going on strike.

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

Compensation pay for pension contributions

February 13, 2018

The government has allocated 200 million euros to compensate workers that voluntarily continued during and after the financial crisis their contributions to the second level pension fund or paid higher second level pension fund contributions from 2014 to 2017. A law was implemented during the financial crises of 2007-2008 that allowed the government to temporarily stop contributions to the second level of pensions.

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

Finland

Industrial action looms

February 20, 2018

The trade unions have announced industrial action in several sectors where the collective bargaining process remains deadlocked. The first strike is planned on 28 February at the University of Helsinki e.g. in reaction to the unwillingness of the employer to negotiate on pay rise. In March, industrial action is to be expected in the day care, private adult education and the real estate sector. This sector includes cleaners, caretakers and property managers. Besides pay rises other demands in the collective bargaining processes include overtime pay and the improvement of the situation of those with zero-hours contracts.

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

Bargaining in municipal and state sector shows progress

February 15, 2018

Although the negotiations on smaller issues are still going on, main collective agreements for the public sector are finally beginning to get shape. After a slow process of bargaining in the municipal and state sector where the unions demand for compensation for the 30% holiday bonus cut was not met, there has been a breakthrough. A one-off payment has now been agreed for employees to compensate for the lost holiday bonus. Some 421,000 municipal employees will receive a payment of 9.2% of their monthly salary.

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

France

New statutes for railway workers disputed

February 27, 2018

Strike actions are being discussed by unions in reaction to Macron's plans to reform rail system and cut rail workers' special employment rights. One of the fears of the unions had expressed is that the rail system will be privatised after an advisory report 10 days ago suggested turning SNCF into an autonomous company backed by public funds. The prime minister stated that SNCF would not be privatised but remains state-owned. But the plans for cutting rail workers' special employment status seem to be very real. Many rail workers have jobs for life and, in some cases, the right to retire in their 50s – a decade earlier than other public workers. Under government plans, these historical privileges would not be applied to new rail staff.

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

How to guarantee gig workers social protection?

February 26, 2018

In recent tripartite talks between the trade unions, employers' groups and government officials, the discussion is how to find ways to protect freelancers who work exclusively, or almost exclusively, for one platform. One of the basic problems is how to differentiate between independents, with a portfolio of different clients to fall back on, and workers whose only source of income is a single Internet platform such as Uber. According to the press the government has given up on its efforts to give the self-employed the same unemployment benefits as salaried workers.

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

Outsourced Holiday Inn workers end strike

February 12, 2018

Room cleaners and other outsourced workers at the Holiday Inn in Clichy ended their 111-day strike on 8 February by signing an agreement with the hotel's subcontractor Héméra. The agreement signed by the trade unions puts an end to piece rate payment of housekeepers, mandates strict control of agreed working hours, guarantees two consecutive days of rest per week, eliminates contracts of less than 130 hours monthly and stipulates payment for time changing in and out of work clothes, among other important gains.

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

Germany

Volkswagen agreement concluded

February 29, 2018

In a fourth round of talks, carmaker Volkswagen and trade union IG Metall reached a wage agreement for more than 120,000 workers. Base pay for employees covered by the collective agreement is to be increased by 4.3% as of 1 May 2018. In addition, employees are to receive a one-off payment of €100 for the months from February to April 2018. An additional annual payment of 27.5% of a month's salary from August 2019, which may be converted into six days of leave by special groups of employees, has also been introduced. From July 2019, a monthly payment of 90 euro is to be made to the company pension scheme; from January 2020, the figure will rise to 98 euro. In future, project working time arrangements are to be changed. The collective agreement has a term of 27 months.

Read on: [in English ...](#) Union bulletin: [in German ...](#)

IG Metall wins right to a 28-hour week and wage deal

February 20, 2018

After a period of strikes and intense negotiations, trade union IG Metall, representing 900.000 metal and engineering workers, has won the fight for a collective agreement on work-life balance and a wage deal that gives workers the equivalent of 3.5 percent annual raises over 27 months. It means workers at many of the country's most important engineering firms from 2019 on will be able to opt to take on a 28-hour working week for up to two years. The deal is expected to have a much broader impact than on the 900.000 IG Metall union members alone and is seen a major breakthrough for flexible working in Germany and Europe. A first deal was stuck on 6 February in Baden-Württemberg that served as a reference for the rest of the country.

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

Local health insurance workers agree on wages

February 11, 2018

Trade union Ver.di has reached a collective bargaining agreement with the employers for the nationwide 55,000 employees of the general local health insurance funds (AOK). According to the union, the workers will get a 5.6 percent wage raise in two stages. With retroactive effect from January 1, 2018, wages and salaries will rise by three percent and from January 1, 2019 by a further 2.6 percent.

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

Lufthansa agrees on pay deal

February 7, 2018

Lufthansa and trade union Ver.di have concluded a long-term collective agreement for the approximately 28,000 ground workers of Lufthansa, Lufthansa Cargo, Lufthansa Technik and LSG Sky Chefs in Germany. The collective agreement provides for a total increase in remuneration of up to 6%. It has a term of 33 months from 1 January 2018 to 30 September 2020. The agreement is subject to approval by the relevant bargaining committees. The remuneration increase is carried out in two steps: By 3% on 1 February 2018 and by a further 3% on 1 May 2019. A second increase depends on the adjusted EBIT margin specific to the business segment, whereby an increase of at least 1.8% is guaranteed, irrespective of the margin achieved.

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

Greece

Series of strikes and protests

February 20, 2018

There have been various smaller strikes and protests in demand of higher wages and better working conditions in recent weeks. Hospital Doctors went on 24-hour strike demanding new doctors to be hired and fill the many unmanned hospital positions. The Construction Workers Union of Athens ASTERAS held a series of strikes at one of the biggest construction sites, ASTERAS demanding collective agreements with better wages. Telecom Union of CYTA Hellas went on strike after the acquisition of CYTA by VODAFONE, demanding job security and a collective agreement for all workers and freedom of association. On 20 February buses in Athens went on a 6-hour work stop in order to join the general assembly of their union. The civil servants' union ADEDY plans a strike to protest the government's continuing austerity program.

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

Hungary

Public sector union in the lead of series of protest

February 14, 2018

The Trade Union of Hungarian Civil Servants and Public Employees (MMKSZ) has led series of smaller protests and industrial action in the public sector in February. MMKSZ started a 5-day strike on 15 February to protest for municipal officials whose income has been frozen. A union spokesperson claimed that despite multiple calls for negotiations the government refused to meet with the union. The strike is supported by the Hungarian Women's Association. MMKSZ said that over 200 thousand public employees haven't had a pay rise in ten years and that this resulted in a considerable loss of the purchasing value of wages. The strikes and other actions are meant to ask attention for the unfair treatment of public employees.

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

Iceland

Icelandair has a deal

February 12, 2018

The Icelandic pilots' union (FÍA) has signed a collective bargaining agreement with Icelandair that is valid until December 31, 2019. In a declaration FÍA stated that their goal was twofold: secure competitive wages for the pilots in an international comparison but at the same time also strengthening the competitiveness of the Icelandair. The agreement will now be presented to the FÍA members who will vote on it.

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

Ireland

Air Lingus pilots vote in favour of deal

February 16, 2018

Aer Lingus pilots represented by the Irish Airline Pilots' Association (Ialpa) voted on 16 February in a ballot in favour of almost 11% pay increases over close to three years. The pilots will see a 4 percent increase from now, 3 per cent backdated to April 2017 and 1 per cent from January 2019. Another 2.9 percent is in return for increased flexibility and productivity.

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

Clash over breaches referred to Labour Court

February 13, 2018

Unions are in dispute with Irish rail over mentoring of trainees and alleged breaches of procedures by management. According to the unions the rail company is forcing a change to drivers' terms and conditions by making the training of new recruits compulsory, when it had previously been done on a voluntary basis. After threatening with industrial action both parties re-entered negotiations and agreed to refer the issue to the Labour Court. Meanwhile the unions involved, the National Bus and Rail Union and SIPTU, will continue their ballots for strike action.

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

Health workers suspend industrial action

February 9, 2018

Several thousand health and social care workers, working in the so called 'section 39 agencies' funded by the Department of Health, voted in January in favour of a one-day strike over the failure to restore their pay cuts in line with public servants (see our January Newsletter). But on 9 February, they agreed on suspending the strike for six weeks following an agreement, facilitated by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), to begin a process that will lead to the restoration of pay for thousands of health and social care workers.

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

Wages of temporary workers

February 6, 2018

During a seminar *The World of Work: A Shifting Landscape* the Workplace Relations Commission launched a provisional report of research into current and prospective changes that affect or will shortly affect a very large proportion of the workforce. Questions treated were whether and how temporary work contracts more and more have become a feature of working life; what are the implications of an aging workforce on employment relations and what broader policy questions need to be considered. It was reported that temporary employees earn approximately 20% less than those in permanent jobs doing similar work.

Read on (the seminar presentations): [in English ...](#)

Italy

Renewal of public service agreement after 10 years

February 23, 2018

Trade unions reacted positively towards the collective agreement they negotiated for the 560000 workers in local and regional government offices. After a 10-year freeze, they managed to win an 85 euro pay increase per month and there are improvements in a range in holiday entitlement and sick leave. Additional

resources are available for local bargaining. The General Confederation of Labour for public services, FP-CGI, is proud of the new collective agreement that addresses wages, rights and bargaining at the same time.

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

Amazon brings back Taylorism

February 22, 2018

The announcement of Amazon to introduce bracelets in order to optimise workers' performance has led to a furious protest. Politicians and unions refer to the early days of capitalism and talk about robotising mankind. In a critical blog, the website Equal Times analyses the current situation in logistics and the background of the dispute at Amazon that led in 2017 to a walk-out. In the global context of easy relocation and falling transport costs, logistics appears to have become the main profit generating factor, exploiting the differences between production costs in the manufacturing countries and end prices in the destination markets. Moreover, recourse to technology, rather than benefitting workers, appears to have increased their workload, judging by the ever-decreasing turnaround times, which in logistics encompasses transportation, packaging, warehousing and the delivery of goods.

Read on: [in English ...](#) Video: [in Italian ...](#) The Equal Times blog: [in English ...](#)

Doctors call strike off

February 20, 2018

A strike planned on 23 February by general practitioners, hospital doctors and vets was called off after civil-service bargaining agency ARAN invited their trade unions for talks. The trade unions spoke about a first step forwards that will enable the unions to finally exercise the opening of bargaining without weighing on citizens and workers.

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

Four hours walk-out at Ryanair

February 13, 2018

At 10 February, there has been a four-hour strike at Ryanair Italy. The pilots' union ANPAC was not participating in the industrial action because their union is currently in talks with Ryanair. Ryanair confirmed in December that they recognise unions for all staff, but is focussing on making agreements with the pilots' unions first. The unions representing cabin and ground crew that called out the strike, Cgil, Cisl and Uil, are angry that they weren't included in contract negotiations with the Ireland-based budget airline.

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

Latvia

What happens with the workforce at bankrupt bank?

February 28, 2018

The third largest lender of the country, the bank ABLV, is to be closed down. On 24 February 2018, the European Central Bank announced that ABLV was 'failing or likely to fail in accordance with the Single Resolution Mechanism Regulation'. The ECB said that ABLV's liquidity position had deteriorated to the point where it had insufficient funds to meet its obligations. In fact, ABLV experienced a bank run which drained it of money. The Luxembourg subsidiary of the bank declared that its liquidity still fully covered the amount of its clients' deposits. However, the decision was to also wind up the subsidiary. The Association of Latvian Commercial Banks stated that it fully supported the decisive and forceful action for the benefit of a resilient financial sector. In both countries it is unclear what will happen with the workforce.

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

Liechtenstein

Union newsletter assesses bargaining results

February 22, 2018

In an editorial of its quarterly, trade union LANV labels the results of the last bargaining as very modest. Apart from a few branches with 0.5 to 1% general pay increases, most negotiations led to a standstill in the wage development. This is the more surprising as the economic situation is positive. The union demands aimed to compensate at least the inflation and to guarantee the purchase power of workers. The union is especially worried about the development in the hairdressing branch, where the employers decide to quit the bargaining system. In the hospitality sector two rivalling employers' organisations are active, one that respects the bargaining, the other that refuse to negotiate and to respect the agreements.

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

Lithuania

Investment in teachers first priority

February 2, 2018

In an opinion poll, investment in teachers and education came on top of the ranking. Making the teaching profession prestigious by 2025 was one of the three top priorities that were unveiled as part of a national initiative that was led by the media and the state's leaders and lasted for almost half a year. The government reacted by stating that the country's future depends on how politicians, society and the state invest in, regard and treat teachers. The position the teacher has in society is like a litmus test.

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

Luxembourg

Union OGBL wants legal protection for trainees

February 14, 2018

In a meeting with the employment minister on 6 February, trade union OGBL demanded protection and social right for trainees. The number of voluntary traineeships is on the rise but according to the union there is no legal framework whatsoever to protect young people who want to gain work experience. The OGBL demands legislation to protect these trainees, by introducing clear and precise qualitative criteria to be fulfilled in a traineeship and to introduce a guarantee that the traineeship serves an educational purpose for young people. Furthermore, trainee periods should be covered by some sort of social protection, such as including the period in pension calculations, being covered by health insurance and fixing an adequate remuneration for the trainees.

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

Social plan negotiated at DAS

February 7, 2018

Trade union OGBL stated that a social plan was agreed for 15 employees laid off by DAS Luxembourg. The employees of the insurance company, specialised in legal protection, receive financial compensation for their job loss and support to re-enter the labour market. On 10 January 2018, the Allianz Group announced plans to acquire the assets of DAS Luxembourg from German insurance group Ergo. The deal saw 15 workers lose their jobs, as Allianz agreed to take on 10 people from the legal and claims department only.

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

Malta

Breach of agreement leads to protest by doctors

February 6, 2018

As meetings between the minister failed to break the impasse, the MAM union of doctors, backed up by the UHM Voice of the Workers called out a one-day strike on 6 February. The doctors are protesting over the way St Luke's, Karin Grech and Gozo hospitals are being transferred to Steward Global Healthcare. MAM says this is a breach of the doctors' collective agreement. Approximately 3.000 patients are expected to have been impacted by the strike. MAM doctor's union declares in a statement that the actions could count on an overwhelmingly support from doctors' and claims it as a success.

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

Netherlands

Pilots at Transavia strike

February 19, 2018

Transavia's pilots, some 500, have been without a pay agreement for over a year and negotiations broke down in February. The pilots' union VNV has reacted with a strike. In a leaflet handed out to passengers it was assumed that Transavia plains at Schiphol, Eindhoven and Rotterdam airports would remain on the ground during the strike, which would last for several hours. The pilots are demanding improvements in the flight rosters so they can better plan in free time and time with their families. Currently, pilots face continual roster changes, the union says. In addition, the pilots are calling for a 'modest pay rise' and that their employer contributes into a special fund for pilots who become unable to fly through illness.

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

Teachers continue actions

February 14, 2018

Primary school teachers are still urging the government to meet their demands for decent salaries and a normal workload. They will continue their so called 'code red' actions and have organised a regional strike in the Northern provinces at 14 February. Following earlier protests in June 2017, October 2017 and December 2017 the government promised a few improvements mainly concerning issues around the work load. The demand for decent salaries is not yet been met.

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

Successful strike of Deliveroo riders

February 9, 2018

Several weeks of striking against the plan of Deliveroo to replace all employees on a contract with 'self-employed' workers by the bike riders and trade union FNV has proven to be successful. The government launched a full-scale investigation in the strategy of employing workers on bogus self-employment contracts despite working full time for a company like Uber or Deliveroo. Till now the government has been rather passive in the matter but it has promised, where applicable, to enforce the law in the case of bogus self-employment.

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

Norway

Youth inclusion on the labour market

February 8, 2018

In a comment, attention is paid to the fact that more and more people fall outside of the labour market. Some because of ill health; others because of high competency demands or tough job competition; many despite of their desire to participate. It is particularly worrying that an increasing number of young people struggle with finishing their education and finding work. Young people with complex experiences need support in the workplace. In order for work placement to be successful for this group, the author favours well-functioning support services which make sure youngsters get 'place and train' and not 'place and pray'.

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

Worker involvement in public sector digitalisation

February 6, 2018

On 5 March, an innovative tripartite initiative will be introduced in Oslo aimed at increasing worker involvement and social dialogue in public sector digitalisation. In September 2017, the trade union of Municipal and General Employees Fagforbundet, the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, the national association of municipal and local government employers signed a local tripartite cooperation and dialogue agreement to shape an inclusive strategy for the digitalisation of the public sector.

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

Poland

Launch of voluntary pension scheme announced

February 16, 2018

The government has announced plans for a voluntary employer-sponsored pension plan into which employees would put a minimum of 2.0% of gross wages and employers would put a minimum of 1.5%. The state would only provide nominal bonuses. The plans are expected to boost the countries savings.

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

Portugal

Postal workers strike against privatisation

February 23, 2018

Workers at the CTT postal services went on nationwide strike and demonstration on 23 February. The industrial action was planned by the four unions representing CTT postal workers (SNTCT, SINDETELCO, SINCOR, and SINTTAV) in demand of the renationalisation of the recently privatised CTT Postal service. If the restructuring plans of CTT go through, this will leave hundreds of employees out of job, increasing the work load for the remaining postal employees. Postal unions say the strike's turnout was over 70%.

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

Wave of strikes expected in public and care sector

February 22, 2018

It looks as if the country will be swept by a wave of strikes, demonstrations and protests, by professionals of various sectors including teachers, doctors, nurses and public prosecutors, over the coming months. Teachers have pledged strike action for March, while doctors have said they may strike in April. Nurses initially gave the country's Health Ministry until the end of February to further negotiations over pay and working conditions, but in the meantime confirmed a national two-day strike set for 22 and 23 March. Unions representing nurses accused the Health Ministry of broken promises. Among the demands are a 35-hour work week from July, overtime payment, and the payment of a 150-euro supplement for nurses with specialist functions, which should have come into play from January. At the start of 2018 the country's doctors had already waged similar action.

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

Wages too low in Algarve hotels

February 20, 2018

Despite higher occupancy and higher room rates the hotel workers' trade union warned about low pay in the sector, saying that about 60% of hotel staff and 80% of catering workers are struggling by on the minimum wage. The Association of Hoteliers of Portugal (AHP) and the Portuguese Tourism Confederation (CTP)

claim that the workers are earning more. The hotel workers' trade union wants to reopen the process of wage negotiations for the sector that have been on the lock since 2009.

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

Romania

Effect of social security deductions disputed

February 27, 2018

Since the government introduced a new distribution of the social security contributions, there has been a fight going on about the impact on net wages. By emergency ordinance it was decided in 2017 to transfer all social contributions from employers to employees. This important change became effective on 1 January 2018. Companies had to increase the gross salaries of their workers with the value of the social contributions so that the net salaries wouldn't drop. However, estimates show that in the private sectors some 2 million workers have received lower wages after the social contributions were transferred from employers to employees. The government still firmly denies that there is reliable evidence of wages going down in January 2018. The labour ministry has ordered that, by 31 March 2018, employers will have to register addenda to their workers' labour contracts with the new gross salaries after the social contribution transfer.

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

Union law barrier for decent bargaining

February 21, 2018

According to a leader of trade union Cartel-ALFA, the law on trade union representation is so harsh that collective bargaining at national and sector levels is virtually impossible. The result is that only a small number of collective labour agreements at company level could be concluded. The law says trade unions must represent 50%+1 of the total company workforce. If they don't have this proportion, collective agreements are negotiated by representatives who are usually chosen by the management of the company and are not negotiating in good faith. The labour inspectorate in December said there were 9,000 agreements, but only 2,000 are 'real' collective agreements negotiated by local trade unions. The other 7,000 are agreed by undefined 'employee representatives'.

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

Retailer Lidl improves wages

February 12, 2018

German retailer Lidl announced a pay increase of the company's over 5,500 employees beginning 1 March. A seller will earn a minimum gross wage of RON 3,061 (658 euro) or a net of RON 1,800 monthly (387 euro), while a commercial worker will earn a gross RON 3,301 (709 euro). The national minimum gross wage stands at RON 1,900 (408 euro) or a net RON 1,162 (249 euro).

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

Serbia

Censorship and job insecurity put pressure on journalists

February 22, 2018

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, visiting Serbia on a work trip expressed his concerns for the safety of journalist in Serbia. Pressure against journalists has increased and led to self-censorship and discouraged journalists from performing their important work. The Commissioner called on the authorities to investigate and prosecute all crimes against journalists. A recent report conducted as part of a project involving Balkan Investigative Reporting Network, the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia and the Slavko Curuvija Foundation rang the alarm clock over the pressure that journalists are confronted with. Earlier in February the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) made a statement for the safety of journalists and protection of journalism in Serbia on the platform of the Council of Europe.

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

Slovakia

Overtime and shift allowances change

February 13, 2018

Planned changes of the Labour Code will lead to a wage improvement for working during nights, weekends and holidays. The parliament passed a revision to the Labour Code on 13 February that increases existing work allowances and introduces new ones. The revision also introduces 13th and 14th salaries, i.e. benefits the employees receive before the summer, starting in June 2018, and Christmas holidays. The amendments aim to make it more attractive for workers to stay in the country. Another aim is the reduction of night work. The improved pay come into effect in two steps (as of 1 May 2018 and 1 May 2019).

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

Steel workers receive highest bonus in 10 years

February 1, 2018

Employees at a Košice-based plant of the U.S. Steel corporation will benefit from a successful turnover. The success will be reflected in the employees' variable wage payment, which will be the highest since 2007, as the result of the applicable collective agreement. 8.5 percent from the average consolidated net profit for the previous three months will be paid to the steelworks' employees. Back in 2007, the variable wage payment amounted to some 250 euro, but during the crisis employees received only single-digit payments. The trade unions expressed their satisfaction and referred to the success in negotiations over the collective agreement, which brought the variable wage payment at the level received by other U.S. Steel employees in the USA.

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

Slovenia

Public sector workers on strike, new negotiator called in

February 22, 2018

Several groups of public sector workers went on strike in February. Police workers walked-out on Monday 12 February demanding a wage increase of around 15 percent. The head of the police trade union said that officers are undervalued and deserve more to reflect the hours they work. Health care workers other than doctors, and social care workers went on strike on 13 February demanding the government to stop austerity measures, rise their pay and increase staffing. On 14 February Slovenian schools closed as around 40.000 teachers went on strike. They demanded that their salaries be brought in line with other public workers. A few days later, the main negotiator in the governmental delegation resigned in an effort to 'disburden' the negotiating process and speed up negotiations.

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

Port management and union of crane operators come to agreement

February 3, 2018

Following a go-slow protest, the trade union of crane operators and the management of Luka Koper, the operator of the country's only sea port, came to an agreement on the case of a shop steward's employment contract. Koper wanted to fire the trade unionist, but this was seen as an attempt to undermine the trade union. Under the agreement, the management will withdraw the lawsuit against worker and the company will revise its work safety rules.

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

Spain

Prison workers demand salary equalisation and more staff

February 20, 2018

Prison officials demand the equalisation of their salaries across the country. Currently, the differences between workers with the same functions can reach up to 700 euro, depending on the prison in which they work. A problem that, according to their trade unions has been there for 6 years without any negotiation on the topic between officials and the General Administration. Therefore, in the absence of dialogue, and in order to make their demands visible, the prison unions CCOO, ACAIP, UGT and CSIF have agreed to hold a large demonstration on 24 February in Madrid, in demand salary improvements. Another point of protest is the lack of personnel in the prisons that led to an increase of the number of attacks on officials.

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

Ryanair not in good faith – union will appeal

February 7, 2018

After a first warning last month, trade union SEPLA is taking legal action against Ryanair over the lack of contract compliance. Last December Ryanair declared for the first time to recognise unions. However, the company is still struggling to come to agreements with its employees. SEPLA doesn't have faith in further negotiations claiming that Ryanair will only listen to the representatives when they are forced to do so. SEPLA is planning to submit two lawsuits to the High Court regarding Ryanair's contracts. In a letter sent to members, SEPLA accused Ryanair management of failing to negotiate in good faith since Europe's largest budget airline opened the recognition talks.

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

Basketball players come to an agreement

February 14, 2018

The Asociacion Baloncestistas Profesionales (ABP) basketball players' union and representatives of the basketball club association (ACB) finally reached a deal on a new collective bargaining agreement. The agreement was reached just hours before the basketball players would begin their strike in the professional basketball league. ABP and ACB agreed on demands regarding a minimum wage increase and the social fund. The social fund, a fund that provides the financial basis for the services the ABP offers to its members, was an important matter in the negotiations as ACB league officials argued for a drastic reduction of the current amount contributed by the ACB.

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

Sweden

Labour Force data 2017

February 22, 2018

According to the annual report 2017 published by the statistical office, the employment rate increased by 0.7 percentage points to 67.8 percent in 2017, with on average 5,022,000 person employed. The increase of the number of employed persons was important in the it-sector, in public administration and in construction. On average, 6.7 percent of those in the labour force aged 15-74 were unemployed in 2017, which is a decrease of 0.2 percentage points compared with 2016. The unemployment rate among men decreased by 0.4 percentage points to 6.9 percent, while among women, the unemployment rate was 6.4 percent.

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

Employers against expulsion of skilled migrants

February 16, 2018

In an open letter, a group of CEOs representing some of the country's most prominent companies denounces the expulsion of a number of high-skilled migrant workers. They criticise the migration agency for refusing to extend foreign employees' work permits, leading to expulsion, on controversial grounds. The companies

are afraid that the strict rules regarding labour migration will discourage high-skilled workers to leave their homes to come and work in Sweden. The bosses state that the country cannot expect engineers, IT-technicians, and other specialists to leave their countries if they risk expulsion for unpredictable reasons. At the end of 2017, a proposed legal amendment that would have reduced the number of foreign workers deported over technicalities or mistakes in their permits was rejected by Sweden's Council on Legislation.

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

Switzerland

UN staff on strike

February 27, 2018

In one of the busiest weeks of the European headquarters of the UN in Geneva employees planned a half day strike. It is still unclear how many of the 9,500 employees participated in the strike. UN staff are protesting recent pay cuts of 3.5 percent that will swell to 5 percent in June 2018. Staff of other UN quarters around the world are also faced with pay cuts. Since president Trump is in office Washington demands significant belt tightening as threatened deep budget cuts to many UN agencies. The strike was declared to be the first day of action that will be followed by others.

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

Trade union confederation: coalition partner attacks workers' rights

February 21, 2018

The conservative party in government (SVP) announced plans to promote a liberal labour market. Part of the plans is to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights. Beyond that, the SVP wants to get rid of the ILO-Conventions that the country has ratified with the argument that only international conventions that are backed up by a popular referendum are acceptable. The trade union confederation has started to mobilise against the proposals. The union says that workers can derive several important rights from the ratified conventions: the right to be organised, the right to collective bargaining, equal treatment at the workplace and other fundamental rights. A withdrawal would destroy the protection of workers.

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

News agency in conflict over job cuts

February 16, 2018

In response to the announcement of the news agency SDA/ATS that up to 40 out of their 180 total employees are at risk of losing their jobs, there has been a strike from late January to early February. Negotiations following the strike remain deadlocked while management and staff still haven't reached an agreement on the number of job cuts. Both parties have asked the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) to mediate.

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

Turkey

Workers protest against privatisation of sugar factories

February 26, 2018

Sugar factories have been one of the longest established public enterprises, employing thousands of people. Fearing massive layoffs after privatisation, sugar beet producers, factory workers and opposition parties, have reacted with anger. Sugar factory workers and trade union Şeker-İş have launched a campaign to stop privatisation, arguing that local economies would collapse if the factories were to be closed. They are asking for modernisation of plants, instead of privatisation and have warned against a spike in unemployment.

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

United Kingdom

Continuing fall of real wages

February 23, 2018

Data from the Office for National Statistics show that real wages are continuing to fall and unemployment is rising. In fact, real wages fell for the tenth month in a row as pay growth failed to rise above the rate of inflation. This alarming news came out at the same day that the Living Wage Foundation published new data on the effects of earning below the real living wage. According to a survey, commissioned by the Living Wage Foundation, low pay is having a devastating effect on family life and worker health. The survey polled 1,016 UK parents working full time and earning less than the Living Wage.

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

Income distribution and living standards

February 22, 2018

A report of the thinktank Resolution Foundation, *Living Standards Outlook*, is exploring in detail what the next five years may hold in store for household incomes and inequalities. The report is concerned with an in-depth look at the real spending power of typical households and of the income distribution. The authors conclude that the outlook is poor for low income working-age households. The years 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 in the projections all involve part of the income distribution becoming worse. Roughly the bottom 40% of the working-age population is expected to face relatively weak or even negative income growth, with higher and relatively equal growth for the rest (in cash terms incomes grow fastest for the richest). The last decade has been the weakest for average earnings in two centuries after adjusting for inflation. This is the product of a combination of disappointing nominal pay growth and above-target inflation. On nominal pay, whereas 4% growth was normal before the financial crisis, average earnings growth has remained below 3% cent since January 2009.

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

Increase of zero-hours contracts

February 21, 2018

NGO Gingerbread, working with single parent families, published a report that profiles single parents and assesses how life has changed for the one in four families headed by a single parent in the UK. While progress has been made over the past 100 years to improve the lives of single parent families, from the abolition of the workhouse in 1930 to the repeal of the Bastardy Acts in 1987, the report finds that many single parents are still locked out of a decent standard of living. Single parent employment rates are at a record high and still, a third of children with a working single parent today living in poverty. One of the striking findings is that the number of single parents on zero-hours contracts has increased tenfold over the past ten years, with over 40,000 single parents employed this way – over 3% of employed single parents.

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

Adecco publishes Labour Market Outlook

February 19, 2018

The Adecco Group UK&I and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development produced a Labour Market Outlook 2017-2018. The Outlook is a quarterly report providing analysis and commentary on key employment trends. The report is based on a survey of more than 1,000 HR professionals and senior decision makers. This quarter, the respondents signal a lack of investment in skills and training, particularly in light of current challenges Brexit might exacerbate. The overall median basic pay increase expectation is around or below 2% (by sector: private sector, 2%; public sector, 1%; voluntary sector, 1.5%).

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

Strikes at Gatwick airport prevented by pay rise

February 12, 2018

After 100% of Omni-Serve workers that are organised in the union Unite voted in favour of strikes a pay deal was put on the table in order to mitigate strike action. The company employs bus drivers who ferry

passengers to and from aircrafts at Gatwick airport. The proposed strike action was a response to a 0% pay offer for 2017, which followed a three-year pay freeze. Omni-Serv returned to the negotiating table and made a revised offer of a two year pay deal worth 5 per cent plus a £600 lump sum (non-consolidated payment).

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

Tough equal pay claim for retailer Tesco

February 7, 2018

Retailer Tesco will be confronted with the largest ever £4bn equal pay claim. This was announced by Leigh Day solicitors, a firm that has been contacted by more than 1,000 Tesco staff. The solicitors will take the initial legal steps for 100 of them. The most common rate for women is £8 an hour whereas for men the hourly rate can be as high as £11 an hour, according to the solicitors. If the legal challenge demanding parity with men who work in the company's warehouses is successful, thousands of women who work in the stores could receive back pay totalling £20,000. The company commented that it is working hard to ensure all workers are paid fairly and equally.

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

For more information, please contact Jan Cremers or Sanne van der Gaag, 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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