

collective bargaining

Issue 3/2018 March

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
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European sources

How salary levels are set in EU Member States

March 27, 2018

Eurofound published a document that provides an overview of wage formation systems in EU Member States. The paper summarises earlier and ongoing research. It looks at the mechanisms used to determine statutory minimum wages, the use of variable pay schemes in companies in the EU, and national systems of supplementary pay. The analysis finds that variable pay usually represents a fairly significant percentage of total salary levels, ranging from 5% to 11% in most of the countries where information is available.

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

Workers in nine EU countries earn less than in 2010

March 22, 2018

The annual ETUI report 'Benchmarking Europe 2018' examines 'real wages', i.e. the value when cost of living is taken into account. It shows that workers in nine EU countries – Italy, UK, Spain, Belgium, Greece, Portugal, Finland, Croatia and Cyprus – are earning less in 2017 than they did in 2010. Working people in six of those countries – Italy, UK, Spain, Belgium, Greece and Finland – also earned less in 2017 than they did in 2016. Salaries have tumbled by as much as 20% between 2010 and 2017. Greek workers suffered the biggest loss of real wages with minus 19%.

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

Bargaining after the crisis

March 20, 2018

The World Economics Association had dedicated the spring edition of its Journal to an analysis of the current economic outlook. The issue looks back at the effects of the crisis, discusses the creation of jobs and assesses the political economy of reforms in Europe. Authors criticise the EU policy that was mainly focussing on wage restraints, budgetary discipline, deregulation and measures that weakened the economic security and bargaining strength of organised labour. One article ('The creation of jobs') looks after the role of bargaining in decision-making processes during the course of production.

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

Earnings in 2017 in the EU

March 12, 2018

According to Eurostat data, Luxembourg is at the top of the wage ranking with an hourly wage of €43.8 in 2016. Denmark (€38.7) and Belgium, (€37.9) offer the second and third best hourly wages for workers across the EU. Workers in countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Hungary, Croatia, Lithuania or Latvia are paid under €10 for an hour of work. Eurostat revealed that the hourly employee compensation increased in 2017 in all EU member states, with the EU average standing at €23.1 and €26.9 in the euro area. Compared to 10 years ago, hourly wages increased significantly across the EU.

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

Recent wage dynamics

March 9, 2018

A IMF working paper describes that nominal wage growth in most advanced economies remains markedly lower than it was before the Great Recession of 2008–09. The paper finds that the bulk of the wage slowdown is accounted for by labour market slack, inflation expectations, and trend productivity growth. In particular, there appears to be greater slack than meets the eye. Involuntary part-time employment appears to have weakened wage growth even in economies where headline unemployment rates are now at, or below, their averages in the years leading up to the recession.

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

The World Bank on inequality and income convergence

March 8, 2018

The World Bank investigated the occurrence of inequality in Europe and published several related reports. The economic integration and convergence in the EU has slowed, giving rise to concerns over income inequality and social exclusion over the past decade. Income inequality across the EU is high but drastically declined as poorer countries and households converged to richer ones, particularly between 1993 and 2008. The global crisis took a toll on economic growth and this convergence has since stalled, with EU-wide inequality still at relatively high levels. Moreover, within-country levels of inequality have increased, particularly in Central and Eastern European countries. Growth in household incomes and convergence up until 2008 has been followed by years of crisis and stagnation, leading to concerns over continued growth and fairness in the EU. The impact of recession has been visible in communities, but the hardship has not fallen equally on all shoulders.

Read on: [in English ...](#) The two main reports: [in English \(1\) ...](#) [in English \(2\) ...](#)

Women in the EU

March 7, 2018

In 2016, the unadjusted gender pay gap stood at just over 16% in the European Union. In other words, women earned on average 84 cents for every euro a man makes per hour. Across Member States, the gender pay gap in 2016 ranged from just over 5% in Romania and Italy, to more than 25% in Estonia, followed by the Czech Republic and Germany (both almost 22%). Although the gender pay gap has dropped in most of the EU Member States, it increased between 2011 and 2016 in ten Member States, with the most significant increases being observed in Portugal and Slovenia.

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

Minimum wages and the European Social Model

March 1, 2018

The WSI 2018 report on minimum wages aims to contribute to the debate on 'adequate minimum wages' and the key role of minimum wages for the European Social Model by offering a comprehensive analysis of current minimum wage developments in Europe and beyond. One significant finding is that it confirms the scope for more ambitious increases in minimum wages, in particular in Germany, where the minimum wage is currently at a relatively low level in European comparison.

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

Austria

Cancelled flights with no agreement in sight

March 22, 2018

Trade union Vida, the union for on-board personnel, and Lufthansa's Austrian Airlines started in October 2017 with their bargaining round. The two sides are still miles away from reaching an agreement. The main dispute concerns a pay rise. Austrian Airlines offered an increase in salaries of 2.1% and an additional onetime pay of 1.4%. The works council and the trade union want to raise the wage level to the standard level that is paid in the industry. At Easyjet, for instance, wages are on average 10 to 20% higher both in the cockpit and in the cabin. The ongoing negotiations resulted in a cancellation of multiple flights.

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

Busy times for collective bargaining

March 15, 2018

The spring round of collective bargaining started on 7 March with the negotiations for the approximately

8,000 employees of the paper industry. The electrical and electronics industry (50,000 employees) followed on 12 March. The wage negotiations in the chemical industry (45,000 employees) will start on 5 April 2018. Part of the demands of the workers in the domestic industry are an increase in minimum wages or minimum salaries, increase of actual wages and or actual salaries with special consideration of the recipients of low incomes and a legal claim to leisure option. Negotiators state that the industry is doing well and now is the time for workers to be properly involved in the success.

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

Longer working time destroys work-life balance

March 6, 2018

The Chamber of Labour and the trade union confederation ÖGB currently campaign on the future of labour in an online dialogue initiative. The part dedicated to the consequences of an hourly working time of 12-hours led to massive responses, with an online participation of some 18,000 people. Many workers indicated that they already worked long hours and referred to fatigue and increasing work-related stress. The result confirms the expected negative effects. An overwhelming majority of the replies was very critical about the impact of a prolonged working day on the work-life balance, on children care and on the own leisure time.

Read on: [in German ...](#) The online survey: [in German ...](#) Facebook: [in German ...](#)

Belgium

Taxi drivers protesting Uber block Brussels

March 27, 2018

Taxi drivers in Brussels protested against ride-sharing service Uber with a 24-hour strike on 27 March. The taxi drivers blocked the entire inner city and the ring road around Brussels and the access to Brussels Airport. Around 500 taxi drivers were expected to take part in the actions. The taxi drivers have already been protesting for years against the competition from ride-sharing services like Uber. The taxi drivers' federation claims that this is unfair competition because the ride-sharing services don't have to deal with the same strict regulations as official drivers. The federation of taxi drivers and other federations ask for the resignation of the Brussels mobility minister who proposed a new taxi plan for Brussels that gives professional Uber drivers the same status as normally registered taxi drivers.

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

Increase of wage gap between high and low paid

March 23, 2018

In a report, based on wage data of 40,000 employers, it is said that the pay differentials between the best and the poorest paid workers have increased with 5% in the last 6 years. Whilst low-paid workers were confronted with a standstill, the highest earners succeeded in substantial wage increases. Fulltime workers, belonging to the category of the 10% best paid, earned on average a monthly gross wage of 5,030 euro, an increase with 430 euro. The 10% category lowest paid received only 80 euro extra over that period, bringing the monthly gross wage at 1,790 euro. The difference widened in 2016 with 3%.

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

Agreement at AB InBev after strike

March 9, 2018

Starting at 8 March, workers of brewery AB InBev went on strike for several days. Workers blocked delivery trucks from entering or leaving the AB InBev breweries; as a result, no deliveries could be made to bars, supermarkets or other retailers. With the actions the workers protested the failure of negotiations on a premium being paid to workers who have to move to another site because AB InBev is closing its site in Hasselt. A few days later, unions and AB InBev reached an agreement and the breweries re-opened.

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

Bulgaria

Improved pay for protesting prison workers

March 21, 2018

Following a meeting between the minister and the trade union of prison workers, the government announced that it will increase the wages of prison staff. The government is to provide 7.66 million euro for increases to the salaries of prison workers. The deal was made after weeks of protest and a 'Europe for us too' petition, gathering signatures. In reaction to the government's decision to increase the wages the trade union decided to suspend the protest activities.

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

Unions warn against social dumping

March 19, 2018

Two unions warn that, although the EU member states reached an agreement to tighten posted worker controls, another door has been opened to social dumping. They refer to the fact that the country has relieved the import of workers with or without qualification under the pretext that shortages stall the economic development. The unions describe the mechanism that the workers enter through Bulgaria, but in practice they work in Western Europe for extremely low wages.

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

Croatia

Unions oppose increase of pension age

March 20, 2018

The government is planning on a pension reform in the second quarter of 2018 that will increase the pension age from 65 to 67. The Union of Autonomous Trade Unions (SSSH) is opposing the planned reforms. The SSSH states that the country already has higher unemployment rates that will only increase further when the retirement age is going up. They also point out that life expectancy is about three years less than in the rest of the European Union.

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

Rally telecom workers

March 17, 2018

The telecom workers trade union organised a rally outside a downtown office of Croatian Telekom to protest wage cuts and lay-offs. The gross salary of the workers at Croatian Telekom centres of 800 euro has been cut by 15%. Besides the wage cuts, the union claims that Croatian Telekom laid off half of its staff in the past four years to replace them with cheaper labour from employment agencies. Management claims that the workers have very good salaries above the national level that will increase under the new model instead of be cut.

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

Cyprus

Multiple actions loom at Co-op bank

March 21, 2018

Multiple threats with strike once more at the Cyprus Cooperative Bank. In the beginning of March there was a dispute over the banks recent sacking of a number of employees. In a ballot, the members of the bank workers' union Etyk authorised the trade union to take action if necessary. Later in the month, the union threatened with a strike because the union was not informed of the banks plans to seek investors. The union

accuses the bank of lacking transparency.

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

Industrial action of waste plant workers

March 19, 2018

Workers at a waste management plant organised a one-day strike to pressure their company to sign the collective agreement that officially expired in December 2017. The workers said that they will give the company three weeks to sign the collective agreement. They threatened to go on an indefinite strike if the company fails to do so. The company says it has to finalise their agreements with the state.

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

Czechia

Pay offer at Škoda Auto negotiated

March 21, 2018

As reported in our February newsletter unions and management of the country's biggest car maker, Škoda Auto, have been bargaining on wages since the start of 2018. After unsuccessful rounds of negotiations and unions threatening with industrial action Škoda has now proposed an 8.3% hike in wage tariffs from April. Besides the demand for higher wages there is also a dispute around a new shift system aimed at raising production, which is opposed by unions. Negotiations will continue till the end of March. Earlier on, union officials stated that they could call a strike in May if no deal is agreed.

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

Unions want shorter working week without loss of wage

March 13, 2018

Unions want to shorten the standard working week that at the moment is 42.5 hours a week. Inspired by the experiences in Germany and France, they want to cut the present working hours by half an hour a day without lowering salaries. The unions are optimistic about their demands since the unemployment rate in the country is the lowest in the European Union and firms lack employees.

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

Denmark

Labour dispute might lead to nationwide public-sector strike

March 23, 2018

An ongoing labour dispute could mean the country will be effectively paralysed from 1 April 2018 when public service workers go on strike or are locked out, if no agreement has been reached by that time. The unions, representing 180,000 state employees and around 500,000 people employed by the municipalities, are demanding an 8.2% pay rise over three years but have been offered only 6.7%. The government can choose to stop the conflict by law with a lock-out and unions therefore expect a quick government intervention.

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

Estonia

No solution found at meatpacking plant Rakvere

March 10, 2018

The nearly five months old wage dispute at meatpacking plant Rakvere (see our February newsletter) is not yet solved. Workers 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. Unions are now trying to negotiate with both HKScan and the Finnish parent company of the same name. According to the union HKScan does not want to meet the demands of the strikers in fear employees from other departments may also come forward with demands for higher wages.

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

Finland

Finance sector concludes collective agreement

March 27, 2018

A strike in the financial services sector was averted at the eleventh hour after mediation by the national conciliator. The parties reached an agreement on the collective agreement shortly before the first three days' work stoppage in banks was due to begin. The negotiations in the financial services sector have been going on since October last year. The existing collective agreement expired in November 2017. Key problem of the dispute has been weekend work. Both parties are now ready to open up more possibilities for banks to provide service also during the weekend. The agreement stipulates that weekend work will be agreed, in the main, according to local negotiations.

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

Dispute at universities ends with deal

March 6, 2018

After university employees held their first-ever strike late February and threatened with a second strike in March they reached an agreement with the employers on a two-year work contract with 3.45% salary increase. Next to an agreement on salary increases, both parties reached a deal on reforming the pay system. According to the deal, universities will introduce from 2019 bi-annual evaluation rounds that will affect salaries. Workers stoppages and further actions are now called off.

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

Collective labour agreement in retail and hospitality sectors

March 3, 2018

After weeks of negotiating the retail companies of the Finnish Commerce Federation and the Service Union United (PAM) reached a collective labour agreement that ends the overtime ban. The sector had negotiated a new agreement since January and the new agreement is valid for two years. The agreement extends to shop staff, office administrators, and warehouse and transport personnel that work in the commercial sector. A similar agreement was reached for the hospitality and leisure sector. It was approved by PAM and the respective employer federations. In the agreement, personal remuneration will increase by 1.8% at the start of May 2018 and then again by 1.7% at the start of May 2019, among other things. The collective agreement in the hotel, restaurant and leisure sector covers around 85,000 workers and supervisors.

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

France

Mass demonstrations and strikes all over the country

March 24, 2018

With tens of thousands public sector workers on strike and hundred thousand taking to the street in protests against the reform plans, president Macron has his first big test by the trade unions. The railway drivers went on strike in reaction to plans to reform the rail system and cut rail workers special employment rights. One of the fears expressed by the unions is that the rail system will be privatised (see our January newsletter). Railway unions are planning prolonged industrial action that could last until June. Besides the

railway drivers also teachers, nurses, air traffic controllers and other public-sector staff went on strike accusing Macron of seeking to dismantle the state sector.

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

Air France strike over Easter weekend

March 23, 2018

After an earlier strike in February 2018, Air France unions voted in favour of further strikes. The first one took place on Friday 23 March, leading to a cancellation of a quarter of the scheduled flights. The second strike action is planned on Friday March 30th, the eve of the Easter weekend. Unions demand a 6% pay rise but management so far offered only 1%. Unions state that while the company is making profits, salaries (including those of pilots) have not been increased since 2012.

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

Strike at Carrefour looms

March 14, 2018

Trade unions at the supermarket giant Carrefour have called a strike and warned of supermarket closures and possible goods shortages after the group announced the future loss of thousands of jobs. The unions Force Ouvrière (FO) and CFDT called the strike for 31 March, in an attempt to influence the plans for the Carrefour supermarkets, warehouses and offices. According to the unions the plans are due to 'shareholders' attacks on jobs and rental-management, and the 'hold up' on profit-sharing'.

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

Firms in future fined over gender pay gap

March 7, 2018

The government is preparing a legal act that gives companies caught discriminating against women over pay three years to close the gap or face fines. The social partners were informed and asked to come back with their advice within one month. The measure is part of a social reform bill due to be presented to the cabinet at the end of April. If passed by parliament, the measure will be rolled out by 2020. Men are still paid on average 9% more than women despite equal pay laws going back 45 years.

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

Germany

Opel workers ask for clear commitment

March 23, 2018

The works council at carmaker Opel has demanded 'constructive proposals on the basis of collective bargaining agreements' from parent PSA after sites were excluded from an investment plan pending the outcome of further talks with labour representatives. Europe's second-biggest carmaker by sales, side-lined the trade unions by publishing a production and investment plan for European sites which excluded Germany. Trade union IG Metall rejected PSA's demands for further concessions to become more competitive.

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

Wage offer Deutsche Telekom rejected

March 23, 2018

Trade union Ver.di called for targeted strikes in the beginning of March after a second round of negotiations on wage rises failed to produce an offer from the management of Deutsche Telekom. In a third round of talks that took place on the 22 and 23 March, management offered a 2% pay raise for salaried staff on July 1 with a further pay increase of 1.7 % on March 1, 2019. The trade union is seeking a 5.5% pay rise over 12 months

and has rejected the offer. Unions will continue to put pressure on Deutsche Telekom and warned for further strikes in advance of the next round of collective bargaining negotiations in April.

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

Public service workers strike

March 20, 2018

Public service trade union Ver.di, which represents 2.3 million public employees, is demanding a 6% pay raise for public service workers from state and local governments, with a minimum increase of 200 euro per month. Because after two rounds of talks there still hasn't been made an offer the union announced nationwide warning strikes to put further pressure on the negotiations that will continue in April 2018. Strikes are to hit public transport, rubbish collection, kindergartens and hospitals.

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

Greece

Half of private sector workers earned less than 800 euro a month

March 24, 2018

According to a survey conducted by trade union INE/GSEE, private sector workers earn less than public sector workers and seem to be suffering more from the austerity measures that were taken after the financial crisis. In addition to wage cuts, private sector workers have to deal with more flexible labour with lower salaries.

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

Taxi drivers and railway workers on strike

March 7, 2018

On the same day that rail workers held a 24-hour strike, taxi drivers in Athens went on a nine-hour strike to protest false competition by Uber. The taxi drivers urge the government to protect and therefore regulate the sector by implementing stricter operating limits for taxis. The railway workers were protesting the privatisation of the rolling stock maintenance company and staffing levels.

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

Hungary

Critical assessment of the government labour policy

March 10, 2018

In a sharp polemic, underpinned with graphs and figures, the current policy is criticised. According to the author, the government did not use the last eight years to close the gap in living standards, but rather to strengthen its power. The tax and social policies clearly benefited the upper middle-class. Between 2010 and 2016, the gap between the poorest and the rich grew. In 2010, the top ten-percent in terms of per capita income made 7.3 times more than the bottom 10 percent. By 2017, this had increased to 8.6 percent. The purchasing power of the poorest one million individuals lost 15 percent of its value in less than six years.

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

Iceland

Unions struggle to protect foreign workers

March 6, 2018

The great influx of foreign workers makes it difficult for the unions to protect workers' rights. According to a new report from the labour union Efling, 60% violations of workers' rights last year have involved foreign workers. These foreign workers often are not familiar with their rights and don't know that they have to register with a union. Violations include wage and taxes, illegal work and spurious rental contracts. The Icelandic Confederation of Labour has produced several websites that informs foreign workers and warns against abuses, such as social dumping or the use of volunteer work in economically active firms.

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

Ireland

Labour Court recommends restore of pay cut

March 27, 2018

The Labour Court recommended that workers at a cleaning firm have half of a previous 5% pay cut restored. The pay cut dates from 2013 and trade union Siptu was seeking its restoration. Siptu also wanted the restoration to be significantly backdated. In its recommendation, the Labour Court said the range of pay rates for similar work cannot be sustained in the long term. The court found that full reversal of the pay cut could not at present be sustained by the division of the company if it is to remain profitable and sustain employment levels.

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

Deal over redundancy at Kerry Foods

March 21, 2018

Workers at Kerry Foods were planning to go on strike over a redundancy dispute. Kerry Foods wants to cut 31 jobs at a plant in Carrickmacross to reduce costs. The over 300 SIPTU union members at the Kerry Food plant reacted by declaring that they would conduct three 24-hour work stoppages. The scheduled strikes were first postponed and now both parties seem to have reached a resolution. The majority of the redundancies will now be taken up by staff at the plant who wish to retire.

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

Working poor on the increase

March 20, 2018

Think-tank Social Justice Ireland stated that the number of working poor has risen since the country came out of recession. Around one in seven people in poverty do work but have insecure jobs with low rates of pay which means they can't make a living wage. According to the think-tank's report, responsibility lays with employers and the Government for failing to eradicate low pay and precarious employment contracts.

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

New owner Eir may cut up to 1,000 jobs

March 11, 2018

Concerns are growing that the new French owner of telecom company Eir plans to cut up a third of the workforce resulting in job losses for up to 1.000 staff. Earlier on unions at Eir raised concerns over the fact that the company is not taking on apprentice engineers to replace the very large number of engineers that are due to retire this year and in subsequent years. Trade unions officials shared staff concerns in a meeting with the new CEO.

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

Italy

Renewal of public service agreement after 10 years

March 22, 2018

According to a WorkForce Europe 2018 survey on over 10,000 workers on the continent including 1,300 employees in Italy, 40% of Italian workers say that they are so stressed by their job and that they would like a new one. This is the highest in Europe. Moreover, 16% of the workers believe that their company does not care about their psychological and physical wellbeing at all.

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

IMF assesses wage bargaining reform

March 16, 2018

A IMF paper examines whether there is a competitiveness challenge in Italy and evaluates the framework of wage bargaining. Wages are set at the sectoral level and extended nationally. However, according to the IMF, they do not respond well to firm-specific productivity, regional disparities, or skill mismatches. Nominally rigid wages have also implied adjustment through lower profits and employment. The paper is a classical example of the IMF-reasoning that decentralisation of bargaining leads to higher employment rates.

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

New framework for bargaining agreed

March 9, 2018

The central organisations of employers and workers, agreed on what could become a historic agreement. The deal between on the one hand employers' organisation *Confindustria*, on the other hand the three trade union confederations CGIL, CISL and UIL will lead to new contractual arrangements and industrial relations. The negotiations started a year and a half ago. The framework agreement that has been negotiated should become an instrument in the fight against what is called 'contractual dumping', the phenomenon of contractual arrangements signed by non-representative organisations.

Read on: [in Italian ...](#) The agreed document: [in Italian ...](#)

Latvia

OECD recommends increase of minimum pension

March 9, 2018

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) urges the government to raise minimum pension in order to alleviate poverty amongst elderly people. Latvia's old-age poverty rate is the second-highest in the OECD, after South Korea: more than 25% of people aged 65 and older have an income below the relative poverty line. The pension system is designed to automatically adapt to demographic trends and because the working population is shrinking fast this also reduces the pension benefits.

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

Liechtenstein

Wage analysis promoted

March 2, 2018

In several countries, analytical systems of the wage structure are discussed. The trade union LANV has taken the initiative to start with such analyses and controls on a voluntary basis. Out of a sample of 50 companies, five reactions were received. The government has stated that it is not in favour of mandatory wage analyses.

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

Lithuania

Low pay decreases

March 15, 2018

According to the country's statistical office almost 14% of the workers gets paid the minimum wage or even less. Last October 51,600 workers earned 380 euro or less, of them 119,000 worked part-time. This is a strong decrease compared with the previous year when more than 20% of the Lithuanian workers earned the minimum wage or bellow. The decrease is said to be due to the country's new Labour Code, that allows paying the minimum wage only for unskilled jobs.

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

Luxembourg

Re-employment assistance reformed

March 15, 2018

The government reformed the re-employment assistance system to prevent companies from abusing the system. Before the reforms, the system would compensate worker who, after being declared redundant, found a new but lower paying job to 90% of their previous earnings for a four-year period. In the new system the re-employment fund will only pay up to 50% of the salary and furthermore it will only be granted to employees aged 45 and over who have been victim of a collective redundancy or bankruptcy or who have been part of a retention plan.

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

Trade union critical about job losses at car parts maker

March 1, 2018

Union LCGB describes potential job losses at automotive parts manufacturer Mahle-Behr as 'shameful'. The union stated that two-thirds of the staff could face losing their jobs, with a total of 63 jobs at risk, after the management announced a restructuring at the company. The trade unions and the management will soon start talks about a social plan.

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

Malta

Ombudsman: public sector workers unfairly excluded from pension increases

March 14, 2018

After a complaint by an individual public-sector worker, the Ombudsman ruled that public sector workers are unfairly excluded from pension increases that private workers do get when they continue working during retirement. When people chose to work longer and do not apply for pension when they are entitled to, their pension will be increased by a percentage for every additional year they stay in employment. Public sector workers are denied the right to work when they have reached the retirement age; they cannot apply for this pension increase program.

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Netherlands

Huge disparities between executive pay and worker's average

March 23, 2018

Remuneration research and recent increases of executive pay have led to public anger. Trade union FNV and several political parties expressed outrage and raised questions as a massive pay rise for the CEO at ING Bank was announced. The current good governance code requires companies to explain their internal pay ratios. The idea is to have the supervisory board weigh both management compensation, but also consider the effect of top salaries on the rest of the company when setting out pay scales. This should result in a moderating effect on pay for top executives. However, so far, the gap is only widening, with among 21 listed companies the average pay disparity of high earners 83 times the pay level of average workers. Top earner was the CEO of Unilever receiving 292 times higher than the average of the workforce.

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

Strike actions in education continue

March 14, 2018

The primary school teachers continue with their strike actions for a higher salary and a lower work load. In March they organised the fourth primary school teacher strike in the past five months. The education minister stated last year that there was no extra money available. The incoming government promised primary school teachers 500 million euro to reduce workload and 270 million euro to increase salaries. The government committed in March an additional 236 million euro to reducing workload in primary education.

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Norway

Strike looms after negotiations in oil industry fail

March 22, 2018

Initial talks between employers and the two large trade union federations LO and YS that were meant to resolve the dispute over pension reforms and prevent widespread strikes have failed. The major point of conflict that risks impacting output in western Europe's biggest crude producer are the terms for early retirement at the age of 62. A state-appointed mediator has been called in to resolve the issue before 7 April, the day after which most workers are allowed to go on strike. In the planned strike as many as 235,000 private sector workers in a variety of businesses around the country could take part and it would be the first massive strike in 18 years.

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

Poland

Data show increase of average wages

March 28, 2018

Whilst the unemployment decreases, the data from the statistical office show an increase of wages over a year's period (6.8% year on year in February 2018 to 4,599 Zloty or 1,090 euro). In recent years, the disposable income, defined as the total personal income less taxes and social security and state health insurance contributions, also improved.

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

Portugal

Ryanair cabin crew strikes over Easter

March 28, 2018

Workers at Ryanair have announced strike actions for the Easter holiday. The cabin crew workers decided to go on strike after the trade union representing them, cabin crew union SNPVAC, came to the conclusion that the talks with the airline, regarding constitutional and labour code rights such as paternity leave, had got

nowhere. SNPVAC called the crews for strikes on Thursday, Sunday and Monday. Meanwhile, the Ryanair management told the press it had contacted all Ryanair cabin crew to ask them to put the passengers first and ignore the Easter strike call.

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Massive support for railway strike

March 13, 2018

A strike for higher wages at Railway infrastructure (IP) saw 90% of the workers participating. The arbitration court had stipulated that 25% of services had to be maintained as a minimum service. The wage increase the company offered was in some cases less than 2 euro a month. The IP workers are on strike demanding a 4% wage increase which would guarantee at least another 40 euro a month for each worker.

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Romania

Bargaining in banking and finance

March 17, 2018

Since the government changed sectoral bargaining laws in 2011, workers' ability to have industry-wide representation was restricted. Unions have to represent more than 7 % of the sector's workforce to agree to sectoral representation. As a result, pay and working conditions deteriorated. Moreover, the changing banking environment characterised by massive investments in IT infrastructure and cutting offline units and jobs forces trade unions to save jobs and obtain benefits for employees who lose their jobs. Banks already cut around 15,000 jobs during the last decade. The current collective agreement which expires at the end of this year, says employees who lose their jobs are eligible for compensation benefits up to 12 monthly salaries. But in recent years, the unions detected a tendency to reduce benefits for workers who lose their jobs, due to limited job creation. The Federation of Trade Unions in Insurance and Banking (FSAB) is preparing for a historic fight to regain the sectoral bargaining rights. A sectoral agreement would cover all the 100,000 workers employed by the finance companies and raise standards in the industry.

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

Fines for exceeded overtime might increase

March 5, 2018

The current labour code provides a maximum weekly working time for an employee of 48 hours, including overtime. This limit may be occasionally exceeded but an employee should not work more than 48 hours per week, on average, over a period of four months. Moreover, young people under 18 are not allowed to work overtime. A new draft bill may change the rules and introduce higher fines for breaches. The draft bill was inspired by a European survey that showed that 35% of the Romanian employees work more than 40 hours a week, against a EU average of 23%. Moreover, 15% of the employees said work negatively affected their health and 11% said that the job prevented them from spending enough time with their families.

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Serbia

Labour market data 2017

March 15, 2018

The statistical office published its latest data on the labour market evolution. Labour market participation is still low and the unemployment stays at a very high level (14.7% by the end of 2017). Compared to the third quarter 2017, employment decreased in the fourth quarter by 118 300. The highest part (86%) was due to the seasonal character of the jobs in agriculture, forestry and fishery and in households producing goods and services. Unemployment increased, compared to 2016, with 1.6%.

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Slovakia

Lack of qualified labour leads to higher wages

March 7, 2018

The growing economy and lack of qualified labour force drives the wages up. The unemployment rate, which stands at 5.72 %, is the lowest since the Republic came into existence. The low unemployment rate has consequences for companies. They have been complaining about a lack of qualified labour in the long term, and recently, they have started employing foreigners in greater numbers. Average wage is expected to increase to above €1,000 in 2018. The wage increase in 2017 was the biggest seen in the past seven years, based on data collected by the Platy.sk website. The basic gross wage rose by 6.6% compared to 2016, while the average basic monthly gross wage in 2017 amounted to 980 euro. Even though labour costs are increasing faster than the EU and eurozone average, they are still low compared with the older EU members.

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

Slovenia

Teachers suspend strike

March 15, 2018

Following strikes last month (see our February newsletter) teachers went on two more strikes in March after failing to reach a deal with the government on higher wages. Teachers want their salaries - around 920 euro monthly for junior teachers and 1,200 euro monthly on average - to be in line with those of other public workers. After the resignation of Prime Minister Miro Cerar, the public-sector trade unions demanding higher pay are divided. The trade union of teachers will probably suspend its strike plans and wait for a new government while the group of 16 public sector unions wants the outgoing government to finish the talks.

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

Spain

Amazon workers start industrial action

March 21, 2018

Over one thousand Madrid based Amazon workers went on strike with a two-day walkout demanding better pay and conditions. It was the country's first ever strike at Amazon. Unions claim that Amazon deliberately blocks salary increases, cuts wages and reduces payments for those working weekends or holidays as part of a new contract agreement. In a statement Amazon Spain claims that the salaries they pay are, in contrary, on the high end. According to unions UGT and CCOO the strike has been a success with 98% of workers observing the work stoppage.

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

NGO workers demand better wages and working conditions

March 19, 2018

Unionised workers in several NGOs have started initiatives for better wages. NGOs provide work for around 645,000 people and aim to create a fairer world. However, the working conditions for many of its employees seem to deny them the very rights they are employed to safeguard for others. During the crisis, the central and regional governments drastically reduced the budgets for this so-called 'third sector', which generates an annual €14 billion in revenue and represents 1.5% of the country's GDP. Consequently, some of the country's 30,000 NGOs froze or lowered the salaries of their staff – a situation that has never been redressed.

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

Large feminist strike for equal rights

March 10, 2018

According to the organisers 5.3 million followed a strike call by women's organisations, trade unions and other organisations for the first 'feminist strike' in the country's history. With their strike the women were protesting discrimination at work and sexual violence. All over the country there were public rallies under the slogan 'If the women go on strike, then the world stands still'. The women were encouraged to not only participate in the protests and stay away from their workplaces. They were also called upon to stop work at home and neither clean nor cook.

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

Sweden

The model of industrial relations explained

March 20, 2018

For non-Swedes, the functioning of the labour market can seem positively baffling. This article provides a clear introduction to the 'Swedish model' including the position of collective bargaining and trade unions. Based on the division of responsibilities between the state and trade unions, the two work in tandem to guarantee good working conditions and fair treatment of every worker. The autonomy of the social partners to negotiate about wages and working conditions is a key feature of the model.

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

Agreement on employment model for labour market entrants

March 5, 2018

The government and representatives of employees and employers have agreed on a new system of 'entry agreements' that is based on an earlier deal between the social partners. The deal was signed on 5 March 2018. The talks led to the conclusion of a tripartite agreement that will introduce a new employment model for labour market entrants. The 'entry agreement' ('etableringsjobb') aims to help newly arrived immigrants and long-term unemployed to become established in the labour market, and to facilitate future skills provision for employers. In the letter of intent of the negotiation partners, it is said that the basic premise is that entry agreements should make it possible for newly arrived immigrants and long-term unemployed people to get a job with an employer covered by a collective agreement on entry agreements.

Read on: [in English ...](#) The letter of intent: [in English ...](#)

Switzerland

Strike at UN continues

March 24, 2018

Following a half day strike last month (see our February newsletter) UN staff held two more strikes in March. The workers are still protesting recent pay cuts of 3.5% that will swell to 5% in June 2018. An overwhelming majority of 89% of the workers voted in favour of the decision to go on strike against pay cuts and austerity. However, the Director General of the United Nations in Geneva Office tried to prevent the strike by sending an email to all staff stating that 'rules and regulations provide no basis for staff members to be absent from work because of a work stoppage or strike'. In reaction to this attack on the right to strike, several trade unions expressed their solidarity.

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

Minimum wages in hospitality will increase

March 21, 2018

The social partners in hospitality negotiate every year about the modification of the minimum wage. This year, the employers blocked proposals to increase the minimum wage. The unions as for arbitration and, as a result, minimum wages will go up with 0.5%, starting 1 April 2018 for ordinary workers and, at the latest, 1 May 2018 for seasonal workers. The monthly minimum wage for unskilled workers is at least 3,435 Swiss Francs (2,919 euro). The joint sectoral committee has published leaflets in different languages.

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

Worries about privatisation surgical care

March 13, 2018

Global union Public Service International (PSI) expressed its concerns about the recently issued tenders by Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève for private 'partners' to run its ambulatory operation services, through a public-private partnership. In a solidarity letter to Swiss union Syndicat des Services Publics (SSP), the general secretary of PSI states that the public-private partnership is a 'surreptitious introduction of privatisation of surgical care'.

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

Turkey

Protest in public bus transport

March 9, 2018

Drivers went on strike and the private owners of at least 600 public buses withdrew their buses from service to protest financial hurdles announced by the Istanbul municipality. The drivers who went on strike demand transport fares to rise, they claim that 17% of the passengers is using the busses for free. According to the trade union, the transportation fee, which they took from the Istanbul Municipality, did not absorb the cost. The union claims that with this amount of money no employer will be able to pay their drivers' salaries.

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

Fatalities and work-related accidents documented

March 7, 2018

Health and Safety Labour Watch, an intra-professional and independent monitoring platform on health and safety at the workplace, released its 2017 report. At least two thousand and six workers lost their lives as a result of accidents at the workplace. Trade union Disk commented that this is the result of the policy of the current government, with precarious, flexible and irregular working conditions aggravating and popularised by the state of emergency and statutory decrees. The union formulates demands and aims to combine the fight against non-unionised and precarious employment practices.

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

United Kingdom

Huge victory cleaners Daily Mail

March 22, 2018

After a petition for 'a dignified' salary that was signed by nearly 100,000 people and the threat of an all-out cleaners strike at the Mail's offices in Kensington the cleaners demands have been met: as of 1st April 2018, they will all receive the London Living Wage of 10.20 pound per hour. Before the cleaners were paid the current UK minimum wage of 7.50 pound per hour. In real terms the cleaners have secured a 25% wage increase equating to nearly 500 pounds extra per month per worker, or around 6,000 pounds extra per year.

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

First pay rise for health care workers since 2010

March 21, 2018

Eight years after their last meaningful pay rise, over one million nurses, paramedics, emergency call handlers, hospital porters, scientist and other workers have been offered salary increases of 6.5% to 29% over the next three years, starting as soon as July 2018. If the workers back the deal in forthcoming ballots organised by the 14 unions by which they are represented, all workers receive at least a 6.5% salary increase. The unions will consult members for their views until the end of May and announce the outcome of that by 8 June. If the unions agree then staff will start to receive their rise in July, backdated to April 2018.

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

Naming and shaming of underpayment

March 9, 2018

Ahead of the next rate rise on 1 April, when the National Living Wage will go up from £7.50 to £7.83 per hour, the government named and shamed nearly 180 employers for underpaying more than 9,000 minimum wage workers by £1.1 million. As well as recovering backpay for 9,200 workers, the government also fined the employers a total of £1.3 million in penalties for breaking national minimum wage laws. The most prolific offending sectors in this round were retailers, hospitality businesses and hairdressers. Very prominently on the list is the Marriott Hotels group (number 2 in the ranking).

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

Agency work undercuts wages

March 5, 2018

Trade union confederation TUC published a report that investigates the functioning of agency work. According to the TUC, agency work no longer appears to be a stepping stone into direct employment in many sectors and workplaces. Instead, agency workers remain trapped in low paid, insecure work, with few rights in the workplace. Younger agency workers are particularly missing out on career progression. And while some have claimed that the workers have a choice about the form of agency contract they accept, at best this is a 'Hobson's Choice', with workers told they can either sign the contract, or miss out on the chance to work.

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

Public workers confronted with ethnicity gap

March 2, 2018

Results from an ethnicity audit show that public workers in London face an ethnicity pay gap of up to 37%. The study found varying pay gaps, ranging from none at all in the London fire brigade to 9.8% at TfL, 16.7% at the Metropolitan police and 37.5% at the Old Oak and Park Royal development corporation, which runs a major redevelopment project in the north-west of the city. The major of London is deeply troubled by the results of the audit and vows for action.

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