

collective bargaining

Issue 7-8/2019 July-August

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.

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European sources

Work-life Balance Directive enters into force

August 22, 2019

The Work-life Balance Directive, which aims to improve families' access to family leave and flexible work arrangements, has entered into European Union law and must be adopted by Member States. The Work-life Balance Directive introduces a set of legislative actions designed to modernise the existing EU legal and policy frameworks, with the aims of: better supporting a work-life balance for parents and carers, encouraging a more equal sharing of parental leave between men and women, and addressing women's underrepresentation in the labour market.

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

One in four Europeans can't afford a one-week annual holiday

July 31, 2019

For many people in the European Union (EU), summer means holidays and travel. However, it is estimated that 28.3% of the EU population aged 16 or over could not afford a one-week annual holiday away from home in 2018, according to an estimate of Eurostat. In 2013 the corresponding proportion was 39.5%. Among the 28 EU Member States, the countries with the highest proportions of individuals in this situation were Romania (58.9%), Croatia (51.3%, provisional data), Greece (51%) and Cyprus (51.0%, provisional data). In contrast, the EU Member States with the lowest percentage of people unable to afford a one week annual holiday in 2018 were Luxembourg (10.9%, 2017 data) and Sweden (9.7%).

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

Unions call for worker representation on Ryanair's board

July 26, 2019

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) declare that a minimum of three directors on Ryanair's board should be elected by its workforce. Despite a number of labour conflicts since two years, Ryanair has begun to engage with labour unions more constructively. The ITF and ETF believe the next step towards sustainable industrial relations is for chosen representatives to take seats in the boardroom.

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

Tackling social disruption in the online platform economy

July 2019

FEPS published a Policy paper in which it makes the case that regulation of the activities of online platforms is necessary at EU level. Especially the precarious position of their workers needs to be regulated. Much online platform work is vulnerable and the current regulatory responses at national level have so far been insufficient to protect online platform workers. The paper concludes that it is important to shift the narrative away from 'harmful rules' that 'hamper' technological 'innovation' and instead to argue for a socially sustainable technologically supported economy that benefits everyone involved.

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

Austria

More free time to meet the high pressure of work

August 23, 2019

The national union confederation ÖGB (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund) calls for more rest breaks,

holidays and free time to balance the Work-Life relationship. The pressure of work has increased with long working hours, too little personnel and overwork. If the workforce can relax more and better they will be healthier but also more motivated hence the employer will also benefit from the proposed 6 weeks holidays for all and the 4-day working week.

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

Regular lifting and working overtime suffice for heavy work pension

July 19, 2019

Heavy lifting and carrying, regular stooping and up to 61 hours overtime per month and still not regarded as hard work? The Pension Insurance Institution (PVA, Pensionsversicherungsanstalt) has rejected this. After taking over the right of representation by the Arbeiterkammer, it was possible for a former employee of a chemical merchandise trade company to obtain the hardship pension.

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

Belgium

Minimum wage for working prisoners raised by government

August 22, 2019

After 15 years of stagnation working prisoners will receive a higher minimum wage as of next year. This higher wage will be paid, even if striking prison guards prevent them from performing their tasks. Prisoners provide about 6 million working hours a year in mainly manual work. Work regarded by the Court of Audit (Rekenhof) as prison labour.

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

Train service reduced by half due to strike

August 15, 2019

The Syndicat indépendant pour cheminots (SIC, Independent union of railroad employees) called for a strike on 17 August 2019. The reason for the strike, the second after one on 27 July 2019, is the recurring shortage of train guards. Roughly half of the trains were not running.

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

Freelance fees have been stagnant for more than 10 years

August 8, 2019

The result of an online survey published by the Association Générale des Journalistes Professionnels (AJP, General professional journalists' union) shows that some rates of freelance-journalists in the French-speaking part of the country have remained on the same precarious level as they were in 2007. Some rates even dropped below that level. The answers of 255 respondents indicate their average gross earnings were between € 2000 and € 2400. Fortunately, there seems to be a positive development because new magazines aiming at quality want to pay the freelancers a fair price.

Read on: [in English ...](#) The results of the survey: [in French ...](#)

Bulk carrier detained because of bad working conditions

August 6, 2019

Port State Control inspected the Liberian-flagged MV Lita and found safety breaches and deficiencies relating to working conditions on board. The inspection took place following a complaint by one of the seafarers. Only after nine days the ship was released when the most critical of the 36 deficiencies were repaired. During the detention union members afforded the crew with drinking water.

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

Trade unionist's conviction infringes on right to strike

July 11, 2019

During a 2016 strike the president of the Antwerp branch La Centrale Générale – ABVV, took part in roadblocks to the port of Antwerp. The strikers were confronted by police who broke up the demonstration and arrested union leaders. The president was sentenced because of ‘malicious obstruction of traffic’. The court of appeal now ruled that his conviction without sentence was right. A verdict regarded by the international union movement as an infringement of trade union rights.

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

Work-to-rule action hits Brussels Airport

July 2, 2019

A work-to-rule strike by handler Swissport broke out at Brussels Airport. The strike started after talks between trade unions and management broke off. The unsatisfied unions called for the work-to-rule actions because the employees demand attention for their ‘unsustainable’ work conditions that lead to exhaustion.

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

Bulgaria

Low income and spending of Bulgarian households

August 20, 2019

Bulgarians earn little and spend little. They are in last position in the European per capita consumption rankings, at 56% of the average levels for the EU. The income and spending level of Bulgarian households indicates that at this time, things are not looking particularly rosy, nevertheless, they are improving – gradually and at a modest pace. Mostly because incomes are going up uninterruptedly and at a stable rate which is allowing Bulgarians to increase their consumption.

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

30 % of Bulgarians cannot afford a one-week holiday

July 31, 2019

About 30.5% of Bulgarians cannot afford a one-week holiday, according to European Union statistics agency Eurostat, citing figures for 2018. Eurostat said, however, that the figure had dropped by 35.8 percentage points since 2013 – the largest such decrease in the EU.

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

Croatia

Health unions threaten to strike over pay

August 23, 2019

Health unions were due to meet the government to continue negotiations over the current collective agreement and previously agreed pay increases. The unions are threatening strike action if there is not a positive outcome and confirmation that pay increases included in the current collective agreement will be honoured. Pay increases of 3% (in August) for health workers in general and 4% (in October) for staff with diagnostic responsibilities are part of the annex to the collective agreement in force until 31 October. However, the government said it wouldn't confirm the increases, leading to an angry response from the unions and the current negotiations.

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

Developments in working life

August 7, 2019

Rules to bolster the rights of unemployed people, an increase in the maternity leave allowance, a potential referendum on the statutory pension age and the government's new national reform programme are the main topics of interest in this Eurofound note. This country update reports on the latest developments in working life in the second quarter of 2019. According to data from the Croatian Pension Insurance Institute,

the number of insured employed persons exceeded 1.6 million at the end of July and reached the figure of 1,600,405. This means that compared to pre-recession July 2008, when the figure stood at 1.639 million, there are only 39,000 insured persons less.

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

Government invites unions to continue social dialogue

July 24, 2019

The newly appointed Minister of Labour and Pension System, announced that he would officially invite unions to sit down together and continue social dialogue regarding common topics, including the "67 is too much" referendum related to the pension reform.

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

As young people head West, employers look for foreign and retired workers

July 24, 2019

Labour shortages have become an acute problem in the youngest member state of the EU. After the country's accession to the EU in 2013 workers got free access to better paid jobs in western Europe which caused a brain-drain. Another cause for the shortage lies in the (too) early retirements. These were used as a means to buy social peace after the breakup of Yugoslavia and the privatization of many state-owned companies. Now employers recruit more foreign workers to fill vacancies. These come from the countries of the former Yugoslavia, but the suggestion is to look for workers in India, Pakistan and the Philippines. The trade union movement opposes this easy attraction of foreign workers and suggests to pay higher wages in better, long-term contracts.

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

Cyprus

Latest developments in working life

July 31, 2019

The expected resolution to the dispute in the construction industry, deadlocked negotiations on the renewal of collective agreements in the hotel industry and work stoppages by contract workers in the public sector are the main topics of interest in this note. This country update reports on the latest developments in working life in Cyprus in the second quarter of 2019.

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

Tourism headed for labour standoff as industrial peace jeopardised

July 27, 2019

Unions SEK and PEO, representing hotel workers, have warned hoteliers that they are ready to take industrial action, claiming that 'negotiations have come to a dead end after 7 months and there is no point in continuing talks'. The two sides have been in negotiations since the end of December 2018 when the previous collective agreement expired. SEK and PEO sent a joint letter to the labour department of the Ministry of Labour, calling on the Ministry to declare a deadlock in the negotiation process if hoteliers do not substantially alter their stance by the end of the month.

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

Czechia

Government plans quotas for foreign workers

August 23, 2019

Because of an acute labour shortage (342,000 vacancies and only some 196,000 registered jobseekers) the government wants to attract more foreign workers and streamline the process of issuing work permits. Recently the country has in particular turned to Ukraine to fill the gap, now the government wants get

employees from Montenegro, Moldova and Serbia, but also India and other Asian countries.

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

Paid paternity leave to be extended to 10 days

August 19, 2019

Paid paternity leave will be extended from 7 to 10 working days within the next three years, with fathers being compensated at the level of sick pay. This rule is a result of the new European directive on work-life balance. The directive is intended to contribute to the division of care between men and women and to the increased employment of mothers and caregivers.

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

Denmark

Growth of working people with foreign citizenship

August 22, 2019

Figures from the Danish Agency for Labour Market and Recruitment show that a total of 222,500 people with foreign citizenships were employed in Denmark during the first half of 2019. That means the number of foreigners working in Denmark is at its highest level since 2011. The increase reflects ongoing demand for hands on the Danish labour market.

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

Burger King workers get first collective agreement

July 29, 2019

For the first time the 1,400 Burger King employees are covered by a collective agreement. The agreement provides guaranteed working hours, bonus payment for evening and weekend hours, duty planning rules, paid holidays, paid sick leave, paid maternity leave, the right to have weekends off and protection for trade union rights.

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

Estonia

Educational workers union demands government funding for research

August 18, 2019

The Federation of the Estonian Universities, Institutions of Science, Research and Development (UNIVERSITAS), among other academic trade unions, has been at the forefront of protests directed against the negligence of the government towards the academic and scientific sectors.

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The number of 50–74-year-old employed increased

14 August 2019

The number of 50–74-year-old employed persons (232,500) has continued to increase, by 9,600 compared to last year. In the second quarter of 2019, the employment rate of the 50–74-year-old population was 59.2% and the unemployment rate 4.7%. The number of unemployed persons in this age category decreased by 2,100 compared to the same quarter of 2018. 127,700 of the employed were women and 104,800 men. Compared to the previous year, the number of employed women has increased by 3,400 and employed men by 6,200.

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

Finland

Foreign workers used for unpaid work

August 26, 2019

The SAK employee rights advisory service for immigrants and Victim Support Finland have reminded employers that unpaid internships are only rarely acceptable. Foreign employees have contacted the employee rights advisory service for immigrants with concerns about unpaid trainee positions lasting for between two weeks and several months, during which the employer wished to evaluate whether to make an employment contract with the employee.

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

Federation of Enterprises calls for overhaul of collective bargaining

July 15, 2019

The CEO of the Finnish Federation of Enterprises urges Finland to move towards a collective bargaining system that takes better into account the competitiveness and productivity growth of businesses. The Finnish collective bargaining system is in need of a thorough overhaul to prevent a complete collapse, states the managing director of the Federation of Finnish Enterprises. He estimated that reforming the collective bargaining system should be one of the priorities of the upcoming round of sector-specific negotiations between employer and employee representatives. Businesses, he reminded, will have no choice but to look for alternatives if the agreements are not in their best interests.

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

France

Courier delivery Chronopost exploits workers

August 20, 2019

Undocumented migrant workers, hired to work for the courier delivery firm Chronopost, have been on strike outside the company's facility in Alfortville, in the Paris suburbs. They say their working conditions are unacceptable and that the company is taking advantage of their status to, in the words of one worker, 'treat us like slaves'. The workers describe intolerable working conditions for migrant staff at the company, a subsidiary of the French post office, including working longer hours, unpaid overtime and the risk of being fired if they are sick and unable to work. The strike started on 11 June and the workers still hold a picket line. Chronopost denies all responsibility and claims the problem lies at the door of the recruitment agency.

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

French workers are highly productive despite short working hours

July 17, 2019

The 35-hour week is the official length of the working week in France and it gives France one of the shortest working weeks in Europe. But despite the shorter working week, France regularly comes out well in international productivity comparisons - proving that when the French are at work, they're working hard. There is also the fact that exceptions to the 35-hour week for certain kinds of workers mean that many people in France work longer hours than you might think.

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

Strikes during Amazon's prime sale

July 16, 2019

Amazon employees went on strike demanding better wages and working conditions as the retail giant launched its two-day 'Amazon Prime' sale. Around 20 workers tried to block trucks coming to and from the online retailer's distribution centre in the northern city of Lauwin-Planque, disrupting deliveries while demanding better wages and working conditions, as well as union recognition. As the Seattle-based online retail giant launched its annual two-day global shopping offer known as Prime Day, also employees in Germany and the US went on strike.

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

Germany

Labour union calls on 2 million members to join climate strike

August 6, 2019

Service sector labour union Ver.di calls on its 2 million members to join the global Fridays for Future climate strike on 20 September. The union will not proclaim an official general strike but encourages its members to join. The Fridays for Future student movement calls for a global climate strike on 20 September, and plans protests in more than 100 towns and cities.

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

IG Metall is using its power to get YouTubers unionized

July 27, 2019

A group of YouTubers called the YouTubers Union teamed up with Germany's powerful IG Metall trade union to fight back Youtube's recent policies. YouTube has made life hard for smaller content creators, at the same time favouring the big, corporate channels such as the ones owned by large media companies and celebrities. Thousands of YouTubers saw their videos demonetized and penalized by YouTube's algorithms, in some cases removed. They are the same people who, with their creativity, helped YouTube to be what it is today. In a proposal the YouTubers request clear rules, a human to speak to, neutral referees and participation. In case of no reply from YouTube's headquarters in Hamburg the union will go to court.

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

Amazon workers strike ahead of major sale

July 15, 2019

Labour union Ver.di has called on employees at Amazon facilities to go on strike. Workers pushing for better wages have timed the work stoppage to coincide with a major sale day for the online retailer. The motto of the strike was 'No more discounts on our income'. The fight for better wages at the company has been on now for more than six years. Ver.di also demands a collective agreement, which is denied by the employer who declares to be a 'responsible employer'.

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

Pay rise for bank workers following successful collective bargaining

July 9, 2019

Bank sector workers across Germany will benefit from a 4% pay increase over 29 months and support in the digital transition, following successful collective bargaining negotiations concluded with employers on 4 July. The union Ver.di reached this result after five increasingly difficult negotiation rounds as well as a warning strike.

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

Greece

New Democracy wants E-Vote before workers strike

August 12, 2019

After making it easier for employers to fire workers, the new New Democracy government is going to push a measure that would require unions to let workers vote electronically to prove there's a majority for any prospective strikes. Labour Minister Yiannis Vrontis said electronic voting will soon be required. Also under discussion is the creation of a special web page for employers where trade unions can publish strike actions.

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

Unemployment falls to 17.6% the lowest since 2011

July 11, 2019

The Greek unemployment rate fell to 17.6% of the workforce in April 2019 from 18.2% in March and 19.8% in April last year, the Greek Statistical Authority (ELSTAT) said in a report on Thursday. This is the lowest figure recorded since June 2011.

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

Hungary

Suzuki violating union rights

July 19, 2019

IndustriAll Europe has written to the management of multinational motor manufacturer Suzuki, in protest at their repeated violations of basic trade union rights in their dealings with the Hungarian affiliate, metalworkers' union VASAS. Earlier this year, VASAS established itself at Suzuki's large plant in north Hungary having successfully recruited hundreds of workers there. The majority of those workers have not openly identified themselves as union members for fear of losing their jobs.

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

Iceland

Individuals' total annual income around 6.6 million ISK in 2018

August 9, 2019

In 2018, total annual income per individual in Iceland was 6.6 million ISK (€ 48.673) on average. The median income from work shows a considerable difference in the income of individuals with basic education compared with those with higher education. It should be noted that the comparison of total income by education does not take into account the labour status of individuals. Total income is defined as the total income from work, capital income and other income. Other income may include pension payments, benefits and unemployment benefits.

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

Distribution of wages by sector

July 10, 2019

A set of comprehensive data series on earnings for 2014-2018 by occupational groups, sectors and economic activities has been published. Previously published data for 2014-2017 have been revised. Results are based on the Icelandic Survey on Wages, Earnings and Labour Costs, which cover about 90 thousand employees.

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

Ireland

Ryanair seeks to block strikes

August 21, 2019

After a long row and the failure of mediation attempts, Ryanair sought a court order to prevent industrial action of the airline's Irish based pilots. Around 180 of Ryanair's Irish based pilots are represented by trade unions IALPA and Fórsa, 94% of the pilots who took part in a recent ballot, voted in favour of industrial action. The company accused Fórsa of collapsing mediation talks aimed at resolving a number of issues between the two sides. The High Court granted Ryanair the injunction preventing a planned strike.

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

Serious regional wage disparities

July 30, 2019

Workers in the southeast earn little more than half of the national average, according to a major economic survey, which lays the blame on the lack of high-quality jobs in the regions. The South East Economic Monitor written by Waterford Institute of Technology academics has found that when returns for taxes on work are calculated, including PAYE, universal social charge and self-employed taxes, the figure is 52% of the national average. Moreover, the most recent data (Q4 2018) show that the southeast has the highest proportion of workers earning the National Minimum Wage or less (12.9% versus 7.6% country-wide).

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

Dispute in health care addressed by the labour court

July 12, 2019

The Labour Court will reconvene in a health support staff dispute. In a statement to management and SIPTU, the court noted that its role under the Industrial Relations Act is to investigate disputes. The dispute centres on a job evaluation scheme, which the Government agreed to carry out during negotiations on the last Public Service Stability Agreement. The job evaluations examine whether roles have changed and whether pay rises are warranted. Trade union SIPTU has accepted the invitation to attend the hearing. SIPTU blamed the government for failing to pay increases recommended by a job-evaluation scheme which examined whether any of the roles of the staff had changed and expanded in recent years.

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

Italy

Highway workers strike

August 1, 2019

Trade unions Filt Cgil, Fit Cisl, Ultrasporti, Sla Cisl and Ugl Trasporti organised a strike on 4 and 5 August 2019. Toll collectors, technical and administrative workers join in strikes that are meant to put pressure on the employer side in the negotiations about the renewal of the collective agreement. The government issued a travel warning for Saturday 3 August, asking the public to avoid travelling at peak periods as traffic will be slow and more dangerous with large numbers of vehicles on the road. Three weeks later, on 25 and 26 August, the workers walked off again for a 4-hour strike.

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

Italian airline strike has been postponed until September

July 25, 2019

A planned strike at the national carrier Alitalia, set to cause travel chaos for passengers flying through Italian airports on Friday, has been postponed. The strike has now been rescheduled for 6 September, unions said. Unions are now debating whether or not the airline strike will last 24 hours as initially planned. The strike was called in protest over new transport plans drafted by the government, which unions said they weren't consulted on.

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

Country-wide public transport strikes

July 21, 2019

Commuters in Rome and throughout Italy expected two public transport strikes as the result of nationwide action by trade unions representing transport workers. The strike action has been called by trade unions protesting over the 'absence of strategic responses' in the transport plan being put forward by the government which, they claim, has excluded union representatives from talks.

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

Unions continue fight for new private health agreement

July 2, 2019

The public service federations are continuing their campaign to force the AIOP and ARIS private health employer organisations to negotiate a collective agreement. The last one was concluded 12 years ago. This new initiative follows a meeting with the Conference of Regions and Autonomous Provinces where the unions secured a commitment initiate a change in legislation on the accreditation of private providers that would require them to negotiate a collective agreement with the three recognised trade unions in line with the negotiations in the public sector.

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

Latvia

Wage data over the 1st half of 2019

August 28, 2019

Data published by the Central Statistical Bureau reveal that in the 2nd quarter of 2019, compared to the 2nd quarter of 2018, average monthly gross wages and salaries grew by 7.8% or 78 euro, reaching 1 083 euro for full-time work. Just like in the 1st quarter of 2019, annual growth rate of the 2nd quarter comprised 7.8%. Compared to the 1st quarter of 2019, in the 2nd quarter of 2019 gross wages and salaries grew by 4.6%. In the 2nd quarter of 2019, average monthly gross wages and salaries in the public sector exceeded the indicator recorded in the private sector (respectively 1 097 and 1 079 euro). However, a faster annual increase rate was registered in the private sector (8.9%, compared to 6.0% in the public sector).

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

Minimum wage for teachers should increase

July 18, 2019

The parliament's Budget and Finance Committee supported a government proposal to increase the minimum wages of teachers to 750 euro this year September to December. The committee had to find a compromise on the resetting of portions of the state budget. The increase of minimum wages will apply to approximately 24 129 general education teachers, 12 159 pre-school teachers, 2 426 vocational education teachers, 7 350 interest group teachers and 4 144 specialised vocational education specialists. The Latvian Trade Union for Education and Science Employees is happy for the increase of wages. However, the trade union maintains its request for further wage increases from 1 January 2020 onward.

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

Liechtenstein

Government honours family-friendly companies

August 9, 2019

The government is seeking to motivate companies to promote a healthy and harmonious work-life balance for families. To this end, the government will be awarding prizes to particularly family-friendly companies later this year. The winners will be awarded a certification, with larger companies also receiving an individual report of their results.

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

Lithuania

Gender pay gap continues

August 31, 2019

Data published by Statistics Lithuania show that the men's gross monthly wages exceeded those of women by on average 161.4 euro in the 2nd quarter of 2019. Women's average gross wages stood at 1,207.8 euro, or 88.2% of men's average gross wages of 1,369.2 euro. The State Social Insurance Fund, Sodra confirmed that, while incomes have been growing steadily, gender wage gap remains significant and leaves women more

exposed to poverty risk.

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

Audit Office documents poverty and income inequality

July 30, 2019

An audit entitled 'Does Social Support Ensure the Minimum Consumption Needs of People Living in Poverty and Promote Labour Market Integration', carried out by the National Audit Office, the Supreme Audit Institution, documents that income inequality and poverty remain among the highest in the EU. In 2018, 22.9 % of the population lived below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, and 11.1 % below the extreme poverty threshold. The OECD and the European Commission note that the adequacy of social benefits in Lithuania remains relatively low, the living standards of the poorest households have improved only moderately and the impact on reducing income inequality is lower than in the EU.

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

Luxembourg

Agreement for security services

August 30, 2019

The majority union LCGB and the OGBL signed with FEDIL Security Services (employers' association) the extension of the collective agreement for security and guard services. This agreement now guarantees 4,000 employees an increase in purchasing power and better working conditions.

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

Cargolux and unions sign new agreement

August 8, 2019

This agreement is applicable until end of December 2022 and will result in substantial improvements for the pilots employed by Europe's leading all-cargo airline. Part of the agreement signed is a salary increase of 4% for the airline's more than 500 pilots over the 4-year duration of the contract. Additionally, the new agreement includes significant improvements to the flight time limitations.

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

Malta

Air Malta strike before court

August 27, 2019

An industrial action ordered by pilots, delaying Air Malta flights by half an hour. The action was called off after a court upheld a request by the airline to temporarily stop the action. The pilots had launched their industrial action over a dispute about the collective agreement and threats of disciplinary measures against some of the union members. In the following weeks, Air Malta instituted court action against the pilots' union, claiming that their industrial action was illegal and demanding payment of damages. The action was filed against ALPA the Airline Pilots Association and the members of its executive committee.

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

Collective agreement at Bank of Valletta

August 22, 2019

The GWU trade union section for the Professionals, Finance and Services and the Bank of Valletta signed a three-year Collective Agreement covering the working conditions for workers at the Bank of Valletta for the years 2019 to 2021. The agreement aims to further enhance the conditions of employment and ameliorates current family-friendly measures that assist employees reach a better work-life balance.

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

Netherlands

Freelancers earn 48% less than employees

August 22, 2019

Statistics Netherlands reports that freelancers and other workers with a flexible employment relationship earn 48% less per hour than employees with a permanent contract. This difference is largely explained by background characteristics. Flex workers are on average younger and less educated. If these characteristics are taken into account, the difference between the two groups is only 7%.

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

Companies recruit more female board members

July 5, 2019

Shareholders of Dutch listed companies are increasingly committed to recruiting more female board members. Half of the board members appointed since October 2018, are women, according to a study by Eumedion. Eumedion represents institutional investors' interests in the field of corporate governance and related sustainability performance. The study by Eumedion found that more and more shareholders voted against the appointment of a new male board member if there were only men on the board.

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

Minimum wage rises for young workers

July 1, 2019

From month July 21-year-olds no longer fall under the youth minimum wage. For years this youth wage applied to workers until the age of 23 years. In 2017, the government decided to gradually reduce this age to 21. There are no plans to further lower the age limit for an adult minimum wage, but the chairman of FNV Jong, said "Ultimately, all people over 18 must receive an adult wage."

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

Norway

Foodora bike couriers go on strike in Norway

August 21, 2019

A group of 102 Foodora couriers organized with the Norwegian Transport Union (NTF) went on strike after negotiations over a collective agreement with Foodora failed. The representative of NTF said that a collective agreement guarantees pay and rights of employees and when an employer refuses it, industrial action is necessary. In a comment to the news site NRK, he said that he was surprised and disappointed over the failed agreement, because negotiations had been conducted in good spirit.

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

What are the minimum wages in Norway?

August 13, 2019

During many years Norway has attracted foreign workers. Currently, there are approximately 850 thousand immigrants. This is mainly caused by the high level of salaries that is incomparably higher than in other countries. This website enumerates the lowest wages that can be earned in various sectors according to the Arbeidstilsynet (Norwegian Labour Inspection).

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

Strike avoided with solid pay deal

July 1, 2019

An announced strike at the mobile offshore units was called off after trade union Industri Energi and the Norwegian Shipowners' Association agreed on a mediation result that gives employees on the mobile offshore units a solid increase in salary, starting 1 June 2019. The result ensures employees encompassed by the Collective Agreement for the mobile offshore units a general increase in wages, holiday allowance included, of 3.6%, at a minimum of NOK 24,679. For the group individually remunerated in the respective companies, a wage supplement is given within a limit of 3.6% on average, however, so that each person individually paid shall be guaranteed a wage increase of 2.6%.

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

Poland

Unions distrust Ryanair's announced job cuts

August 3, 2019

Union leaders say the 900 job cuts announced by Ryanair are mainly about intimidating its workforce and have little to do with operational justifications. Unions believe the cuts are an attempt to undermine collective bargaining because the company at the same time expects growth. The union's distrust is grounded in Ryanair's union-avoiding tactics in response to the creation of a new cabin crew union last year.

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

Prime Day protests include a strike vote at Amazon

July 18, 2019

Prime Day protests included a referendum to strike organized by TU NSZZ Solidarność and Workers' Initiative. The decision to take the vote comes after negotiations with Amazon Poland failed to resolve the collective dispute on higher wages because the company unilaterally broke off negotiations. The dispute that has been ongoing since May and the vote are expected to last until September. Union representatives will visit warehouses on a rotational basis to materialize the referendum; a turnout of 50% is needed to make the referendum binding.

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

Ikea fires worker over LGBT criticism – discussion continues

July 1, 2019

Swedish furniture giant Ikea fired a local worker critical of the company's LGBT policy. The worker used quotes from the Bible to voice his comments on an internal company forum. The conservative justice minister ordered an investigation of the case because he found the dismissal a violation of "the freedom of conscience and religion". Other politicians suggested a boycott of the Swedish furniture retailer. The debate comes at a moment that the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has condemned the distribution of 'LGBT free zone' stickers by the newspaper Gazeta Polska. The ETUC is afraid that this kind of action will create unnecessary divisions and conflicts in workplaces and in society, as demonstrated by recent violence against members of the LGBT community. It might tempt people to break the law by discriminating on grounds of sexual orientation, which is against EU and Polish law, so the union confederation states.

Read on: [in English ...](#) [in English \(2\) ...](#) ETUC statements from 2017 and 2019: [in English ...](#) and here: [in English \(2\) ...](#)

Portugal

Striking tanker drivers defy threat of arrest

August 14, 2019

Three days into a strike, Portuguese fuel tanker drivers have rejected a new government decree requiring them to fulfil minimum services or face arrest or even jail. Strikers reacted angrily after proceedings began against 14 drivers who did not comply with the decree. The government is trying to stop the strike hitting key tourist areas. Officials are particularly keen to protect Lisbon airport and the southern Algarve coastal region and the military and police have been drafted in to help move fuel stocks to areas that are running dry.

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

Unions criticise government for undermining collective bargaining

July 10, 2019

The Frente Comum group of public service unions has criticised the government for failing to respect existing collective bargaining arrangements in the public sector. The government has put forward reforms to public sector pensions without going through the proper procedure for consultation. Instead of negotiating directly with public sector unions the government will use a social dialogue forum that includes private sector employers. The Frente Comum unions are concerned about the impact of the proposed pension reforms which could reduce rights for workers to retire from 60 with 40 years' service, for example.

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

Romania

Government raises the number of work permits for foreign workers in 2019

August 27, 2019

The government increased quotas for non-EU foreign workers in 2019 by 50% up to 30,000 work permits, an all-time high number, under the pressure of higher demand from local companies claiming they are affected by the workforce crisis. The decree has been proposed in July by the Labour Ministry.

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

Railway workers prepared for four-week strike

August 22, 2019

Train mechanics and the other employees of Romanian passenger railway company CFR Calatori are preparing for massive protests, to last four weeks, starting September 16. They want to draw attention to the tragic situation in the railway sector, caused by the lack of investments, the president of the Federation of Railway Carrier Unions of Romania (FSTFR) announced on August 21. The protests will be organized together with the Federation of Locomotive Mechanics and the National Railway Federation.

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

Strike by union at ADM Constanta averted

July 15, 2019

Workers at ADM's North Star Shipping grain silos in Romania's Black sea port of Constanta said on Monday an indefinite strike scheduled to start on July 15 had been averted after reaching a deal on wages. An indefinite strike at the Constanta port silos could have severely impacted grain supplies to Egypt, the world's largest wheat importer, and where ADM is an active exporter. Egypt closed its local wheat supply season on Monday, meaning imports would be the sole supply source.

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

Serbia

Protest action for better negotiation for teachers' salary

August 31, 2019

Teachers and education trade unions in Serbia are demonstrating for decent salaries and comprehensive social dialogue in education in front of the buildings of the Ministry of Education, the Serbian government and the Ministry of State and Local Administration. The unions report that the provisions of the Law on Salaries in the public sector, which are to come into effect at the beginning of 2019, rank salaries for education personnel in the eighth salary group, when the salary for other public sector employees with similar levels of qualifications is to be allocated under the ninth salary group. An ominous threat is that the eighth salary group implies no career development perspectives for education personnel in Serbia.

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

Labour market in the 2nd quarter of 2019

August 30, 2019

In the second quarter of 2019, the employment rate increased to 49.2%, while unemployment rate, in the same period, had the value of 10.3%. The activity rate of the population aged 15 and over increased in the second quarter 2019 to 54.8%, where the activity rate of males was 62.9%, and of females 47.3%. In the 1st half of 2019, gross salaries and wages increased, compared to the same period in 2018, with 9.6% in nominal terms, i.e. 7.1% in real terms. Simultaneously, net salaries and wages increased by 9.8% in nominal terms and by 7.3% in real terms.

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

Serious labour shortage

August 28, 2019

The first symptoms are already appearing – kiosks, shops and restaurants covered with notices advertising free workplaces everywhere. The unions are convinced that the only way to solve the problem is a pay rise. The situation is alarming as in some supermarkets there are important departments completely lacking staff in the afternoon. The unionists easily prove that it's hard to live with 250 euros a month and argue against the employers who claim that the economy is not ready yet to carry a burden of increased wages.

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

Slovakia

About 700 staffers asked to voluntarily leave at U.S. Steel Košice

August 26, 2019

About 700 people have asked the U.S. Steel Košice (USSK) company if they can leave their posts voluntarily. If so they can – if they have been working for more than 10 years at the steelworks – receive a severance pay equalling 12 times their average monthly wage. With this request the personnel anticipates the company plan to reduce the number of its staff by the end of 2021.

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

Chamber of Commerce backs employers on minimum wage

July 15, 2019

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry SOPK fully backs the employers organizations' stance that the minimum wage should be only increased in line with the current legal mechanism. The unions demand a sharper rise but that would threaten the companies' operations and even existence, thus potentially resulting in mass redundancies. That in turn would endanger social harmony. At the end of August it became clear that social partners couldn't come to an agreement, hence the Labour Ministry will take a decision.

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

Slovenia

Reform pension system

August 28, 2019

The government promised to reform the pension and healthcare systems, two issues that were supposed to dominate its social policy agenda. To ensure sufficient funds for pensions and long-term care, the state will have to improve youth participation in the labour market since the population is rapidly ageing, which has been driving growth in pension spending.

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

Earnings increased by 4.3% compared to 2018

August 16, 2019

Data (with attached pdfs) published by the Statistical Office reveal that, compared to earnings for the first half of 2018, average monthly earnings for the first half of 2019 increased: gross earnings in nominal terms by 4.3% and in real terms by 2.8%, and net earnings in nominal terms by 3.6% and in real terms by 2.1%. However, in the month of June 2019 the wage development was uneven: compared to earnings for May 2019, average net earnings for June 2019 increased in the public sector by 0.3%, while in the private sector they decreased by 1.0%.

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

Spain

Ryanair strike announced

August 28, 2019

Workers at the low-cost airline Ryanair announced stoppages on five days in September, compounding disruption from another 10 days of industrial action. The action was a protest at the Irish airline's plans to close its Spanish bases in Las Palmas, Tenerife South, Lanzarote and Girona, as well as the Portuguese base of Faro, a move that could see more than 100 pilots lose their jobs.

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

Work stoppages at RENFE

July 30, 2019

A four-day strike called for July 31, August 14, August 30 and September 1, led to according to the minimum services established by the Public Works Ministry. The strike was announced just over two weeks after the CCOO union called a rail strike on July 15, leading to the cancellation of 320 train services. Unions are demanding an increase in the worker replacement rate to curb the outsourcing of services, as well as greater internal promotion and better working conditions.

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

Sweden

Wage data updated

August 30, 2019

The Labour Cost Index in June 2019 for the private sector was 131.5 for wage earners and 134.3 for salaried employees. Compared with June 2018, labour costs have increased by 2.1% for wage earners and by 2.4% for salaried employees. Since mid-2019, a slowdown on the labour market has become manifest.

Read on: [in English ...](#) To enter into the database: [in English ...](#)

Pension Reform in Sweden: Sustainability and Adequacy of Public Pensions (new paper)

August 2, 2019

This paper looks at the pension reforms implemented by Sweden in the 1990s and their implications for pension adequacy.

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

New rules limit the right to take industrial actions

July 11, 2019

The Parliament passed a bill to expand the peace obligation in workplaces with a collective bargaining agreement in place, and in disputes, through amendments to the Employment (Co-Determination in the Workplace) Act. In order for an employee to participate in an industrial action against an employer who is bound by a collective bargaining agreement, the purpose must be to achieve a collective bargaining agreement and the trade union must have negotiated its demands with the employer. Further, it will not be

allowed for an employer or an employee to take industrial actions to exert pressure in a dispute. The new rules will enter into force on 1 August 2019.

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

Switzerland

Why living on the breadline is especially hard in this rich country

August 27, 2019

People on a low income are often forced to spend much more than necessary, making it especially hard to make ends meet. In one of the richest countries in the world around 8% of the people are considered poor, while 3.5% are on welfare; both groups are growing.

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

Gender equality needs improvement

August 7, 2019

Despite being a highly developed country it only ranks 20th in gender equality, according to the World Economic Forum, Switzerland ranks 20th in gender equality, lagging behind many European countries, such as the Scandinavian countries, France, Germany, and Poland. The feminist movement has been a long and challenging endeavour. The differences between women and men are still worthy of attention. If the country wants to remain one of the best places to live and work, it needs to address the gender gap and reduce gender inequality. Public initiatives demonstrate the urge for changes.

Read on: [in English ...](#) See the data by the World Economic Forum: [in English \(2\) ...](#)

Turkey

Glassworkers on strike over long-standing union busting

August 9, 2019

Members of IndustriALL Global Union's affiliate Kristal-Is struck at Düzce Cam, one of the subsidiaries of Turkish-based glassmaker Okan Group in the town Düzce. Over a four-year struggle for union recognition, the glassmaker has used every union-busting tactics.

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

Union picket at Spanish packaging company protests

July 25, 2019

Workers are protesting against a Spanish company in Söğütlü town of Sakarya province after it unlawfully dismissed six trade union members on 29 May 2019. The company is refusing to recognize the union, even though the Turkish Ministry of Labour issued official certification on 29 April stating that Selüloz-Is has a sufficient majority for being a bargaining partner.

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

Court confirms 'The Cargill 14' were fired for forming a union

July 11, 2019

A local Turkish court determined on July 10, 2019 that workers at Cargill's Bursa-Orhangazi factory were dismissed in April 2018 solely as a consequence of their union activity. The expert report, which informed the court's decision, confirmed that the company's justifications for dismissal were groundless. The workers were fired because they had joined Tekgıda-Is. Despite this court finding, Turkish law does permit employers under these circumstances to offer compensation as an alternative to reinstatement.

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

United Kingdom

National Health Service workers vote to strike against privatisation

August 15, 2019

Hospital workers in Bradford, England, facing the backdoor privatisation of their jobs have voted to take indefinite strike action from August 26. This is the latest in a series of disputes that have hit the National Health Service (NHS) in the last four months—in Merseyside, Cornwall, Blackpool, South London, Birmingham and Doncaster, involving workers in pharmacy, catering, cleaning, domestic services, porters, building services and security.

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

Workers at Walmart subsidiary oppose new wage-cutting contract

August 14, 2019

Workers are rallying in Leeds to oppose the imposition of a new work contract that will negatively impact 60,000 employees of the UK supermarket giant Asda, a subsidiary of US-based global retailer Walmart. The merging of five current contracts into one ‘flexible’ contract, known as Contract 6, will mean workers losing paid breaks. Working bank holidays and weekends would be compulsory and they would have to agree to work more flexible hours.

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

Pilots allowed to strike at British Airways

August 3, 2019

British Airways (BA) lost a legal appeal to prevent its pilots going on strike over pay. BA’s parent company International Consolidated Airlines Group (IAG) first went to court the previous week, but its initial application was dismissed. Were the strike to proceed, it would involve 4,000 pilots at Heathrow and Gatwick but affect flights from all UK airports, including Stansted, Manchester, Belfast, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Up to 140,000 passengers a day would be affected by the action.

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

Compensation for flexible workers facing cancelled shifts

July 19, 2019

Millions of flexible workers will benefit from new rights and extra protections if they lose out on work, under proposed government reforms. New rights for flexible workers giving them enhanced protections and control over their working lives. The plans include compensation for shifts cancelled at short notice. This is the second phase of the largest upgrade in workers’ rights in a generation, through the government’s Good Work Plan.

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

One-sided flexibility - addressing unfair flexible working practices

19 July 2019

The proposals made by the Low Pay Commission were published on 17 December 2018 to address the issue of ‘one-sided flexibility’. This issue exists within some parts of the labour market, where employers misuse flexible working arrangements, creating an unpredictability in working hours, income insecurity and a reluctance among workers to assert basic employment rights.

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

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