

collective bargaining

Issue 11/2019 November

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

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contents

European sources

Collective bargaining in a changing world of work
Joint priorities on vocational education and training
Youth take action on organising and collective bargaining

Austria

Average pay rise of 2.75% in cleaning sector
Salaries in commerce increase by up to 2.5%

Belgium

Management's proposed social accord rejected by railway unions
AB InBev staff on strike for 24 hours
Bus drivers strike successfully

Bulgaria

The number of employees under labour contracts has decreased

Croatia

Teachers expand strike in demand for higher wages

Cyprus

Unemployment drops
How many years are people expected to work for?

Czechia

Companies do not believe in requalification
Government plans to reduce the workforce
Minimum wage should be half of the average

Denmark

Trade unions in Denmark say no to EU-driven Budget Act

Estonia

Average gross hourly earnings continue to increase

Finland

Emergency statement on collective bargaining round
Solidarity strikes

France

Call for ‘unlimited’ strikes
Labour shortages

Germany

Collective agreement in chemical industry
Fresh threats of Lufthansa strikes
Lidl supports wage fairness in the supply chain

Greece

Enhanced surveillance report
Meeting of trade union of public servants

Hungary

Union calls to hike teachers’ wages
115,000 pensioners rejoin the labour market

Iceland

Lay-off of bank employees
Journalists strike

Ireland

Labour market participation
Labour Court recommends pay increase
Legal ‘right to disconnect’

Italy

Hundreds of flights affected by strike
Solidarity with metalworkers at ArcelorMittal

Latvia

Union coordinates protest for higher health spending
Minimal pension to increase in 2020

Liechtenstein

Unemployment falls to 1.4%

Lithuania

Teachers' warning strike

Report on labour productivity assessment

Luxembourg

Asset management firm KBC will cut 20 jobs

Malta

Malta Union of Teachers requests update of promotions and progressions procedures

Netherlands

TATA Steel announces 1,600 job cuts

Over 4,000 schools close for one day during national teachers' strike

Photojournalists win lawsuit over 50% pay increase

Norway

Wages increase in line with unionisation rate

Poland

Public radio broadcaster found guilty of breaking the principle of equal treatment

Portugal

Foreign subsidiaries' pay 40% more than in national companies

Non-teaching school workers strike

Rise of minimum wage to €635, but still lowest in western Europe

Romania

Pensions will rise by 2020

Necessity of increasing minimum wage

Serbia

Poverty development

Slovakia

Slight drop in unemployment

Bank employees threaten to strike

Slovenia

Pensions set to rise in December 2020

Postal strike

Spain

Unions oppose court's decision on dismissal of workers
Top female football players strike

Sweden

Raised retirement age as of 1 January 2020

Switzerland

Unions want salaries to rise
New collective agreement at Lidl Suisse

Turkey

Wildcat strike by sanitation workers

United Kingdom

Freelancers should be paid a higher minimum wage
Party plans would 'boost minimum pay for millions'
Healthcare workers strike

European sources

Collective bargaining in a changing world of work

November 18, 2019

The OECD has published a new report which provides a comprehensive assessment of the functioning of collective bargaining systems and workers' voice arrangements across OECD countries, as well as fresh insight on their effect on labour market performance today. The publication also discusses how collective bargaining can be mobilised to address emerging challenges in the labour market and identifies the type of government intervention that may be required to do this. The report provides a detailed review of existing collective bargaining institutions and workers' voice arrangements. It analyses the role of these institutions for employment, wages and labour market inclusiveness, as well as non-monetary aspects of job quality.

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

Read on: [the executive summary](#) and [the report](#)

Joint priorities on vocational education and training

November 19, 2019

Ceemet and industriAll Europe, the representative European social partners in the metal industry, have long been jointly advocating for first-class vocational education and training (VET) strategies to support the metal, engineering and technology-based (MET) sector in thriving in and adapting to a fast-evolving world. Although many efforts have been made and interesting initiatives delivered by the European Commission over the past years, Ceemet and industriAll Europe stressed that much remained to be done at their meeting with Commissioner-Designate for Jobs Nicolas Schmit.

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

Youth take action on organising and collective bargaining

November 13, 2019

Young workers face specific challenges in the labour market that trade unions must address. Involving young activists in trade union work is also fundamental to trade union renewal. IndustriAll Europe is therefore investing in its youth activities, giving priority to trade union organising and collective bargaining to help improve the quality of work for young workers and apprentices.

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

Austria

Average pay rise of 2.75% in cleaning sector

November 22, 2019

After four rounds of negotiations, employees in the monument, façade and building cleaning sector and home care sector will receive a significant salary increase of 2.75%. Even apprentices will receive this raise. The minimum wage will be set at € 1,598.11. Holiday payments will be paid quarterly and in advance, thus making it easier for the cleaners to manage financially. Another important point reached is the transparency in the pay slips making it easier for employees to check the several surcharges for overtime and other extra services.

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

Salaries in commerce increase by up to 2.5%

November 21, 2019

After four rounds of collective bargaining and more than 200 company meetings the union GPA-djp reached a new collective agreement for the 413,000 employees in commerce. The lower salaries will increase by 2.5%, the others by a slightly smaller amount, and on average the increase will be 2.35%. Apprentices will even receive a 7.4% higher compensation. In order to fight increasing work pressure, two additional leisure days will be given, the first after 10 years and the second after 15 years in service.

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

Belgium

Management's proposed social accord rejected by railway unions

November 21, 2019

The united trade unions representing railway workers rejected a draft social accord for 2020-2022 proposed by the management. The unions stuck to their demands, including a wage raise of 1.1% and the maintenance of a 36-hour working week for the entire workforce, both present and future. The negotiations on the social accord already began in June 2019. Management has been given a week to respond.

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

AB InBev staff on strike for 24 hours

November 20, 2019

Workers, employees and executives of the AB InBev sites of Leuven, Hoegaarden, Jupiler and Bellevue, as well as all warehouses, went on strike for 24 hours. It was a trade union protest against the end to job guarantees and the problems with incorrect payment of wages resulting from the outsourcing of the payroll administration to India.

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

Bus drivers strike successfully

November 14, 2019

For the tenth day in a row, bus drivers working for the Flemish local transport company De Lijn are taking strike action. Action and disruptions were especially noticeable in Flemish Brabant. During the strike, unions and management reached an agreement. The planning teams will be strengthened, holiday plans will be honoured and new drivers will be recruited.

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

Bulgaria

The number of employees under labour contracts has decreased

November 12, 2019

According to preliminary data from the National Statistical Institute (NSI), at the end of September 2019 the number of employees under a labour contract decreased by 39,100, or 1.7%, compared to the end of June 2019, reaching 2.31 million.

Read on: [in English ...](#) Read on: [the NSI press release ...](#)

Croatia

Teachers widen strike in demand for higher wages

November 19, 2019

Teachers are expanding an ongoing strike, making it nationwide in their demand for higher wages. The strike has been (partially) ongoing since last month, with classes halted in certain municipalities on particular days. Unions said they are now launching a nationwide strike and that they also plan street protests. The teachers' strike is supported by 47 trade unions out of solidarity and because they believe that defending the education sector is a priority.

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

Cyprus

Unemployment drops

November 22, 2019

According to the results of the Cyprus Statistical Service's Labour Force Survey, in the third quarter of 2019 the labour force amounted to 447,206 persons or 63% of the population, in comparison to 442,456 persons (63.1%) in the corresponding quarter of 2018. The number of employed persons was 417,118 and the employment rate 58.7%, in comparison to 407,728 persons (58.2%) in the corresponding quarter of 2018.

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

How many years are people expected to work?

November 22, 2019

In 2018, the expected duration of the working life of people in Cyprus (i.e. the number of years that 15-year-olds are expected to work over their lifetime) was 37.1 years, above the EU 28 average of 36.2 years, according to figures published by Eurostat on Friday. For men it was 39.9 years and for women it was 34.1 years. In 2017, the expected working life was 36.3 years and in 2000 it was 36.8 years. Eurostat said that the EU average of 36.2 years is 0.3 years longer than in 2017 and 3.3 years longer than in 2000. Men are expected to work longer than women: on average, the expected working life for men in the EU is 38.6 years and for women 33.7.

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

Czechia

Companies do not believe in requalification

November 25, 2019

The CSOB banking group has published the results of research indicating that companies don't really believe in the requalification of workers. Although the Employment Office spent 174 and 128 million CZK respectively in 2017 and 2018 (6.8 million and 5 million euros) on the requalification program, only one third of the companies was willing to hire a 'requalified' employee without any experience. More than 50% of companies would not hire such an employee at all. Most companies prefer their own education programmes.

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

Government plans to reduce workforce

November 19, 2019

The Deputy Prime Minister announced that 2,089 government workers, or 2.6% of the total workforce, will lose their jobs. The reductions will affect all departments. This year the public sector has reduced its workforce by 860 people since January.

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

Minimum wage should be half of the average

November 15, 2019

The two biggest trade unions and the Minister of Labour agree that the minimum wage should be half of the average monthly wage. This simple formula is a response to the employers' long-time request for transparent methodology for passing a minimum wage. However, they consider 50% of the average wage to be too high. For their part, the unions will not accept any minimum wage below this threshold.

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

Denmark

Trade unions in Denmark say no to EU-driven Budget Act

November 11, 2019

Trade unions and leftist political parties in Denmark have started a vigorous campaign calling for an end to the EU Budget Act, enacted in the country in 2012. The legislation places a ceiling on social spending and development expenditure by the government. Trade unions are demanding that the austerity measures imposed under this Budget Act be scrapped and a new people's budget implemented.

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

Estonia

Average gross hourly earnings continue to increase

November 21, 2019

According to preliminary data from Statistics Estonia, in 2018 managers had the highest gross hourly earnings, while elementary workers had the lowest. In 2018, the gross hourly earnings of managers were €11 and those of elementary occupations workers €4.60. The average gross hourly earnings increased by 29% in four years. Compared to 2014, gross hourly earnings increased the most for skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers (36%) and service and sales workers (35%). The earnings increased the least for technicians and associate professionals (22%).

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

Finland

Emergency statement on collective bargaining round

November 27, 2019

Employers have taken damaging positions in this year's negotiations that have started in October 2019, according to IndustriALL. Employers are demanding a lowering of labour costs and lengthening of working hours and, even more alarming, are trying to weaken trade unions by pushing for major restrictions of industrial action and destroying the system of deducting trade union membership fees from salaries. This could severely weaken trade unions' financial capacity.

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

Solidarity strikes

November 25, 2019

Finland is feeling the brunt of a series of sympathy strikes staged in connection with the long-running dispute over the terms and conditions of 700 parcel-sorting employees at Posti, the Finnish state-owned postal services provider. Finnair announced it has cancelled more than 250 of its 377 scheduled flights. The cancellations and delays are caused by a one-day sympathy strike launched by the Finnish Aviation Union (IAU). The strike is expected to disrupt catering, customer service and ground-handling functions at airports across the country, including Helsinki Airport.

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

France

Call for 'unlimited' strikes

November 19, 2019

The French government is determined to push ahead with its pension reform, even if this means that strikes could block parts of France. That is because the rail workers' General Confederation of Labour (CGT-Cheminots) initially called for an unlimited strike to take place on 5 December, to protest against the amendment of the special pension schemes included in the government's reform. Most of the major unions have joined the movement: the General Confederation of Labour (CGT), Workers' Force (FO) and France's

main trade union in the education sector, the FSU. The French group of trade unions Solidaires and the teachers' union SE-UNSA also joined the call.

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

Labour shortages

November 5, 2019

From next year on, authorities, working together with employers, will identify industries lacking qualified candidates and facilitate the hiring of foreigners to fill the gap, the Labour Minister said. Currently, employers have to justify why a French citizen cannot be hired in a complex administrative process, which resulted in around 33,000 economic migrants being granted visas last year. Construction, hotels and restaurants, and some retailing sectors have long complained of a shortage of people willing to take what is often low-paying work.

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

Germany

Collective agreement in chemical industry

November 22, 2019

On 22 November 2019, the Mining, Chemicals and Energy Union (IG BCE) and its counterpart on the employer side, the BAVC, concluded a new collective agreement covering 580,000 employees in the German chemical and pharmaceutical industry. The innovative agreement, which runs for 29 months, includes the following key elements: first, a staged pay increase varying over time from 1.5% to 1.3%; second, the creation of an 'account for the future' which provides employees with the choice between additional pay increases or more time off; third, the introduction of an employer-financed, long-term care insurance. According to the IG BCE, the value of the whole package equals a pay increase of 6%.

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

Fresh threats of Lufthansa strikes

November 20, 2019

After having agreed to arbitration following a strike by the cabin crew at the beginning of the month, the UFO union is threatening further industrial action. Lufthansa will have to give in to the union's wage demands to prevent the strike. Last time the airline had to cancel one in five flights, at the cost of millions of euros. An important part of the conflict is the seeming refusal of the airline to recognise the union. At the end of the month the two parties resumed talks.

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

You can follow the case: [in German ...](#)

Lidl supports wage fairness in the supply chain

November 19, 2019

By signing the ACT Memorandum of Understanding, Lidl became the first German discounter to commit to ensuring living wages. ACT stands for action, collaboration and transformation and is an agreement between global brands and retailers and trade unions to transform the garment, textile and footwear industry and achieve living wages for workers through collective bargaining at industry level. Hence Lidl will consequently support freedom of association, collective bargaining and responsible purchasing practices in its garment and footwear supply chain.

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

Greece

Enhanced surveillance report

November 20, 2019

The European Commission has published an ‘Enhanced surveillance report’ on Greece which provides a comprehensive framework for monitoring economic developments. On page 22 of this document it reports that the new Development Bill of October 2019 introduced a number of changes to the collective bargaining framework. The Bill introduces the possibility of opting out from sectoral-level bargaining for certain businesses. It also amends the procedure for the extension of sectoral agreements that is no longer automatic, but at the discretion of the Minister of Labour subject to specific conditions. Other new elements include the creation of a public registry for employer associations and for trade unions in order to better verify their representativeness, and a restriction to the unilateral recourse to arbitration.

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

Meeting of public servants trade union

November 8, 2019

The trade union of public servants in Attica organised an event – under the slogan: ‘The class-oriented movement is moving forward with solidarity and internationalism’ – to inform its members about the upcoming Congress of the Trade Union International of Public & Allied Employees (TUI PS&A) that will take place. The participants discussed the TUI Report of Action in Europe, the goals of the conference and the need to further strengthen the action on sectoral struggles.

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

Hungary

Union calls to hike teachers’ wages

November 13, 2019

Teacher union PSZ has called on the government to come to a decision on increasing wages for employees working in the public education sector as part of a package of demands. In a statement the union noted it has set the government a deadline of 22 November to meet its various demands. However, the union said the wage issue was one among many, and given long-standing problems in public education and a problematic new bill on vocational training before parliament, demonstrations this autumn appear to be unavoidable.

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

115,000 pensioners re-join the labour market

November 11, 2019

More than 115,000 pensioners have re-joined the workforce, up from around 75,000 at the end of last year, the Finance Ministry State Secretary reported. Growth was supported by the introduction of more exemptions for pensioners from the start of this year. The rollout of the tax exemptions followed the establishment in 2017 of pensioners’ cooperatives which provide the legal foundation for retired Hungarians to work again, mitigating the impact of the labour shortage.

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

Iceland

Lay-off of bank employees

November 20, 2019

Íslandsbanki has laid off 20 employees, most of whom worked at the bank's headquarters in Smáralind. The bank has shrunk by approximately 90 employees, or 10-12% in total, in 2019. Some of these changes today are organisational in their nature. Job descriptions are changing. Íslandsbanki is fully owned by the Icelandic State Treasury. It is not the only bank to have laid off employees this year. In September, Arionbanki laid off approximately 100 employees.

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

Journalists strike

November 8, 2019

Journalists are striking for the first time in over 40 years, RÚV reports. Reporters for online media, photographers, and videographers at Icelandic National Broadcaster RÚV, Fréttablaðið, Morgunblaðið, and Sýnar, who are members of the Union of Icelandic Journalists (Blaðamannafélag Íslands) were on strike between 10.00 AM and 2.00 PM.

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

Ireland

Labour market participation

November 15, 2019

The European Commission published a paper which analyses the reasons why the labour participation rate in Ireland has yet to recover from the crisis. According to this paper, in recent years the Irish economy has experienced a sustained expansion phase and the unemployment rate is approaching pre-crisis levels. However, ten years after the crisis, the labour market participation rate, a crucial determinant of labour supply, has not recovered as strongly as expected.

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

Labour Court recommends pay increase

November 8, 2019

The Labour Court has recommended a pay increase of 2.25% for 5,000 workers at Penneys. The recommended pay increase falls short of the 3.4% increase that the Mandate union was seeking on behalf of its members at the Primark company. In the recommendation, the Labour Court has backdated the pay award to January of this year.

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

Legal 'right to disconnect'

November 1, 2019

The campaign to have the 'right to disconnect' enshrined in law is gathering pace. Led principally by the bankers' trade union, the Financial Services Union (FSU), the campaign seeks legislation regulating excessive out-of-hours contact between employers and staff via email, messaging app or phone.

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

Italy

Hundreds of flights affected by strike

November 25, 2019

Italian national carrier Alitalia has grounded a total of 137 flights and rescheduled many more on 25 November due to a four-hour strike called by several unions representing airport and airline workers, including air traffic controllers.

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

Solidarity with metalworkers at ArcelorMittal

November 8, 2019

IndustriAll European Trade Union and IndustriALL Global Union have written a joint letter to their Italian affiliates FIOM-CGIL, FIM-CISL and UILM to express full support and solidarity with the 24-hour strike scheduled on 8 November across all of the ArcelorMittal (ex Ilva Group) facilities. The strike comes in response to the disappointing meeting of the Italian metal trade unions with the top management of ArcelorMittal.

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

Latvia

Union coordinates protest for higher health spending

November 13, 2019

Hundreds of health workers gathered outside the Latvian parliament calling for higher spending on healthcare. The demonstration was called by health care worker organisations led by LVSADA. It was joined by a broad coalition of trade unions, professional associations and civil society organisations all angry that the government has gone back on a legal commitment to increase spending on healthcare.

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

Minimal pension to increase in 2020

November 13, 2019

On 13 November, Latvia's parliament, the Saeima, approved the final reading amendments to the State Pensions Law. These amendments provide for increasing minimal retirement pension amounts in 2020. Amendments provide for using a new calculation base set by the government to calculate minimal pensions. In general cases it will be €80. For people suffering from disabilities since childhood this amount will be €122.69.

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

Liechtenstein

Unemployment falls to 1.4%

November 6, 2019

At the end of October unemployment had fallen to 1.4%, compared to 1.5% the month before. In October 2018 the general figure was 1.6%. There was an even sharper year-on-year decrease in youth unemployment, by 0.6%. The 25-49 age group had an average unemployment rate, while the 50+ employee group was the best off at 1.2%.

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

Lithuania

Teachers' warning strike

November 28, 2019

Around 400 schools across Lithuania suspended classes as teachers staged a two-hour warning strike to press their demands for more funding next year. The strike action was backed by all trade unions that signed a collective agreement in 2017 to allocate €117 million in additional funding for education in the 2020 government budget.

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

Report on labour productivity assessment

November 13, 2019

A report published by the Labour Productivity Board of the European Commission aims at reviewing labour productivity developments and assessing the relationship between labour productivity and changes in value added, labour compensation and exports in the domestic economy. According to this report, over two decades Lithuania was one of the fastest growing EU Member States in terms of labour productivity and GDP growth. Between 2000 and 2017, Lithuania's labour productivity per hour worked (at constant prices) almost doubled, in comparison with 21% in the EU Member States. This was influenced by the application of modern technologies in industry.

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

Luxembourg

Asset management firm KBC will cut 20 jobs

November 21, 2019

According to trade union ALEBA asset management firm KBC (with 42,000 employees worldwide and an annual profit of €7.5 billion) is planning to cut all local jobs as part of a company restructuring. The 20 staff members will be laid off in 2020. This announcement, not yet confirmed by the company, comes just one month after other financial institutions also announced job slashes.

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

Malta

Malta Unions of Teachers requests for update of promotions and progressions procedures

November 19, 2019

The Malta Union of Teachers (MUT) has contacted the Secretariat for Catholic Education after it held a meeting with the Ministry for Education and Employment in relation to situations where serving employees are appointed to another grade with the same employer. The MUT stated that changes in the Public Service Management Code earlier this year, together with changes in the sectoral/collective agreements, implied that serving officers who are promoted or appointed to new grades do not start from the first step of the scale but from a higher point.

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

Netherlands

TATA Steel announces 1,600 job cuts

November 28, 2019

Tata Steel's reorganisation in Europe will be felt the hardest in IJmuiden. 1,600 of the expected three thousand layoffs will happen in this city situated near the country's capital. Two thirds of the jobs lost will be office and management functions. Trade union FNV immediately threatened to respond with strikes. Tata will meet the Central Works Council to discuss details.

Read on: [in English ...](#) The company's plan: [in English ...](#)

Over 4,000 schools close for one day during national teachers' strike

November 6, 2019

Just before the announced strike the government offered a one-time €460 million boost. Nevertheless, teachers are standing firm for structural increases in funding that can preserve the profession and guarantee quality education for all. More than 4,000 schools closed on 6 November to fight ongoing austerity and growing work pressure due to staff shortages. The first strikes occurred in 2017 and 2018 and were followed by a national strike at the beginning of 2019 (see Issue 3 of the *Collective Bargaining Newsletter*, 2019). On 25 November the trade unions announced further strikes for 2020. This time it will be a two-day action to increase the pressure.

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

Photojournalists win lawsuit over 50% pay increase

November 4, 2019

On 1 November two freelance photojournalists won a lawsuit against DPG Media (formerly De Persgroep). The court rule stated that the rates DPG pays are not fair. The judge ordered to increase the rates by 50% (to 0.21 cents per word and €65 per photo) respectively. DPG Media therefore has to pay these two freelancers extra for work they did in 2018. The Dutch Association of Journalists and the Dutch Association of Photojournalists have supported the journalists in this lawsuit. The European Federation of Journalists applauded the courage and persistence of the photojournalists, particularly as this court ruling will have an impact beyond the borders of the Netherlands.

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

Norway

Wages increase in line with the unionisation rate

November 4, 2019

According to recent figures from the Research Council of Norway, the measured effects of trade union membership on wages are: at a workplace where 0-25% of employees are union members, the wages are 6%

higher for women and 8% higher for men as compared to workplaces without union members. Where 25-50% of employees are in a union, wages are 14% higher for women and 15% higher for men than in workplaces where there is no union. The situation is even better where 50-100% of employees are part of a union, because wages are 23% higher for women and 18% higher for men.

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

Poland

Public radio broadcaster found guilty of breaking the principle of equal treatment

November 13, 2019

On 2 September 2017, radio journalist Dorota Nygren wrote a story about a 53-year old man in Italy who spat at an Italian priest. She decided not to mention the man's national origin as this would be discriminatory. The editor of the broadcaster threatened her with dismissal and she was later transferred to another department on a lower salary. In 2018 Nygren brought a court case against her employer, a case she won on 8 November when the radio broadcasting was found guilty of breaking the principle of equal treatment and the court ordered the payment of compensation for the discrimination and the correction of the plaintiff's reduced salary.

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

Portugal

Foreign subsidiaries' pay 40% more than in national companies

November 29, 2019

In 2018, the average monthly salary in the subsidiaries of foreign companies in Portugal reached at €1,354: its highest value since 2010 and well above the €966 of national companies, Statistics Portugal (INE) says. According to the INE's 'Globalisation Statistics', between 2010 and 2018 the average monthly remuneration was consistently higher in foreign subsidiaries, on average €393.70 more than in domestic companies.

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

Non-teaching school workers strike

November 17, 2019

The National Federation of Public and Social Workers' Unions has scheduled a national strike of non-teaching workers in schools to protest the 'chronic shortage' of these officials. The federation decided to call a national strike of the non-teaching workers from both the schools grouped under centralised leadership and the non-grouped public schools.

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

Rise of minimum wage to €635, but still lowest in western Europe

November 13, 2019

The government presented a proposal to raise the monthly minimum wage by nearly 6% to €635 next year, which would still make it the lowest in western Europe. The Prime Minister promised to raise the monthly minimum wage by 25% to €750 by 2023 when he began his second term in office last month. The increase has coincided with significant dynamism in the economy and the labour market. One in five workers in Portugal are on the minimum wage and the employment status of 890,000 people was officially described

last year as precarious, a term used to refer to non-standard forms of employment, including temporary work and fixed-term contracts.

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

Romania

Pensions will rise by 2020

November 28, 2019

According to the new prime minister, pensions 'will increase next year' and the budget planning, to be drafted during the coming couple of weeks, will factor in the necessary expenditures.

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

Necessity of increasing the minimum wage

November 27, 2019

The increase of the minimum wage is not only a request of the trade unions, it is a necessity and it will be realised, stated the Romanian President after meeting government representatives to discuss economic matters (mainly the budget revision for this year and the budget planning for 2020).

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

Serbia

Poverty development

November 4, 2019

The Serbian Government's Team for Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction has defined the country's absolute poverty income to be €104 per month. Poverty has decreased a little since 2017, by 0.1%, but half a million citizens are still unable to provide for their basic needs. Poverty is even more rife in rural than in urban areas; the ratio between the poor living in the cities and villages remains at 4.8% to 10.4%.

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

Slovakia

Slight drop in unemployment

November 21, 2019

After unemployment increased slightly to over 5% in September, it dropped in late October to 4.94%. In annual terms, it fell by 0.29 percentage points. This drop stands in contrast to reports suggesting an economic slowdown. According to bank analysts, the unemployment rate has been persistently low because the number of available jobs, especially in the west of the country, is still quite high. Unemployment will probably continue to hover around 5% next year.

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

Further information: [in English ...](#)

Bank employees threaten to strike

November 7, 2019

The financial sector pays among the highest salaries in the country, but within this sector a huge gap exists between top management and the more common jobs such as working behind the counter. Employees of UniCreditBank recently came to work wearing badges with the message: 'strike alert'. Their main aim was to highlight the issues of salary, conditions, overtime and work stress, and to support the unions in their struggle to negotiate a new collective agreement. The reluctance of the bank to increase salaries stands in contrast to their willingness to pay management annual bonuses at 100% of their salary, the trade unions claim.

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

Slovenia

Pensions set to rise in December 2020

November 22, 2019

The National Assembly endorsed legislation that curtails pay rises in the public sector but also brings an unscheduled increase in pensions in December 2020, assuming GDP growth exceeds 2.5%. Despite opposition from pensioners' associations and several parties, the increase will be a flat €6.50 for all pensioners, rather than a percentage increase. If GDP growth is significantly higher (up to 3.5%), which is unlikely according to the latest forecasts, pensions would rise by €9.75.

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

Postal strike

November 10, 2019

Postal workers went on strike recently, as the Trade Union of Postal Workers and the management of the national postal company Pošta Slovenije have failed to find common ground on the workers' demands, including higher wages. The union demands the number of employees to be increased by 300 so that Pošta Slovenije can meet its obligations and the workers can perform a normal number of hours.

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

Spain

Unions oppose court's decision on dismissal of workers

November 30, 2019

Thousands of workers protested against the Constitutional Court's (STC) judgment in favour of the objective dismissal of workers for even justified leaves of absence. The court's decision was based on Article 52.d of the Statute of Workers, which, though in existence since 1980, was substantially strengthened by the government's labour reforms of 2012. Trade unions across the country, including the Workers' Commissions (CCOO) and the General Union of Workers (UGT), organised demonstrations in provincial capitals and called for a protest march to the Congress of Deputies in Madrid.

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Top female football players strike

November 17, 2019

A strike by women footballers in Spain's top division because of a dispute over pay saw all eight fixtures postponed. They are demanding a professional agreement that regulates minimum working conditions, rights to minimum wages and measures for maternity leave.

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Sweden

Raised retirement age as of 1 January 2020

November 7, 2019

On 16 October 2019, the Swedish Parliament voted in favour of the government's proposal regarding a raise of the age limit for the national public pension, and for amendments to the Employment Protection Act (the EPA) regarding the right to remain in employment. The amendments will enter into force on 1 January 2020. There is no general retirement age in Sweden. However, there are pension-related age limits in different regulations which will affect an employee's decision on when to retire. The age at which the national public pension can start being drawn will be raised from 61 to 62 years as from 1 January 2020.

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Switzerland

Unions want salaries to rise

November 15, 2019

To meet the high cost of living and decreasing purchasing power, say trade unions, wages should rise. They also state that people should even receive a 13th month's salary in order to pay bills including health insurance premiums. The union demand is supported by a study the union conducted with the Bern University of Applied Sciences. According to the results of this study, 12.4% of employees think their wages are too low. This is a substantial increase compared with the 9.4% of three years ago. The study also points towards other areas that need improvement like health protection and job security.

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Read the report: [in French ...](#)

Lidl Suisse new collective agreement

November 11, 2019

Lidl Suisse, together with the trade unions Syna and the Swiss Society of Commerce Employees (Société suisse des employés de commerce), signed a new collective agreement for the period 2020-2024. The agreement includes new rights for parents as well as for apprentices and interns. Lidl Suisse employs more than 3,500 staff.

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Turkey

Wildcat strike by sanitation workers

November 4, 2019

Sanitation workers in the Maltepe municipality of Istanbul launched an indefinite wildcat strike last month. The workers said provisions of their collective bargaining agreement were not being respected, and they denounced layoffs imposed by the municipal administration. Along with the Maltepe municipal workers, workers in other municipalities – including Üsküdar, Ataşehir, İstanbul, Aliğa, İzmir and Aydın, as well as hundreds of workers at factories elsewhere – are simultaneously striking or protesting against austerity and layoffs.

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United Kingdom

Freelancers should be paid a higher minimum wage

November 20, 2019

Contractors and other flexible workers should enjoy a higher minimum wage than those with secure employment, the think tank Demos has urged. A higher rate would insulate workers from some of the risk they face as a result of unsecure earnings. The think tank also suggests that banks or trade unions could administer benefits such as holiday pay. The report, financed by NatWest bank, suggested access to loans and mortgages was poorer for flexible workers. Other recommendations include training from the government and banks on managing finances when being self-employed, and automatic pension contributions.

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Party plans would 'boost minimum pay for millions'

November 15, 2019

Plans from the two biggest political parties to raise the minimum wage would boost pay for millions of people, a leading economic research group says. The move would also double or treble the number of people whose wages are set by government, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) said. Some have argued that current minimum wage levels are too low, leaving people in work struggling. Labour's manifesto will reaffirm plans for the biggest shift in conditions for employees in Britain since the 1980s – including changing the way wages are set for 20 million workers.

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Healthcare workers strike

November 25, 2019

Members of Unison, Northern Ireland's largest health workers' union, have gone on strike over pay and staffing levels. Unison represents about 25,000 healthcare workers including nurses, social care staff and support services, but not doctors.

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For more information, please contact Paul de Beer, Oana Ciuca or Sjaak van der Velden, De Burcht (Scientific Bureau for the Dutch Trade Union Movement) p.t.debeer@uva.nl or the Head of communications at the ETUI, Mehmet Koksak mkoksak@etui.org. For previous full issues of the *Collective bargaining newsletter* please visit <https://www.etui.org/Newsletters/Collective-bargaining-newsletter> or consult the archive with all articles in our database at www.cbnarchive.eu.

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