

collective bargaining

Issue 2/2020 February

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

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European sources

Fewer workers are benefiting from collective bargaining

February 21, 2020

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) released data indicating that in the European Union there are at least 3.3 million fewer workers covered by a collective bargaining agreement than there were at the beginning of the century.

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

A woman's place is at the bargaining table

February 12, 2020

IndustriAll Europe has launched its 'Women Workers' campaign in the run up to International Women's Day. Female workers across Europe are still facing difficult realities. At the current pace, the pay gap between men and women won't close for another 54 years. Women still work less or not at all because of care obligations. Female workers are four times more likely to be working part-time and are less likely to be in employment.

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

Gender pension gap

February 7, 2020

According to Eurostat data, in 2018 women's pensions in the European Union were on average 30% lower than that of men. However, over time the gender pension gap has decreased and is now four percentage points (pp) smaller compared with 2010. Although women receive lower pensions in all EU Member States, the size of the gap varies widely.

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

Austria

24-hour care: a working-time issue

February 22, 2020

An ongoing discussion about working hours in the care industry has recently led to a series of warning strikes. The discussion has focused on employees in the health, nursing and social professions, but particularly on a group of nurses who do not benefit from collective agreement negotiations: the 24-hour carers who look after the elderly and sick at home, live with them and are almost always self-employed and women.

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

Verification in Amazon distribution centre

February 21, 2020

During a raid in an Amazon distribution centre in GroÙebersdorf, the Austrian 'financial police' found 39 violations of the Wages and Social Dumping Act. They also checked 55 workers, who are said to be marginally employed with the interposition of three subcontractors. Amazon has denied all allegations.

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

Care workers strike for a 35-hour workweek

February 4, 2020

Care workers have gone on strike after employers refused to discuss the possibility of a 35-hour week for the 125,000 employees in the private nursing, health and social sector. The strike was called by GPA-djp (union of private sector employees, graphical workers and journalists) and Vida (transport and services union). The warning strikes were still going on at the end of February.

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Belgium

Workers took average of 13 sick days last year

February 23, 2020

The average employee took 12.9 days off work last year as a result of illness. Human resources consultancy SD Worx has found that there has been an increase in sick leave of around 15% over the last five years. A large part of the increase was due to a growth in cases of long-term sickness, which was bigger in companies with more than a thousand employees than in smaller firms. The results only refer to the private sector.

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Brussels Airport police on strike

February 22, 2020

The Brussels Airport police began a work-to-rule action at passport control for departures. The industrial action is in protest against a shortage of manpower, made worse by a lack of resources, which together have created a working environment unions say has become intolerable.

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Work-related burnouts on the rise

February 14, 2020

In 2019, Idewe, the external service for prevention and protection at work, received around 12% more notifications of psycho-social risks than in 2018. Two thirds of the notifications concerned disputes in the workplace, while the number of notifications of physical and psychological violence was up by 18%.

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Read the Press release: [in Dutch ...](#)

Bulgaria

Trade unions announce protest against European Green Deal

February 14, 2020

The Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB) and the Podkrepa Confederation of Labour announced a series of protests against the so-called European Green Deal. According to the unions' presidents, they are not against making the economy greener but oppose the proposed intensity and time span.

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30% of pensioners at risk of poverty

February 7, 2020

30% of pensioners are at risk of poverty according to Eurostat. This is the fourth-highest rate in the EU. The at-risk-of-poverty rate for pensioners has been rising gradually since 2013, when it was 13%.

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Croatia

Unemployment drops to record low level

February 24, 2020

The unemployment level in Croatia has fallen to a record low. One of the main reasons for this development is mass emigration. As a consequence, the country increasingly relies on retirees: from shop assistants to doctors. The number of registered unemployed has dropped to just 128,000, from 345,000 at the end of 2013.

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Minimum wage lags behind

February 13, 2020

Despite an 8.3% rise in the minimum wage in 2020, Croatia is still slumping on the Eurostat ranking of guaranteed wages across Europe. The gross minimum wage of EUR 546 is higher than in Hungary and Romania, but most of the newer EU Member States have surpassed Croatia.

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Cyprus

Workers get smaller share of GDP

February 10, 2020

The wage-to-GDP ratio has fallen in 2019 to 49.7%, from 55.7% in 2009. Working people are thus receiving a smaller share of total income. Nevertheless, employees are getting higher salaries than three years ago. According to data from Cyprus's statistical services, the average wage in 2018 stood at EUR 1,938, increasing by 2.5% from EUR 1,891 in 2017.

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Czechia

Rise of minimum benefits

February 19, 2020

The living minimum is to be raised to CZK 3,860 (EUR 155) from CZK 3,410 (EUR 137) per month, while the existential minimum will be raised to CZK 2,490 (EUR 100) from CZK 2,200 (EUR 88) per month. The increase was necessary because both amounts have been at the same level for eight years, while prices have increased by 13% during that time.

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Shortage of skilled workers continues

February 12, 2020

There is a serious shortage of skilled workers. While older workers are gradually retiring, there are not enough young graduates from vocational or trade schools to replace them. While two years ago, the Czech Republic lacked around 300,000 skilled workers in various trades, it now lacks an estimated 400,000.

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Large wage differences between sectors

February 5, 2020

Because of competition to attract and retain talented workers, wages are being driven up in many sectors. In some sectors, employers offer wages ten times higher than the average wage. Wages are not expected to rise much higher because the labour market is becoming saturated.

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

Denmark

Collective agreement for industry

February 9, 2020

After final negotiations, the Confederation of Danish Industry (DI) and the Central Organisation of Industrial Employees in Denmark (CO-industri) announced that they had reached an agreement on a three-year renewal of the collective agreement for industry. The new agreement includes amendments to the rules on parental leave. The period of leave with full pay has been extended from a total of 13 weeks to 16 weeks.

Together, the Industrial Agreement and the Collective Agreement for Salaried Employees in Industry cover more than 6,000 businesses and 230,000 employees.

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Estonia

Highest employment rate ever

February 23, 2020

Recent data published by Statistics Estonia shows that the labour market situation last year was better than ever before. In total, over 670,000 people were in employment in 2019. That figure equalled 68.4% of all persons aged 15-74, which is higher than in any other EU Member State. Unemployment fell to 4.4%, compared with 4.6% in 2007.

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Finland

New collective agreement for sawmills and plywood factories

February 25, 2020

The new collective agreement for sawmills and plywood factories drops the 24 annual unpaid working hours, which was effectively steamrolled into collective agreements in 2016. The Finnish Industrial Union and the employers accepted the proposal made by the National Conciliator. The agreement includes a 3.3% pay rise. Roughly 10,000 employees are covered by this collective agreement, which will last 25 months.

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Collective bargaining begins for universities

February 4, 2020

The general collective agreement for universities expires on 31 March and negotiations for a new agreement have started for its renewal. The Finnish Union of University Researchers and Teachers (FUURT) is being represented in negotiations by JUKO, the Negotiation Organisation for Public Sector Professionals. Other employee representatives in the negotiations are Trade Union Pro and JHL (the trade union for the public and welfare sectors). The employer side is represented by the Finnish Education Employers (FEE). All parties agree with the common goal to make universities great places to work.

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France

Pilots' union announces strike

February 21, 2020

The union representing the pilots of Air France's low-cost airline Hop declared a strike action in an attempt to force the airline's hand in currently stagnated talks over working conditions and salaries. If their demands are not met, the pilots' union – Syndicat National des Pilotes de Ligne (SNPL) – will continue the strike every Friday until 30 April.

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Unemployment is steadily declining

February 14, 2020

The number of unemployed in France fell to 2.4 million last year. The unemployment rate stood at 8.1% of the labour force, as compared to 8.8% in 2018. According to the president, this demonstrates the effectiveness of policies. The French parliament is again debating the rise of the retirement age.

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

Germany

Academics catch up late on total income

February 20, 2020

The Tübingen Institute for Applied Economic Research (IAW) published a report that shows that academics' incomes overtake that of supervisors and technicians only at the age of 60. The data is based on 12,453 people born between 1948 and 1986.

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

Rise of 'options-based models' for working time

February 19, 2020

The Institute of Economic and Social Research (WSI) at the Hans Böckler Foundation has published its summary of collective bargaining for 2019. In addition to substantial salary increases, agreements in 2019 were marked by the prevalence of "options-based models" for working time. The WSI is forecasting a more "contradictory" trend in collective bargaining in 2020, amid a labour shortage and a structural crisis in the automobile sector.

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

Thyssenkrupp workers will fight for their jobs

February 4, 2020

Workers in the company Thyssenkrupp's elevator unit will press for employment protection as well as labour representation in upcoming talks with potential buyers when the company sells the EUR 15 billion division. Any buyer will have to come to an agreement with IG Metall, Germany's most powerful union, as part of an acquisition.

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Greece

24-hour transport strike

February 18, 2020

A 24-hour strike halted ferries, public transport, and municipal services in Athens and other parts of the country as unions staged protests against pension reforms. The strike went ahead after a pension reform bill was submitted to parliament. It includes plans to lower monthly income contributions and overhaul the way

some pension funds operate. Some 10,000 protesters joined rallies in Athens. Large protests were also held in Thessaloniki and other cities.

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Hungary

Strong employment and wage growth

February 27, 2020

Strong labour demand has continued to boost employment and wages. These favourable labour market trends have contributed to improved living standards and a reduction in poverty. Investments reached a record high thanks to a favourable economic outlook, easy financing conditions, supportive fiscal policy and EU funding.

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Tesco raises salaries

February 24, 2020

Tesco-Global Department Stores Zrt. will increase its employees' wages in two steps this year, with the company spending HUF 3.8 billion (EUR 11 million) on wage increases for retail workers under an agreement with the Trade Union of Trade Employees (KAS) and the Trade Union of Independent Workers (KDFSZ).

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Iceland

Union members in favour of strike

February 20, 2020

Members of the Federation of State and Municipal Employees (BSRB) have voted in favour of going on strike. Work stoppages will begin on 9 March, with a general strike commencing on 15 April, if a collective bargaining agreement has not been reached by that time. BSRB announced that 87.6% of union members who participated in the vote were in favour of the actions. This will apply to some 15,400 workers in 15 different trade unions.

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New labour market research institute

February 5, 2020

The Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ) and the Federation of State and Municipal Employees (BSRB) have agreed to set up a new institute for labour market research. The Varða institute will encourage independent research projects, which might have considerable influence on workers' wages and employment conditions.

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Ireland

Health, social and care workers on strike

February 21, 2020

Nine health and social care agencies around the country were hit by strike action in a dispute over pay. Unions warned that further industrial action will follow if workers do not receive pay restoration in line with public servants. Their employees are not classed as public servants but suffered the same pay cuts during the recession. Unlike public servants though, their pay has not been restored since.

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Minimum wage rises

February 4, 2020

On 1 February 2020, the national minimum wage increased to EUR 10.10 per hour, from EUR 9.80. This has implications for employers, as various employment permits will be affected, including the Atypical Working Scheme, Intra-Company Transfer Employment Permits, and Contract for Services Employment Permits. The new rate also applies to employment permits already in issue.

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Italy

Wood and furniture sector on strike

February 20, 2020

The sectoral trade unions Feneal Uil, Filca-Cisl and Fillea-Cgil decided to go on strike after the breakdown of the negotiations with Federlegno (the employers' association) for the renewal of the national collective agreement for wood and furniture workers which expired on 31 March 2019. About 150 thousand workers are employed in this sector.

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Latvia

Second-lowest minimum wage

February 10, 2020

Latvia has the second-lowest minimum wage in Europe after Bulgaria, according to data published by Eurostat. The Welfare Ministry announced that discussions are currently taking place on a potential rise of the minimum wage to EUR 500 per month in the future, which is EUR 70 more than the current minimum wage.

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Slight decrease in employment

February 24, 2020

A total of 913,000 people (or 65% of the population aged 15–74) were employed in the last quarter of 2019, which is 4,700 fewer than in the third quarter. Relatively large increases in the number of employed persons were registered in construction, financial and insurance activities, public administration, defence, and social

security services, as well as agriculture, forestry and fishing, according to data compiled by the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia.

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Liechtenstein

Consumer prices fall by 0.2%

February 10, 2020

Consumer prices fell by 0.2% in January compared to the previous month. Yearly inflation was 0.2%, according to figures from the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) in Neuchâtel. The Swiss national index of consumer prices is adopted monthly by the Liechtenstein Statistics Office.

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Lithuania

Pay rise for Lithuanian language teachers abroad

February 27, 2020

The government increased allowances for Lithuanian language teachers in Belarus, Poland and the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad by 50%. The measure is aimed at bringing their salaries up to the level of their counterparts in Lithuania.

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Luxembourg

Social plan at Delphi Technologies

February 5, 2020

After nine difficult negotiation meetings, a social plan was signed between Delphi Technologies and the trade union OGBL. In November 2019 a plan had been announced to restructure the group. This plan also implied the relocation of the 'fuel injection system' division. Now the number of redundancies has been reduced and a solution was found for those who will be declared redundant.

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Malta

Union demands meeting on coronavirus

February 28, 2020

The General Workers Union demanded that the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD) hold an urgent meeting to discuss the implications of the coronavirus with the government. Another union, UHM (Voice of the Workers) urged the government to set up a coronavirus committee, which would include government representatives, including the health minister.

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Netherlands

Rising number of full-time working women

February 20, 2020

The proportion of women on the labour market who work full-time is slowly rising. In 2019, 27% of women worked 35 hours a week or more, compared to 25% in 2016. In the same period, more male workers started working part-time. Just over half of the total workforce (4.6 million out of 9 million) was working full-time in 2019.

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Workers have more to spend

February 12, 2020

According to Statistics Netherlands, wages in the private sector increased by 3.4% in January 2020, the biggest increase in a decade. At the same time, price increases slowed down, meaning that, on balance, workers had more money to spend. By comparison, wages in the private sector only increased by 2.4% over the whole of 2019.

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

Supervision of healthcare interns falls short

February 6, 2020

The Dutch trade union FNV surveyed around 2,000 people in healthcare and concluded that because of staff shortages interns are often used as fully trained healthcare workers despite lacking the necessary experience or training. This situation can cause dangerous situations for patients.

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

Norway

2020 headline inflation rate

February 17, 2020

The Norwegian headline inflation rate is forecast to ease in 2020 to 1.5% for the year, down from 2.2% in 2019, a publicly appointed commission reported. With members from trade unions, employers' federations and Statistics Norway, the commission's conclusions will influence the outcome of Norway's annual round of collective bargaining, which is set to begin soon.

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Poland

Wages rise

February 20, 2020

Wages in companies employing over nine people rose by 7.1% in January compared with the same month a year earlier, according to the Central Statistical Office.

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

Miners strike

February 18, 2020

The unions at PGG SA, the EU's largest coal producer in the Silesia region, demanded a wage increase of 12%. They held a two-hour emergency strike and scattered coal at the doorways of the offices of regional lawmakers.

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

Portugal

National strike scheduled

February 28, 2020

The Common Front of Public Administration Unions announced a national strike for 20 March, demanding salary increases of EUR 90 this year for all workers, irrespective of their pay grades. The decision was taken at a national meeting of public sector trade unions.

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

Romania

Lidl increases minimum wages

February 19, 2020

The local subsidiary of the German retail chain Lidl announced that from 1 March the lowest monthly wage paid to its employees will exceed RON 4,000 (EUR 840), up from the current level of RON 3,500 (EUR 730). That is about RON 2,500 (EUR 520) in net terms, representing the highest minimum revenue in the country's retail sector. The figure includes salary, meal vouchers, and annual Easter and Christmas bonuses, as well as other types of bonuses.

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

Shoe producer closes factory

February 10, 2020

Ara Shoes Group announced that it would close one of its two factories in Romania and cut the workforce at its second plant in April this year. The factory to be closed, located in Simleul Silvaniei, employs 350-400 people. The second factory, located in Valea Lui Mihai, has 600-650 employees. The decision was prompted by the repeated hikes in the minimum wage in Romania.

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

Number of non-EU workers doubles

February 4, 2020

Over 21,300 non-EU citizens were working legally in Romania in the first nine months of 2019, twice as many as in the same period in 2018, according to data from the General Inspectorate for Immigration (IGI).

Yet 97,000 jobs remained vacant despite managers actively seeking to fill the positions, according to the National Employment Agency.

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Serbia

Every fourth worker has a permanent contract

February 25, 2020

In Serbia, every fourth employee has a permanent job, while the rest are in a voluntary or contractual work relationship with their employers, the president of the Nezavisnost trade union said. He underlined that the basic problem for all trade unions, including Nezavisnost, was to provide labour, legal, social and political protection to all employees, not just those with a permanent job.

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

Slovakia

Employees at top IT school on strike

February 17, 2020

Employees of the Faculty of Informatics and Information Technologies (FIIT) of the Slovak University of Technology (STU) went on strike following conflicts between some of the staff and the dean. The conflict escalated when the dean fired his predecessor. The strikers fear that educational quality is in danger of deteriorating at FIIT.

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

Business service centres and employers want more flexible labour legislation

February 5, 2020

Despite some improvements in labour legislation, business service centres and employers are calling for a new law that would reflect current labour market trends. Multinational companies in particular have complained about the changes in labour legislation and the increase of labour costs.

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Slovenia

Wages rise

February 19, 2020

The average net monthly real earnings increased by 2.1% in the last year, reaching EUR 1,133.50, the Statistics Bureau of Slovenia (SURS) reported. In nominal terms, the average net monthly wage rose by 3.7% last year. The average monthly gross earnings in 2019 amounted to EUR 1,753.84.

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Journalists protest against layoffs

February 18, 2020

The Trade Union of Journalists and the Journalists' Association (DNS) called a protest against the ongoing layoffs at Delo, the largest newspaper publisher in the country. The two organisations say the management is abusing social dialogue and damaging the newspaper and Slovenian journalism.

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

Spain

Fewer young jobseekers finding work

February 27, 2020

The probability of jobseekers in Spain under 25 years old getting a first job fell by 1.2% in 2019, the second consecutive year of decline. The data show a downward trend since 2017 when the probability figure stood at 12.1%. In 2019 it stood at 8.9%. Temporary work is the main method of accessing employment for young people, since 7.9% found a temporary job compared to 0.5% who found a permanent job.

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

General strike for jobs and pensions in the Basque Country

February 3, 2020

In the Basque Country and the Basque-speaking region of Navarre, tens of thousands of protesters and strikers joined a one-day general strike called by Basque-nationalist unions under the slogan 'Jobs, pensions and decent lives'.

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Sweden

More working days lost due to strikes

February 20, 2020

Around 7,500 working days were lost in Sweden last year due to industrial action, breaking a years-long trend of decreasing conflicts. This figure is a big increase from the 50 working days lost to strikes and lockouts during 2018, and also up from the 2,570 days lost in 2017. Major conflicts between both port workers and SAS pilots and their employers led to the high figure, according to the annual report from the National Mediation Institute.

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Switzerland

Trade unions oppose full national control of immigration

February 24, 2020

Trade unions oppose a 'yes' vote on 17 May 2020 for the proposal by the People's Party to take full national control of immigration. The initiative demands that the government stop the freedom-of-movement

agreement with the EU within a year. Collective agreements existing under the current system of bilateral accords with Brussels are vital for monitoring labour rights.

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Social progress for the elderly

February 21, 2020

The number of people who are dependent on social assistance is increasing steadily, which is why there have been repeated calls for better social security for older workers. That is precisely the goal of the bridging performance proposed by the Federal Council and the social partners. In spring, parliament will discuss issues concerning older workers.

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Turkey

Women's employment rises

February 23, 2020

Turkey's first lady lauded the country's progress in female employment and urged women to take on more entrepreneurial roles as the government prepares to kick off new programmes to boost women's participation in the labour market. Between 2004 and 2018 the female employment rate rose from 23% to 34%. The first lady emphasised the importance of government incentives to boost women's employment.

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Metal workers' wage increases

February 3, 2020

After intense negotiations, an agreement was reached on a substantial wage increase. Turk Metal and Özçelik-İş unions signed the agreement. All wages will increase by 17% during the first six-month period, (while inflation is at 6.05%).

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

United Kingdom

New trade union recognition at Manchester Airport

February 26, 2020

Former workers from Premiere Handling, which collapsed last year, have secured a new trade union recognition deal with their new employer Stobart Aviation Services. In July 2019, Premiere Handling collapsed, with the loss of dozens of jobs at Manchester Airport. A number of Unite members subsequently gained employment at Stobarts Aviation after it secured a contract to provide ground handling services to airlines including SAS, Norwegian Airlines and Pakistan International Airlines.

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University workers on strike

February 20, 2020

Thousands of university workers have been on strike, forming picket lines on campuses across the UK over pay, pensions and working conditions. The University and College Union (UCU) reported that support from staff and students remained solid, despite the fact it will be the third time university staff have gone on strike in the last three years, most recently just before Christmas.

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Average wages top pre-financial crisis levels

February 18, 2020

Average real wages, which take account of the impact of inflation, have risen above their pre-financial crisis level for the first time. An increase of 1.8% took pay excluding bonuses to GBP 474 (EUR 551) in the year to December, just GBP 1 above the peak of GBP 473 (EUR 550) in March 2008, the Office of National Statistics said.

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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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