

# collective bargaining

Issue 12/2018 | December

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**

### **Ryanair still not respecting workers' rights**

*December 28, 2018*

Ryanair is still not respecting union rights and labour laws of the countries they operate in. This month Ryanair has sacked all pilots and cabin crew in the Netherlands after they refused to re-locate to bases such as Morocco and Belarus and organised themselves in trade union FNV. The Dutch governmental institution on unemployment benefits however did not grant them permission for the collective firing of the workers. Spanish cabin crew staff is in the middle of disagreement about pay and working conditions and announced multiple strike actions for January 2019. Spanish unions are urging Ryanair to respect Spanish legislation and employ their workers in Spain under national labour laws. A year after Ryanair announced it would recognise unions, the company still has a long way to go before it can be considered a fair employer, states the International Transport Workers Association (ITF). The ITF and European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) have published a report examining the progress the airline has made and what remains to be done. The report acknowledges that Ryanair workers have won improvements in some areas, but shows that many of the issues which led to repeated industrial action over the summer have not been resolved.

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

### **Online labour markets**

*December 20, 2018*

W In online gig work, self-employed workers complete projects remotely for clients obtained through online

labour platforms. Surveys suggest that similar proportions of European workers engage in online gig work and local gig work, yet the two differ significantly. The online gig economy is transnational and spans a full spectrum of skills, from data entry to software development. This article goes into what this development might mean for the future of the labour market. And as online workers are not organized into unions, and in many countries could not legally be organized even if they wanted to, since they are self-employed what does the upcoming gig-economy mean for the quality of work?

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

### **Platform workers and grassroots unions**

*December 16, 2018*

When platform workers are getting organised they do not always do this through a traditional trade union. While traditional trade unions are increasingly focussing on organising platform workers platform workers are also organising themselves in more creative ways. Recent research from the European Trade Union Institute indicates that digital platforms have also become sites experimentation in the labour movement with grassroots independent unions becoming more prominent, particularly in the on-demand transport and food sectors of the platform economy. The Fairwork Foundation estimates there are currently over seven million digital platform workers across the world.

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

### **OECD job strategy report recognises importance of collective bargaining**

*December 11, 2018*

OECD published a new job strategy report, the first one in 12 years. According to the report that is called “Good Jobs for All in a Changing World of Work” collective bargaining is the best way to deliver better quality work. The OECD states that the digital revolution, globalisation and demographic changes are transforming the labour market and says that unions and employers have an important role to play and can work together in educating and training workforce to fit the demands of the changing labour market. Furthermore the OECD report recognises the important role that collective bargaining plays in both boosting productivity as tackling inequality. Collective bargaining is also linked with higher employment and lower unemployment, young people, women and low-skilled workers are also doing better under coordinated bargaining than under fully decentralised systems.

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

### **Formal employee representation and decision making**

*December 5, 2018*

A new CESIFO working paper examines the involvement in decision making of works councils and unions, the quality of the information provided to them by management, the preparedness of the representation body and the role of the work climate and trust. Cross-country data are used to establish perceived shortfalls in employee involvement based on the responses of employee representatives in EU establishments with formal workplace employee representation. Findings include that the desire for greater involvement is smaller where workplace representation is organised via works councils instead of union bodies, a finding that also obtains across country clusters. However, the favourable influence of the works council institution, if not information provision, does not carry over to situations in which management is adjudged uncooperative and untrustworthy.

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

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## **Austria**

### **Protests against social security reforms**

*December 13, 2018*

Trade unions brought together over 4000 protestors outside the headquarter of Vienna health insurance to protest new social insurance legislation. The Private Employees' Union (GPA) fears worse benefits for patients and increased work pressure on its employees due to the reform. Furthermore they state that the new legislation creates a three-class social insurance system that only benefits privately insured people and private insurance companies. The unions came with a united message to the government: they are prepared to fight for their healthcare system. More than 60 % of Austrians are reported to be against the social

security reforms.

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

### **Metal workers gain 3.3% wage hike**

*December 7, 2018*

Collective bargaining negotiations for the more than 110.000 workers and the approximately 17.000 metalworking apprentices ended with a successful agreement that will be valid for twelve months. Workers in the industry won a 3.3% wage increase and the apprentice compensation is going up with 7.2%. Another point of negotiations was 12-hour working day that was recently introduced by the government. In the new collective agreement an additional break of 10 minutes was agreed for working of more than ten hours. From the third hour of a working day, a 75% surcharge will be paid until 7 pm, from 7 pm on, a 100% surcharge will apply. The night work allowance is raised in four annual stages of around 7% to 2.53 euro.

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## **Belgium**

### **Protests against reform and wage plans government continue**

*December 12, 2018*

Trade unions are continuing their joint actions against the federal government's policy with a week of action on 14 December. Even though this government itself is under discussion unions go on with their protests against the pension, end-of-career and wage plans of the government and employers. The week of action ended with a national day of action on which some workers, amongst whom the TEC buses, trams and metros worker in Liège and Charleroi and port workers in Ghent, went on strike. Besides the transport sector strikes also took place in the food sector, and the metal and textile sector. The increase in the retirement age is very sensitive to people who perform physically demanding work and many workers are willing to engage in industrial action to prevent the proposed pension reforms.

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### **Wage development and purchasing power**

*December 12, 2018*

Last year the country has seen one of the lowest wage growths of Europe. Where labour costs in the Eurozone increased by an average 2.5% in Belgium they only increased with 1.2%. According to figures from the advice and audit bureau Deloitte workers on the lowest salaries have seen their net earnings rise the most since the tax reforms that was implemented 3 years ago. A study released by the Catholic University of Leuven on Friday showed that despite the rise in fuel prices and other expenses purchasing power in Belgium has increased over the past few years.

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## **Bulgaria**

### **Social partners discuss governments' wage proposal**

*December 19, 2018*

The National Tripartite Cooperation Council have met to discuss the cabinet's proposal to raise the minimum wage from 260 euro a month to 286 as of January 1, 2019. The employers' organizations are against the increase in the minimum wage. Government also plans to increase minimum pension by 5, 7%. Another point of discussion for the social partners is the increase of the remuneration for night work. The union offers it to become a percentage of the minimum wage for the country – 0, 5% of it for one hour of night work.

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## Croatia

### **Another wave of industrial action at Uljanik shipyard**

*December 6, 2018*

This month saw another wave of strike actions at Uljanik, the biggest shipyard of the country. Workers went on a two-week strike in demand of their November wages and the wages that were not fully paid to them in September and October. These two months the workers received minimum wages instead of their full wages. This summer the Uljanik workers also went on strike to protest similar problems with unpaid wages. Some workers that were unsatisfied with union representation formed an informal workers organisation to represent their interests. This new organisation that is called Stožer za obranu Uljanika (Headquarters for the Defence of Uljanik) is both engaging in negotiations with Uljanik management as in the strike actions.

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### **Labour shortages believed to hinder economic growth**

*December 5, 2018*

According to the national employers' association labour shortages in the country are so severe that around 30.000 current job vacancies cannot be filled. A lot of these jobs are in the tourism sector that over the years has become one of the most important pillars of the economy, accounting for almost 20% of the GDP. One of the problems is the so-called brain drain, with a lot of young and qualified workers leaving the country to work and live elsewhere. The other side of the story is a mismatch between the skills of the labour force and the demands of the labour market. This mismatch is clearly visible when looking at the 9.1 percent unemployment rate in relation to the thousands of jobs that cannot be filled.

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## Cyprus

### **24-hour strike at Limassol port**

*December 28, 2018*

After a two-hour work stoppage earlier this month, port workers went on a 24-hour strike to protest the long delay in reaching an agreement with their employers over renewal of their collective agreement that expired 31 December 2017. Furthermore, unions claim that port managers misinterpret salary provisions as they were agreed in the current collective agreement and also fail to hire workers in line with the current collective agreement. The 24-hour strike was called out by workers in response to a decision of the dispute resolution council that declared that the announced strike would be illegal. Union Peo supported the 24-hour strike while the Sek union asked its workers to not participate in the industrial action as it was declared illegal by the council. However, their members also participated in the strike.

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### **Construction workers demand that collective agreement is respected**

*December 14, 2018*

Construction workers want a full implementation of their collective agreement which would include restoration of previously cut salaries and benefits and are ready to fight for it. With a written statement the workers have authorised their unions Peo, Sek and Deok to announce strike measures if the Federation of Cyprus Building Contractors does not meet their demands.

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## Czechia

### **Collective bargaining and labour law**

*December 20, 2018*

A research article published in The Lawyer Quarterly examines the role and position of collective bargaining in Czech labour law. From both an historical as a European comparative perspective multiple shortages in current the labour system and problems regarding collective bargaining are highlighted. Because of

historical events such as the Nazi and Communist era social dialogue of the social partners and organisations representing their interests does not have the same longstanding tradition as in other European countries. What further complicates the matter is that scholars, judges and legal practitioners were educated in different legal cultures what hampers their legal thinking even today.

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## Denmark

### **Poor support for outsourcing public tasks**

*December 18, 2018*

The government wants to force municipalities and regions to outsource more of their tasks to the private market, for example, childcare and care for the elderly. A new study shows that the government's line has little support from the population. Only 20% of the respondents agreed with the statement that the outsourcing of public services to the private market should be forced upon municipalities and regions. Furthermore, two third of the respondents believes proper wage and work conditions are crucial if public tasks are to be outsourced. This in line with the stance of the trade union that emphasizes that the outsourcing of public services may not have a negative influence on the quality of the services or the employment conditions of the people performing the work.

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

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## Estonia

### **Government approves minimum wage increase**

*December 13, 2018*

The government has approved the minimum hourly wage to rise from 2.97 euro to 3.21 euro per hour. Starting in the new year, the minimum monthly salary will increase from 500 to 540 euro. According to Estonian Tax and Customs Board (MTA) data, a total of 25,500 full-time employees earned the minimum wage of €500 per month, accounting for 5.3% of all paid employees. Another 15,700 people, or 3% of full-time employees, earned €501-539 per month. The new minimum wage was agreed upon in an extended collective agreement concluded between the Estonian Trade Union Confederation (EAKL) Estonian Employers' Confederation (ETTK) last summer.

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## Finland

### **Retirement age will be increased by 3 months**

*December 28, 2018*

The minimum retirement age will this year be raised by 3 months. With implementation of the increase that was approved by parliament in 2017 the new minimum retirement age will be 63 years and 6 months. Further increases in the minimum pension age are to be expected in the near future as the population is ageing. The retirement age has been steadily going up, a decade ago the minimum retirement age was just under 60 years.

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### **New unemployment system criticised**

*December 16, 2018*

According to a survey carried out by trade union confederation SAK and the Industrial Union people are not positive about the new unemployment system that was implemented by the government. The new model is designed to activate job seekers by demanding that in the first three-month review period, unemployed jobseekers become an entrepreneur, work for at least 18 hours or sign-up for activities such as training. When these requirements are not met the benefits are cut. The survey, in which 6000 trade union members took part, reveals that it can be very difficult for unemployed job seekers to meet this requirements.

Especially for people that live in rural areas with lack of job opportunities and elderly job seekers it is difficult to find work. The trade union confederation urges the government to change their unemployment benefit system.

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## France

### **Six game developer workers fired in ongoing pay dispute**

*December 28, 2018*

Game developer Eugen Systems recently fired six workers involved in an ongoing dispute over wages and overtime. The six employees represented nearly a quarter of the 21 people working at Eugen, according to a press release from the independent union Le Syndicat des Travailleurs et Travailleuses du Jeu Vidéo. Many of them went on strike earlier this year after claiming Eugen was paying them less than the mandated minimums set in their contracts. It lasted over a month and a half before negotiations stalled. The STJV and about 15 employees are now bringing a case before a tribunal in March 2019. While the union states that the six workers were fired as an act of retaliation because of the strike action all six fired workers participated in Eugen systems claims that the firing of the six workers is not related to their partaking in industrial action.

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

### **'Blue vests' to protest over working conditions and pay**

*December 18, 2018*

After the yellow vests, it's now the turn of the blue vests to show their anger as police unions are calling on officers to picket to partake in industrial action and only answer emergency calls as they fight for better working conditions and pay. Negotiations between police unions and the Interior Minister failed to find a solution and come to an agreement that is satisfactory for the police workforce. Police are under high pressure with ongoing protests against the government. Government officials promised to pay an additional 300 euro to all those officers who were deployed for the "yellow vest" protests. It's unclear whether this will be enough to take the anger out of the protest.

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### **CGT calls out a great day of action and energy sector strike**

*December 6, 2018*

The CGT called for "great day of action" to demand an immediate increase in wages, pensions and social protection. In a statement the CGT declares that current social movements raise the issues of wages and pensions, social protection, environment and public service. The CGT also specifically called on workers in the energy sector to go on strike. The union believes that the government's long-term energy-transition plan would hurt jobs and increase France's energy dependency on neighbouring countries.

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## Germany

### **Another warning strike at Real supermarket**

*December 21, 2018*

After earlier strike actions at the supermarket chain stores (see our September and November newsletters) trade union Verdi called out a two-day warning strike just before Christmas... Until the end of May, Real still had a collective agreement with trade union Verdi but then the company decided to go a different path and cut employment costs by abandoning the collective agreement they had with union Verdi.

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

### **Union demands 6% pay increase public services**

*December 20, 2018*



The upcoming collective bargaining round in the public service could become tough with trade unions Verdi, the German Civil Servants Union (dbb), the Union of Education and Science (GEW) and the Gewerkschaft der Polizei (GdP) demanding a 6% wage increase or at least 200 euro gross a month more for workers in the civil service of the federal states. In total, there are 2.3 million employees in civil service of the federal states who would benefit from the wage hike. The new pay collective agreement should have a term of twelve months. The collective bargaining round starts on 21 January 2019.

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

### **Strikes at Amazon during busy Christmas period**

*December 17, 2018*

Amidst the busy Christmas period, workers at two Amazon distribution centres in the country have gone on strike as part of a push for improved work conditions that is already going on for five years. Trade union Verdi, that is representing the workers, says Amazon employees receive lower wages than others in retail and mail-order jobs in Germany. Verdi has been calling on Amazon to change its rules to allow a legally binding collective bargaining agreement for the company's approximately 16,000 German employees which it believes would guarantee better working conditions. The union is seeking an agreement similar to that available for retail workers and other mail order companies.

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## Greece

### **Minimum wage expected to increase**

*December 24, 2018*

After years of austerity and wage cuts the country is expected to see an increase of the national minimum wage. The cabinet still has to formally decide upon the wage increase and the precise number on 15 January 2019 but experts believe that the minimum wage will be increased with 5% to 8%. The new minimum wage will also apply to young workers and they will see the highest rise in income as currently they are paid only a sub-minimum wage especially designed for workers up to 25 years of age. An estimated 400,000 workers receive the minimum salary every month. Besides them and many flexible workers also the unemployed will benefit from an increased minimum wage as benefits are based on the minimum wage level.

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## Hungary

### **Massive protests against 'slave law'**

*December 22, 2018*

Despite temperatures well below zero thousands of people took to the streets in protest of an amendment to the Labour Code that allows for employers to demand 400 hours of overtime that was passed in parliament. This so called 'slave law' does not only almost double the amount of overtime that an employer can demand of his or her employees but also states that payment for this overtime can be delayed by up to three years. Opposition parties and trade unions announced more actions coming next month. Massive demonstrations such as these are a rare sight in the country under the current presidency.

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## Iceland

### **Unions enter wage negotiations separate from their federation**

*December 20, 2018*

Trade unions Efling and Verkalýðsfélag Akraness decided that they will enter upcoming wage negotiations separately from the trade union federation SGS of whom both unions are a member. The reason to split up from the federation that consists of 19 trade unions is that they take a more radical stance in the upcoming

wage negotiations that the SGS. Both unions are expected to work more closely together with VR Union that is not part of the SGS.

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## Ireland

### **Healthcare sector threatened with industrial action**

*December 28, 2018*

More than 7000 health service staff will be balloted for strike action in the new year over a 17 million euro wage dispute. Trade union Siptu said the decision stems from a government refusal to pay an increase in wages. According to the union the government has failed to give pay rises to workers such as surgical instrument technicians and lab staff in line with recommendations from independent job evaluations. The union said that some are underpaid by up to 6000 euro a year. Earlier this month, the vast majority of nurses and midwives with the Irish Nurses and Midwives Association voted to go on strike in a dispute over pay and staff shortages.

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

### **Congress of Trade Unions goes for 3,4% pay hike private sector**

*December 20, 2018*

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) says that unions in the private sector would be justified in seeking baseline pay rises of at least 3.4 per cent in 2019. In addition, where sector specific or enterprise specific performance is above the average for the economy, unions should take this into account when formulating wage claims. According to an ICTU report conditions are improving in the private sector with weekly earnings up 3,6%.

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### **New law banning zero-hours contracts**

*December 20, 2018*

A new law banning controversial zero-hour contracts "in most circumstances" will come into force in March 2019. The Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill was passed by both houses of the Oireachtas and will now be presented to the President for his signature. Under the new law, zero-hour contracts will be outlawed except in situations of genuine casual employment and where they are essential to allow employers to provide cover in emergency situations or to cover short-term absence. The legislation will also compel employers to pay a new minimum payment to employees called into work but sent home again without work. The Employment Bill has been described by politicians and media as one of the most significant pieces of employment law in a generation.

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## Italy

### **Temporary layoffs at Fiat plants**

*December 5, 2018*

Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) is getting ready to restructure the Mirafiori plant in Turin, at the temporary expense of approximately 3,245 blue- and white-collar workers. More than half of their current staff will temporarily lose their jobs during the restructuring of the plant. During restructuring that will last until 31 December 2019, the workers will receive reduced salaries, coming from a program funded by FCA and the government.

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### **OECD job strategy country report: how does Italy compare?**

*December 4, 2018*

The country ranks among the weakest of OECD countries on all three indicators of job quantity, reflecting persistently low employment rates, especially among women concludes the new OECD jobs strategy. The gradual economic recovery after the long crisis has lifted employment rates, but they nonetheless remain well below the OECD average. Italy performs better on earnings quality, with earnings adjusted for inequality above the OECD average. Labour market insecurity is high due to a high risk of unemployment and low unemployment benefits. Labour market inclusiveness in the country is weak. Following the long recession, relative poverty has increased: 15% of working-age people live in poor households, well above the OECD average.

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## Latvia

### **Parliament wants to increase salaries healthcare workers**

*December 13, 2018*

Parliament endorsed amendments to the Healthcare Financing Law, which state that the government will have to ensure allocation of funds necessary for increasing healthcare workers' salaries by an average 20 % annually during the next three years. It is estimated that the average salary of physicians working at outpatient clinics will increase from 1,125 euro to 1,350 euro. Nurse and assistant physicians' average salary will rise from 675 euro to 810 euro.

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## Liechtenstein

### **Guide to enrolling low-paid workers**

*December 20, 2018*

When hiring a cleaning specialist or a part-time gardening assistant it is not always easy to keep social security and tax bills accurate. All employers in the country are required to settle and pay statutory social security contributions such as pensions and payroll tax deductions. Furthermore, there may be the obligation to take out non-occupational and / or occupational accident insurance, to pay half of the compulsory health insurance and to conclude a daily sickness benefit insurance. The government has therefore developed a guideline to help people who want to employ workers for small tasks.

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## Lithuania

### **Unprecedented teachers strike continues**

*December 18, 2018*

The teachers strike has entered its fourth week and is causing distress amongst government. Amidst the strike, that revolves around a newly introduced pay system, parliament voted in favour of an amendment to the recently introduced pay system. However, a spokesperson of the education union stated that the adopted amendments are not a sufficient reason for the ongoing teachers' strike to be stopped. In the meantime, the number of teachers on strike is said to be declining with currently around 200 people, or 0.4% of all teachers on strike. In early December 2018 almost 1400 were on strike.

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## Luxembourg

### **Workers get extra day off**

*December 12, 2018*

Government announced that workers will get an extra day's holiday in 2019. The current minimum number of holiday days in the country is 25. In addition, the annual Europe Day on 9 May will be added to the list of public holidays.

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## Malta

### **Discussion about 'free riders' continues**

*December 11, 2018*

Last month both employers' organisations and the majority of the trade unions rejected a proposal by the Prime Minister to make membership of workers and companies in trade unions and employer associations compulsory (see our November newsletter). At an annual two-day seminar the debate on non-unionised workers continued. Trade union the Voice of the Workers proposes an "agency shop model" whereby non-union members pay a fee whenever they benefit from a service negotiated by a trade union. Contrary to other European countries, trade union membership is on the rise in Malta with membership figures for the first time going over the 100.000 mark.

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### **Union claims Stella Maris college is violating rules on working load**

*December 5, 2018*

According to the Union of Professional Educators (UPE) Stella Maris College has issued various teachers with a working load that is well beyond the agreed maximum of 25 lessons. UPE wants to sort out the issue with the school management and in the meantime has advised its members not to perform any additional tasks that makes them exceed their maximum working load. Management states that the school is dealing with some human resource issues but is not forcing their teachers to exceed maximum working load as teachers are always free to refuse these additional lessons.

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## Netherlands

### **Union files declaration against Post service for underpaying**

*December 30, 2018*

According to trade union FNV that bases itself on reports from the labour inspectorate, more than a hundred temporary workers are underpaid because PostNL uses sham constructions. The trade union filed a lawsuit against the postal service company. Temporary employees do not receive the wages agreed in the PostNL collective labour agreement, but minimum wages without pension accrual which according to the union is against the law. The false constructions, also known as 'contracting', take place according to FNV in at least sixteen of the 22 PostNL depots. The lawsuit comes amidst wider industrial unrest at the postal service. Earlier this month PostNL filed a lawsuit against trade union FNV to prevent a strike that was called out because negotiations on a new collective agreement remained deadlocked.

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

### **Collective agreement at JDE coffee company puts end to strike**

*December 12, 2018*

After two 24-hour strikes at branches of Jacobs Douwe Egberts (JDE) coffee company in Joure and Utrecht on November workers won a 5.8% wage increase and agreed upon a new collective agreement. The 5.8% wage increase will be spread out over the course of two years and two months. Besides the wage increases the workers and their unions succeeded putting a stop to plans of the company management to create a two-tier wage system that would pay new workers substantially less than people that are already employed by the company.

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## Norway

### **Norwegian Air Shuttle does not have employer responsibility**

*December 13, 2018*

Unions went to court because they believe Norwegian Air Shuttle is not taking its responsibility as an employer. Both cabin crew and pilots are not directly employed by the airline company but are formally employed by two different subsidiaries. After a long-running court case the Supreme Court finally decided that the airline company does not have employer responsibility for its pilots and cabin crew.

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## Poland

### **Government focusses on just transition for workers**

*December 3, 2018*

The international COP24 climate conference was this year held in Katowice, a city in the coal mining region of the country. Government officials stressed that it will focus on a just transition for workers and adopted the “Solidarity and Just Transition Silesia Declaration. By adopting the Silesia declaration, countries are committing to take seriously the impact of climate change and climate policies on workers, their families and communities when they prepare and implement the transition towards sustainable energy.

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## Portugal

### **40 days of strike at Port Sétubal ends with agreement**

*December 21, 2018*

After 40 days of strike by the stevedores their union SEAL and the port administration finally reached an agreement that put an end to the strike. One of the main problems of the workers was the lack of job security and formal contracts, workers were usually just hired for one day's work. Union and management have agreed to 56 casual workers being offered contracts by the stevedoring companies, and a further 10 to 37 being offered the same in the near future. The strike has blocked a total of over 20.000 cars from a nearby Volkswagen plant. Volkswagen had no alternative route for transporting the cars and is believed to have put pressure on the port management to come to an agreement that would end the strike.

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### **A month of industrial action**

*December 13, 2018*

The country is facing a wave of industrial action over the holidays with about 50 strike warnings being issued by workers, most of them civil workers, demanding higher wages and better working conditions. The strikes are organised in a bid to press the government into implementing further reforms and wage increases. According to the workers and their unions the current economic growth and the country having one of the lowest wages in Europe makes these demands legitimate. SEF immigration and border workers and two large private airport security groups threatening action this festive period but also operating room nurses have announced more strike actions.

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### **Minimum wage to be increased to 600 euro a month**

*December 13, 2018*

The government has proposed to increase the overall minimum wage from 580 euro a month to 600 euro a month. The salary for civil servants is to be increased from 580 euro a month to 635 euro a month. Employers' organisations accepted the proposed increases of the minimum wage while trade union remain critical and demand higher wage increases. When the current government came to power in 2015, the

minimum wage was 505 euro a month. The minimum wage has steadily risen over the last years but with 580 euro a month still is the lowest in western Europe.

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## Romania

### **Strike subway workers prevented with wage deal**

*December 5, 2018*

After unions and management failed to reach an agreement on a new collective agreement because of a dispute over wage increases subway workers engaged in a two-hour strike last month and threatened with more industrial action (see our November newsletter). While the unions wanted a 42% salary hike management had only offered 18%. Some 700,000 people use the subway on a daily base and many are affected by the industrial actions. The general strike the unions threatened with was prevented with a deal on a 20% wage increase to be inked in the 2018-2019 collective agreement.

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## Serbia

### **Teachers stage one-day strike over wage dispute**

*December 17, 2018*

The Teacher Union of Serbia (TUS) and union NTTU organised a one-day strike to protest wage increases that are more than 5% lower than was promised. The teachers were promised a 14.67% wage increase but only got a 9% increase. Preschool teachers did only get 7% wage increase which according to the TUS implies a discriminative approach in education.

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## Slovakia

### **Job agency swindles workers**

*December 13, 2018*

Hundreds of workers, both nationals and migrant workers from Serbia and the Ukraine, have not been paid their wages by the job agency that employed them for several months. Many of them now remain penniless at a building where the job agency housed them and lack resources to make the journey back home or even to buy food. Last month the police carried out raids on the job agency in question and arrested four men that are accused of smuggling more than a thousand of Serbs and Ukrainians for work in Slovakia and not paying them according to the hours they worked

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## Slovenia

### **Collective bargaining bus drivers deadlocked**

*December 20, 2018*

After a year of negotiations with employers for a new collective bargaining agreement, the unions representing bus drivers have found themselves in a deadlock. The agreement, which defines hourly rates below the minimum wage and allows bus drivers to be on the job for as much as 360 hours a month is unacceptable to the drivers. In response, they have announced plans to increase union pressure tactics, while not ruling out a halt of all public transportation. It remains unclear what the bus drivers are going to do now negotiations are deadlocked.

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## **Protest to demand higher wages private sector**

*December 5, 2018*

Trade unions organised a protest to demand higher wages in the private sector and urge employers to take part in social dialog. The protesters demanded higher wages in the private sector and the readiness of employers to take part in social dialog before the signing of collective bargaining agreements. The protest came in response to the employer organisation's threatening to withdraw from social dialogue if proposed changes that will increase the minimum wage go through. At the protest that was held in front of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, unions warned employers that if they withdraw from collective bargaining agreements workers will go on strike.

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## **Spain**

### **Security staff Madrid airport on strike over warm clothes and bonuses**

*December 29, 2018*

Some 300 security staff at Adolfo Suárez Madrid Barajas airport walked out on 21 December 2018 in a strike action in an ongoing dispute over bonus payments, as well as insufficient clothing to keep them warm in the cold. According to their union Alternativa Sindical, security company Eulen, which runs the service, has not paid the workers a bonus that they promised to pay during earlier negotiations. The strike committee says negotiations have failed to reach an agreement and is accusing Eulen management of 'contempt' for the working conditions of its staff in Barajas, alleging the company 'persists in its breaches' in wages and labour. The strike is said to continue until in the next year.

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### **Ryanair is threatened with ultimatum**

*December 28, 2018*

The Independent Union of Airline Passenger Cabin Crew (Sitcpla) and the Workers' Trade Union (USO) have given an ultimatum to airline Ryanair. If no agreement is reached, the unions threaten with 3-days of strike action in January 2019. The unions demand better working conditions and want Ryanair to employ their Spanish-based staff under local labour contracts instead of the Irish contracts that Ryanair uses. Spain is Ryanair's third biggest market. The airline has 13 of its 89 bases in the country.

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### **Biggest minimum wage increase in 40 years**

*December 12, 2018*

Government has announced to increase the minimum wage by 22% in what is the largest annual wage increase in more than 40 years. With this increase millions of low-paid workers could see their wages rise from 736 euro to 900 euro a month. The 22% increase of the minimum wage was agreed jointly with anti-austerity party Podemos. With this move the government hopes to get enough support for the 2019 budget to be adopted in parliament. The country increases the minimum wage annually, last year with 4%. Podemos claims the 22% wage increase as a victory.

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### **Multiple railway strikes**

*December 11, 2018*

Trade union CCOO has called a two-day Railway strike in Renfe and Adif for December 21 and January 7, at the beginning and end of the Christmas holidays. The union called out the strike to protest job cuts and furthermore demands multi-year plan of human resources that allows the renovation, rejuvenation and gender balance in the jobs of both public companies, where women represent only 13% of the staff. This call for strike is not the only strike at the rail. Train inspectors will also go on a one-day strike and partial stoppages of the Adif railway controllers have been announced by the Syndicate of Railway Circulation (SCF) over a lack of personnel.

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## Sweden

### **Using algorithms to improve bargaining outcomes**

*December 14, 2018*

A union researcher is developing an algorithm that can help unions predict several facts that could influence bargaining outcomes. Trade union Unionen, where the union researcher works, has a massive database of information coming from member looking for advice or reporting problems. Based on their behaviour in the past, there can be detected certain patterns in the behaviour of specific companies. The data can also help to get a broader picture of labour market developments. If the economy is for example going to shrink, the algorithm will be able to predict which sectors will be likely to start laying people off or making pay cuts. Knowing this kind of information on forehand can make it easier to allocate adequate union capacity to the sectors or companies and to improve bargaining outcomes.

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## Switzerland

### **Construction workers win negotiations on pension**

*December 19, 2018*

After 20 rounds of negotiations and an intense labour dispute, unions and employers organisations reached a deal over a new collective agreement for construction workers. In the new agreement the pension age of 60 years is secured and construction workers will get a wage increase of 80 francs per month in both 2019 and 2020. The agreement was not easily reached. Employers wanted to move the minimum pension age to 62 years, earlier retirement would be only be possible if workers gave up 30% of their pension. In reaction to the proposed cuts, thousands of construction workers from all over the country took to the streets in a day of protests and more than 15.000 construction workers engaged in industrial action.

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### **Revision of the Gender Equality Act passes final vote**

*December 14, 2018*

Parliament passed the revision of the Gender Equality Act. The revision of the law finally regulates binding measures against ongoing wage discrimination. On average women earn 7% less than their male colleagues. According to union SGB says that this act is step in the good direction but believes that the improvements are not going far enough. The original proposal was weakened by political parties that did not want to make employers fully accountable for wage discrimination. Union SGB announced a nationwide women strike for 14 June 2019.

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

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## Turkey

### **Strike at carton board plants ends with pay deal**

*December 29, 2018*

Workers at Mayr-Melnhof carton board plants had been on strike since June 2018 when they rejected an offer for a new collective agreement that did not include any pay rise or even the adjustment of wages to inflation. After months of industrial action, management and the union finally agreed upon a new collective agreement that will be valid for three years. The new agreement includes a wage increase of 280 Turkish Lira a month in 2018, 300 Turkish Lira in the first half of 2019 and an inflation correction for the second half of 2019 and 2020.

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### **Detained Istanbul airport workers released at first hearing**

*December 19, 2018*



In September 2018 construction workers at Istanbul airport went on strike because they did not receive their wages and to protest unsafe working conditions due to which some workers had died. In response to the industrial action, hundreds of workers were accused of violating the law on meetings and demonstrations and were arrested (see our September and October newsletter). While the labour ministry claimed that 27 workers had died on the site, official data disclosed by Turkey's Presidential Communications Centre (CİMER) show that the real figure is much higher. 52 workers have died while building the new Istanbul airport. After having been imprisoned for more than two months, on 5 December 2018 at the first hearing of their trial, the imprisoned workers were finally released.

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## United Kingdom

### **Cleaners Luton airport on strike**

*December 21, 2018*

During the month cleaners at Luton Airport engaged in industrial action over a wage dispute. Part of the industrial action was a 2 week-long strike that also covered the Christmas days. The cleaners union Unite points out that while the company makes a yearly profit of nearly 40 million pounds it is not willing to pay their cleaners the real living wage. The company said that it had offered staff a 9% increase over three years but according to that rate cleaners at Luton Airport still won't be earning a real living wage in 2021.

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### **Firefighters win pension case in court of appeal**

*December 14, 2018*

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has won a case in the court of appeal about a longstanding dispute regarding firefighters' pensions. The FBU went to court because in 2015 the pension scheme was changed for the worse. Older members could stay in the better pension scheme while younger members had to change to the new scheme which would not only cause them huge financial losses but would also change their minimum retire age to 60 years. Workers that fall under the old scheme can retire at 55. According to the FBU this two different schemes were unlawful on age discrimination ground.

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### **Wages still not back on pre-crisis level**

*December 14, 2018*

Research carried out by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) shows that workers have lost from just under 5,000 pounds in the north-east to more than 20,000 pounds in London in real earnings since 2008. According to the union the country has suffered the worst real wage slump among leading economies. According to the analysis UK workers are suffering the longest real wage squeeze in more than 200 years, with average pay packets not set to recover to their 2008 level until 2024.

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### **Union loses high court case against Deliveroo**

*December 5, 2018*

The Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (IWGB) lost a case in high court with which they wanted to overturn an earlier court ruling that stated Deliveroo riders were not in an "employment relationship" in the context of European human rights law but self-employed. The union, on the contrary, believes that Deliveroo is an employer and that company had to fulfil the responsibilities that comes with being an employer. According to the union, that is going to appeal the ruling of the high court, the Deliveroo workers should be entitled to basic worker rights, as well as to the ability to be represented by trade unions to negotiate pay and terms and conditions.

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### **In work poverty on the rise?**

*December 4, 2018*

According to a new report by the Joseph Rowntree foundation, in-work poverty is on the rise and even rising faster than employment. At this moment 4 million workers, equalling one in eight workers, have an income below the poverty line. The number of children from a working family that live in poverty rose more steeply than at any time for 20 years and has now reached a total number of 4.1 million children living in poverty. The Joseph Rowntree foundation defines the poverty line as being 60% of the median income, adjusted for size and type of household. The government does not agree with the outcomes of the report and, on the contrary, claims that poverty has been reduced with 1 million fewer people living in absolute poverty than in 2010.

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

For more information, please contact Sanne van der Gaag, De Burcht (Scientific Bureau for the Dutch Trade Union Movement) [sannevandergaag@deburcht.org](mailto:sannevandergaag@deburcht.org) or the Head of communications at the ETUI, Steve Coulter [scoulter@etui.org](mailto:scoulter@etui.org). For previous full issues of the *Collective bargaining newsletter* please visit [www.etui.org/E-Newsletters/Collective-bargaining-newsletter](http://www.etui.org/E-Newsletters/Collective-bargaining-newsletter) or consult the archive with all articles in our database at [www.cbnarchive.eu](http://www.cbnarchive.eu).

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