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European sources

European minimum wage report
February 26, 2021

The European minimum wage report published by the Institute of Economic and Social Research (WSI) in Düsseldorf, Germany, illustrates that at the beginning of 2021, minimum wage increases in Europe were much
less pronounced than in previous years due to the pandemic. Minimum wages in the 21 EU states that have a statutory wage floor rose by a median of 3.1 per cent in nominal terms on 1 January 2021. After deducting inflation, an increase of 1.6 per cent remained. At the beginning of 2020, the nominal increase was 6.1 per cent and the real increase 4.5 per cent.

Read on: in English ...  Read on: in German ...

**Launch of consultation of social partners on platform workers**  
*February 24, 2021*

As part of its considerations on how best to improve working conditions for platform workers, the European Commission launched its first phase of consultation of the European social partners as a way to inform the direction of the debate. The document identifies both the challenges and problems with platform work, as well as possible solutions at the European level.

Read on: in English ...

**Millions of workers could get pay rise**  
*February 18, 2021*

More than 24 million workers on low wages in the EU would receive a much-needed pay rise if trade union proposals for the EU’s draft Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages are accepted. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) is pushing for a ‘threshold of decency’ to be included in the legislation that would ensure statutory minimum wages could never be paid at less than 60% of the median wage and 50% of the average wage in the Member States.

Read on: in English ...

**How to tackle in-work poverty**  
*February 15, 2021*

To fight in-work poverty, Members of the European Parliament want action on minimum wages and support for those most at risk, including women and gig economy workers. Nearly 10% of EU workers are living in poverty, with 21.7% of the population affected by poverty or social exclusion. In light of this, MEPs are urging the European Commission and EU countries to include the prevention of in-work poverty in their overall goal to end poverty in the EU because the principle according to which ‘work is the best remedy for poverty’ does not apply to low-wage sectors and those working under precarious and atypical working conditions.

Read on: in English ...

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**Austria**

**Government extends furlough scheme**  
*February 17, 2021*

Short-time work or ‘Kurzarbeit’ has been extended until the end of June after the government announced restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic would stay in place until Easter. The most recent figures show around 460,000 employees were on short-time work and around 60,000 companies took advantage of the measure to avoid even higher unemployment figures.

Read on: in English ...  Read on: in German ...

**Big differences in wages**  
*February 16, 2021*
According to Statistics Austria, the lowest incomes in 2020 were for blue collar jobs with a median salary of €21,961. The highest earners were civil servants with a median annual salary of €59,145. Not surprisingly, some of the highest earners are in management, technology development, IT, law and banking. On the other hand, some of the lowest paid workers are in the hotel and hospitality industry.

Read on: in English ...

**Employment rises as lockdown is relaxed**

*February 11, 2021*

Employment is being boosted by the relaxed lockdown measures and construction and industry are performing well, despite a massive economic slump due to reduced tourism. The reopening of shops, hairdressers and other services boosted employment figures. There are 4,500 fewer people unemployed or in training than in the previous week. However, 525,992 people are still waiting to find work.

Read on: in English ...

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**Belgium**

**Unions call for bigger wage increases in the private sector**

*February 23, 2021*

ACV-CSC, the largest trade union, has planned demonstrations and strikes in protest against the wage increase being offered in the private sector, which workers are calling ‘unacceptable’. Employers want to grant a maximum increase of 0.4% for the private sector for 2021-2022. The ACV-CSC is calling for wages to be increased on the basis of collective bargaining whenever the situation allows for it, especially when it comes to those earning the lowest wages.

Read on: in English ...

**H&M employees strike over store closures**

*February 23, 2021*

Eight H&M stores announced closures, and the union that represents private sector employees said workers will strike over the job losses that will occur as a result of insufficient negotiations. H&M workers signed a petition asking management to put forward a new proposal, but the union says management has ‘remained deaf’.

Read on: in English ...

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**Bulgaria**

**Additional spending on public sector wages and pensions**

*December 13, 2021*

The government has spent an additional €3 billion on wages and pensions during its current term of office as compared to 2017. €27 billion was spent on pensions in the past four years, increasing pensions by 37%. People employed in the public sector such as teachers, police officers and medics have received a total of €17 billion. Their salaries increased by 62% on average.

Read on: in English ...

**Gross wages grow by 9.4%**

*February 12, 2021*
According to the National Statistical Institute (NSI), the average gross monthly wage increased by an annual 9.4% in the fourth quarter of 2020. On a quarterly basis, the average gross monthly wage grew by 4.7% in the review period. On an annual basis, average monthly wages in the public sector and the private sector went up by 13.1% and 8.1%, respectively.

Read on: in English ...

Croatia

Workers demand overdue wages
February 20, 2021

An estimated 200 protesters from the Brodotrogir shipbuilding company demanded the payment of their belated wages. The shipyard of Trogir was restructured but has been having a hard time landing contracts that would bring in income and secure workers' wages.

Read on: in English ...

Demands of Secondary School Union met
February 9, 2021

The Independent Union of Employees in Secondary Schools (NSZSŠH) pointed out that wages in education had increased by at least 12.23% since December 2019, meaning that all the demands put to the government during the longest school strike ever in the country had been met. This increase was achieved in three rounds and the last round was planned for this February after January’s wages had been paid out.

Read on: in English ...

Cyprus

Revised posted worker regulation
February 17, 2021

The government has updated its posted worker regulation by adding a six-month extension for postings that were previously limited to a maximum 12-month duration. Posted EU workers can thus now work for 18 months in Cyprus. Additionally, for posted workers whose employment terms with their home country employer are more favourable than in Cypriot law, the more favourable terms will apply.

Read on: in English ...

Czechia

Health union calls for additional support
February 15, 2021

The OSZSP health workers’ union and LOK doctors’ union have written a joint letter to the government warning of the continuing crisis in healthcare, particularly in some regional hospitals. The unions have also called for additional funding to ensure that all health workers entitled to a COVID-19 bonus get their payments without delay and to avoid a repeat of the problems of payments during the first outbreak.

Read on: in English ...  Read on: in Czech ...
Denmark

New agreements for public sector workers
*February 8, 2021*

Public sector workers will be covered by two new three-year agreements running from 1 April to the end of March 2024. The agreements covering municipal and state sector workers both have an overall value of 6.75% of the pay bill over the three years but the amounts are distributed differently. Both agreements include measures to tackle mental health at the workplace and initiatives to promote sustainability.

Read on: in English ...  Read on: in Danish ...

Estonia

Unemployment rises
*February 15, 2021*

According to Statistics Estonia, unemployment rose by 16,000 to 47,900 (or by 6.8%) between 2019 and 2020. The labour force participation rate stood at 71.6%, and the employment rate was 66.7%. The majority of unemployed people had been without work for less than six months. Unemployment was slightly lower in cities and towns compared with rural areas. Compared with 2019, the share of unemployed persons grew the most among clerical support workers, technicians and associate professionals.

Read on: in English ...

Finland

Longer parental leave introduced to encourage uptake by fathers
*February 16, 2021*

The Minister of Social Affairs and Health announced a reform of the country’s parental leave system, which would extend parental leave by one month. The plan allots 12.8 months of income-related parental allowance per child. The primary aim of the reform initiative is to encourage fathers to make use of their leave allowance to promote professional equality between men and women.

Read on: in English ...

Low employment of female immigrants
*February 9, 2021*

According to a report by the business think tank the Finnish Business and Policy Forum (Eva), weak employment prospects for female immigrants weakens their integration into society and can have an effect on their children’s professional careers.

Read on: in English ...

France

Carrefour workers on strike
*February 27, 2021*
Employees at the Carrefour de Cap Saran in Loiret have gone on strike over such issues as understaffing and outdated equipment. Responding to the call of trade unions the CFDT and Force Ouvrière, about fifty workers took turns at the picket line, putting pressure on the management.

Read on: in French ...

**Agreements signed at Airbus Helicopters**  
*February 17, 2021*

CFE-CGC, CFTC and FO, the three trade unions of the Airbus aerospace group’s helicopter production subsidiary, signed several agreements in a bid to safeguard the future of its two French sites, by ‘helping to create the conditions for sustainable development’ at the sites via ‘cost cutting’ to improve ‘economic performance that frees up the financial resources needed to invest and ensure the future of its business’.

Read on: in English ... Read on: in French ...

**Germany**

**Pandemic hits wages hard**  
*February 17, 2021*

According to data released by the national statistical office, nominal earnings fell for the first time in over a decade. The data illustrates that the coronavirus pandemic has had a more severe impact on earnings than the 2007/08 financial crisis. Preliminary data showed nominal earnings shrunk by 0.6% in 2020, the first contraction since the data series began in 2007.

Read on: in English ...

**New collective agreement for textile and clothing workers**  
*February 16, 2021*

IG Metall and the employers’ Textil + Mode confederation reached a new collective agreement for 100,000 textile and clothing workers in west Germany, which will be applicable for 25 months. The employees will receive a single ‘corona bonus’ payment of €325 for the year 2021. From February 2022 they will see their salaries increase by 1.3%, with a further 1.4% being added from October 2022. In addition to the pay increases, the collectively agreed part-time work for older workers (*Altersteilzeit*) will be extended and improved.

Read on: in English ... Read on: in German ...

**Collective agreement for the bakery trade**  
*February 10, 2021*

The Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststätten (NGG) trade union has concluded a collective agreement for the bakery trade in Baden-Württemberg. Wages and salaries in this sector will increase in two stages by a total of 3.4%. The agreement will cover more than 50,000 employees in this region.

Read on: in German ...

**Greece**

**Strike over labour rights**  
*January 24, 2021*
Thirteen seamen’s associations called a strike in protest at recent legislative changes that they say will undermine their collective bargaining rights in wage negotiations with employers. Unions are trying to restore rights lost during Greece's successive international bailouts between 2010 and 2018.

Read on: in English ... Read on: in English (2) ...
February 22, 2021

A new public service pay deal for about 340,000 state employees will be formally ratified by trade unions. Fórsa, the largest public service union, announced that its members had overwhelmingly backed the proposed agreement in a ballot. The agreement provides for a 1% pay rise in October 2021 and a further 1% rise in October 2022.

Read on: in English ...

Italy

Just transition agreement with ENI
February 10, 2021

Trade unions Filctem Cgil, Femca Cisl, and Uiltec Uil signed an agreement with oil company ENI to address the energy transition. They agreed on a protocol to serve as a framework for discussions on the effects of ENI’s new business structure on human resources, as the company prepares to significantly reduce its carbon footprint. The objective of the protocol is to share and govern the challenge of energy transition through an anticipatory and inclusive model that looks at both economic and social sustainability, and puts work at the centre.

Read on: in English ...

Collective bargaining agreement for metal industry
February 10, 2021

After months of negotiations the national collective agreement for the metal industry – which expired at the end of 2019 – was renewed on 5 February. A draft agreement has been reached by Federmeccanica and Assistal on the employer side and the Fim, Fiom and Uilm on the union side, though it is yet to be submitted to workers. The agreement will cover the period from January 2021 to June 2024. As well as addressing the issue of pay increases, the agreement modernises and updates the job classification system, bolsters guarantees for outsourced workers in the event of a change of service provider, and introduces a national training programme.

Read on: in English ...  Read on: in Italian ...

Women hit hardest by the pandemic
February 1, 2021

Women tend to have less secure jobs in areas which have been particularly badly hit by the corona pandemic. According to the national statistics bureau ISTAT, women accounted for nearly all job losses in December, when the country’s unemployment rate rose to 9.0% from a downwardly revised 8.8% in November. ISTAT furthermore reported that some 101,000 jobs were lost in the final month of 2020, with 99,000 of them due to a fall in employment among women.

Read on: in English ...

Latvia

Burnout and low wages: teachers at risk of leaving jobs
February 23, 2021

According to the latest data from a survey conducted by the Latvian Education and Research Workers’ Trade Union (LIZDA), in the next five years about 46% of interviewed teachers may leave their jobs in schools and other education facilities due to overload and inadequate wages. 41% of interviewed teachers are certain that
in the next five years they will continue working in their jobs. 13.6% of interviewed teachers have still not decided.

Read on: in English ...

Liechtenstein

Equal pay
February 23, 2021

The principle of equal pay between women and men has not yet been met. According to the latest figures from the Statistical Office, women in Liechtenstein still earn 14.7% less than their male colleagues. Two fifths of the difference cannot be explained by objective characteristics such as qualification, training, professional position, branch, etc.

Read on: in German ...

Lithuania

Minimum wages increase
February 10, 2021

The government has announced an increase of the national minimum wage for 2021. The new minimum wage level is €642 per month, which is an increase from €607 per month in 2020. The minimum wages apply to new, pending, and current applications as of January 2021.

Read on: in English ...

Luxembourg

Compensation to business for increase of minimum wage
February 4, 2021

In January 2021, the statutory minimum wage increased from €12.38 to €12.73. To support businesses, the government has put in place a new financial aid known as compensation for the increase in the minimum wage. It is intended for companies in the following sectors: tourism, hospitality, and culture, entertainment and events.

Read on: in French ...

Malta

Industrial action blocked
February 26, 2021

A judge has temporarily suspended industrial action ordered by the UHM Voice of the Workers union in a hospital following an application for an injunction filed by the health ministry. The union asked 1,300 healthcare workers to take industrial action after claims the government had backtracked on previous pledges.

Read on: in English ...
**Netherlands**

**Deliveroo workers are not freelancers anymore**  
*February 17, 2021*

Meal delivery company Deliveroo says it will appeal to the supreme court against a lower court ruling which said its delivery workers should be considered employees. The appeal court judges ruled in favour of trade union FNV which claims that delivery workers are pseudo-freelancers and should be paid in line with the official pay and conditions agreement for the sector.

Read on: in English ... Read on: in Dutch ...

**New agreement for medical general staff**  
*February 9, 2021*

Staff working in medical general practices are set to get a 2% pay increase in a new agreement negotiated by the FNV and other trade unions. There will also be a structural 0.5% addition to the end-of-year bonus and a one-off increase of the same amount.

Read on: in Dutch ...

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**Norway**

**Care workers strike for equal pay**  
*February 2, 2021*

Workers in four social care organisations in Oslo have been taking strike action in support of their demands that all employees should be paid in line with pay rates in the municipal sector.

Read on: in Norwegian ...

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**Poland**

**Wages maintained or raised during pandemic**  
*February 24, 2021*

Most firms preferred to reduce their non-wage costs and investments rather than reduce their workers’ earnings during the pandemic, whilst 20% even decided to raise wages. The ‘Study of Polish Business’ found that 80% of small and micro-enterprises retained their current levels of pay, while just over one fifth of small firms decided to give pay rises to their employees and 18% to increase their workforce.

Read on: in English ...

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**Portugal**

**Airline reaches emergency agreement**  
*February 5, 2021*

Struggling flag carrier TAP Portugal has brokered an agreement in principle with its pilots’ union Sindicato dos Pilotos da Aviação Civil (SPAC), to accept the terms of its emergency agreement. SPAC has become the first union to accept the conditions set by the government and the airline.

Read on: in English ...
Romania

**Government pays for miners’ wages**  
*February 22, 2021*

The government will make available reserve funds to pay the wages of the miners who went on strike in Jiu Valley. The state-owned coal and power company CEH, which owns the mines, is undergoing insolvency proceedings, which bars its access to the fund used for the payment of employees under special circumstances.

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

**Airline to halve employment**  
*February 19, 2021*

According to the restructuring plan the airline Tarom sent to the European Commission, the company will make 700 of its current 1,492 employees redundant and will also close 11 offices abroad. The company had 1,753 employees in June 2020, down from over 2,500 in 2009.

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

Serbia

**New law about temporary workers**  
*February 25, 2021*

A draft law regulating employment of seasonal and other temporary workers stipulates that employers may hire temporary workers for construction, catering, information, entertainment and recreation, creative industries, babysitting, care of the elderly and hygiene work. The law, prepared by the Ministry of Labour, also covers the temporary work engagement of bartenders, waiters, cooks, dishwashers and tour guides. Companies can hire temporary workers for no longer than 180 days during a calendar year, or a maximum of 15 days per month, and the same worker for a maximum of 120 days per year.

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

**Strike at Fiat Plastic**  
*February 19, 2021*

Employees of the FIAT Plastic plant went on strike to protest a pay cut. A strike committee spokesman said that both shifts of workers will be on strike until their demands are met. The demands include restoring the level of vacation allowances and the payment of 65% of salaries for employees on paid leave, instead of the current 60%.

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

Slovakia

**Car makers benefit from government support**  
*February 25, 2021*

Funding wage costs is one of the ways the government is helping businesses stay afloat during the pandemic. Carmakers, steelmakers and the soon-to-close brown-coal mine were among the 20 biggest receivers of state aid to help maintain employment in 2020.
New minimum wage levels  
*February 18, 2021*

The national minimum wage increased by 7.4% from its previous level of €520 in 2020. The new minimum wage level requirements apply to new, pending, and current Single Permit holders.

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**Slovenia**

**Average net wage rises by 6.6%**  
*February 16, 2021*

According to the statistical office, average net monthly earnings increased by 6.6% in 2020, reaching €1,208.65. In nominal terms, the average gross monthly wage rose by 5.8% to €1,856.20 last year. On a monthly comparison basis, net wages fell by 1.0% in December to €1,314.62, after rising by 13.3% in November.

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**Spain**

**Agreement on wage freeze at Renault**  
*February 18, 2021*

Renault Spain and the unions UGT, CCOO and SCP have reached a preliminary agreement on the content of the company’s collective agreement for the period 2021-2024. This agreement covers all Renault’s Spanish facilities (14,000 employees) and provides for a two-year freeze on salaries. In return, however, management has undertaken to hire 1,000 new employees and to ensure the industrial future of the sites, with the production of new hybrid and electric models.

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**Four-day week pilot project launched**  
*February 4, 2021*

The government is set to offer financial incentives to companies that attempt to introduce a 32-hour work week. The aim of this would be to see if productivity and wellbeing can be increased with a shorter four-day work week, whilst maintaining employees’ wages at the same level. The Labour Ministry is currently deciding the details of the four-day work week campaign, but it is expected that the system will be designed in such a way that productivity can be measured against the average increase in salary per hour worked.

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**Collective agreement for the banking sector**  
*February 1, 2021*

The Asociación Española de Banca (AEB, Spain’s banking employers’ association), together with representatives of the CCOO, UGT and FINE trade unions, concluded the broad outlines of a new banking sector agreement, which introduces rules on remote working by including the general framework that was defined by official decree.
New law to make food delivery workers ‘permanent staff’
*February 12, 2021*

The Labour Ministry, trade unions and employer’s associations have agreed to a law improving the rights of food delivery workers employed by global digital platforms like Deliveroo, granting them the status of ‘permanent staff’ instead of self-employed. The new legislation aims at improving the working conditions of food delivery workers, which is currently characterised by low salaries, long working hours, and reduced labour rights.

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Switzerland

Collective agreement in hospitality sector
*February 10, 2021*

The Kommunal municipal workers’ union has negotiated a collective agreement with the Visita employers’ organisation representing companies in the hospitality sector. The agreement runs from 1 January 2021 to 31 August 2023 and provides for a salary increase of SK 1,303 (€128) to be paid in two instalments in April 2021 and September 2022.

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Switzerland

Study on student side jobs
*February 26, 2021*

A study published by the Federal Statistical Office found that 73% of students in tertiary education did paid work alongside their studies. Earnings from such jobs accounted for 39% of students’ monthly income. The largest percentage of their income was financial contributions made by family members (52%), Scholarships and loans (4%) and other resources (5%) made up the rest. Contributions from family were highest among students under 20 (79%) and lowest among those aged 30-25 (23%).

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Commission does not want to cut professional athletes’ wages
*February 23, 2021*

The Education and Culture Commission of the Council of States does not want professional athletes to have to accept a wage cut if their club receives contributions from the federal government. Professional sports clubs can apply to the federal government for contributions as part of the corona aid, but the funds are tied to the condition of lowering wages. For example, players who earn over CHF 148,200 (€135,000) a year would have to lower their average wages by 20%.

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Turkey

Wage support extended
*February 19, 2021*
Turkey has extended short-time work payments until the end of March for registered workers whose hours have been cut due to coronavirus restrictions by one month, according to a presidential decision. The scheme partially covers the wages of workers whose companies apply, allowing many to retain their jobs during the pandemic.

United Kingdom

**Uber drivers are entitled to worker benefits**  
*February 19, 2021*

After years of legal proceedings, the Supreme Court ruled that drivers operating via the application Uber should not be considered as self-employed but rather as ‘workers’ who are thereby entitled to a minimum wage and paid holiday, even if they are not ‘employees’. This ground-breaking decision – which is likely to shake up the gig economy – will improve the working conditions of tens of thousands of drivers.

**Vaccination policies for new staff**  
*February 18, 2021*

The owner of Pimlico Plumbers said he would not offer a job to anyone who had not been vaccinated. Given that the general working population have not yet been offered the vaccination, his approach is somewhat premature. However, the issue of whether employers can insist that staff take the Covid-19 vaccine when it is offered to them is one that many are starting to grapple with. There is no legal basis the government can rely on to force people to be vaccinated and people will not be forced to have a vaccine if they do not want one.

**Employees are working harder during lockdown**  
*February 12, 2021*

More than half of employees say they have been expected to work outside of regular working hours during lockdown, contributing to many people experiencing burnout. Working from home is exacerbating an ‘always on’ culture, according to data from a study of employees that showed 55% of respondents were struggling to keep on top of their workloads within working hours.