

collective bargaining

Issue 9/2021 | September

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.

 DE BURCHT | 

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European sources

Report on low wages

22 September 2021

Nearly three million EU workers cannot afford to heat their homes amid a rise in energy prices. According to the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), 15% of the EU's working poor do not have enough money to turn on the heating. This amounts to 2,713,578 people. Trade unions are calling on the European Parliament to insulate workers against energy poverty by introducing a 'threshold of decency' into the draft EU Directive on Minimum Wages which would ensure that statutory minimum wages guarantee a decent standard of living and could never be paid at less than 60% of the median wage and 50% of the average wage of any Member State.

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

New rules on EU Blue Card for skilled foreigners

17 September 2021

The European Parliament has announced that it has adopted the reform of the EU Blue Card to make it easier to employ highly skilled non-EU nationals and help reduce labour shortages in key sectors. Earlier this year, the EU Parliament and Council reached a short-term agreement regarding the revision of rules for skilled workers who are nationals and residents of third countries. These rules have now become fully effective. The newly approved changes will allow applicants to present a valid work contract of at least six months instead of the previous requirement, which asked for a work contract that needed to be valid for 12 months.

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Legal rights for digital platform workers

16 September 2021

The conditions for so-called platform workers are coming under increasing scrutiny. The European Parliament has voted overwhelmingly to demand that the EU ensures people working for ride-sharing and food delivery apps have proper holidays, healthcare and protected rights. The European Parliament's vote means the European Commission will adopt a directive on this issue.

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Austria

Unions demand 4.5% pay rise in metal industry

30 September 2021

After the trade unions handed over their demands, employer and employee representatives from the metal industry met for the first round of negotiations. The unions are demanding a 4.5% pay rise, the same as in the 2019 bargaining round. At that time an agreement about a pay rise between 2.6% and 2.8% was reached.

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

Social partners discuss '3G rule'

22 September 2021

Workplaces could soon be restricted to those who have been vaccinated, have recovered from the virus or have tested negative. There are currently talks going on between the social partners about the so-called '3G rule' (*geimpft, genesen, getestet* or 'vaccinated, cured, tested'). The Austrian Trade Union Confederation, ÖGB, is positive about these talks.

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Unemployed cannot refuse a job that requires vaccination

16 September 2021

The Minister of Labour stated that the unemployed cannot refuse a job simply because a vaccination is required. In a letter he obliged the Public Employment Service (AMS) to block unemployment benefits for job seekers if they do not apply for a reasonable job because a vaccination is required there.

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Belgium

Appeal for social dialogue as over 500 jobs at risk

26 September 2021

Wallonia's Economic Affairs Minister launched an appeal for social dialogue at Logistics Nivelles and the French distribution chain Carrefour, sole client of the logistics firm, where 549 jobs are on the line. Following an announcement by the Kuehne+Nagel logistics group that it was closing its Nivelles site and retrenching its entire workforce, staff at Logistics Nivelles and employees of the Supertransport company went on strike. The unions accuse the group's management of "sabotaging" the Nivelles plant by refusing to invest in it and investing instead in its Flemish sites at Kontich and Kampenhout, to which it plans to relocate its operations in Wallonia.

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Information on vaccination rate of employees

21 September 2021

Occupational physicians will soon be able to find out the vaccination rate of employees in companies with more than 50 staff. This is due to a tool currently being developed which will cross-reference information from the National Social Security Office (NSSO) and Vaccinet, the database on vaccination status. The project is awaiting authorisation from the Information Security Committee. Only the External Service for Prevention and Protection at Work will be authorised to consult the information. Trade unions say they are very careful about data protection, as well as about other uses that could be made of the data by employers.

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Proposals for fundamental pension reform

3 September 2021

The government is expected to propose fundamental reforms to the pension system. While the legal retirement age is not expected to be under review, the reforms envisage changes to early retirement conditions so that people who started their careers early or who have worked part-time for many years can retire earlier. Changes are also afoot for those looking to extend their working lives beyond the legal retirement age and could thus see their pensions being increased.

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Bulgaria

Unemployment down to record low

15 September 2021

According to the Employment Agency, the unemployment rate fell to a record low of 4.9% in August, from 5.0% in the previous month. On an annual comparison basis, the unemployment rate fell by 2.6 percentage points, from 7.5% in August 2020. A total of 15,422 unemployed people found a job with the help of job centres in the month under review, while 19,522 people registered as unemployed.

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Croatia

Health and social care employees forced to take test

22 September 2021

Employees in the health and social care system who do not want to be vaccinated, do not have a Covid certificate, have not recovered from the virus and refuse to take a test for Covid-19, will not be able to enter the institutions where they work from 1 October, or will be considered not to have appeared at work, and may be dismissed without notice. A government source explained that labour relations are already defined by the Labour Law and employment regulations for health and social care institutions, so that these regulations will not have to be changed for these measures.

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Cyprus

Gender pay gap remains too large

18 September 2021

On the international day for equal pay, the Gender Equality Commissioner demanded a comprehensive approach to close the gender pay gap, as women are paid 10.4% less than men for the same job. Since salary inequality does not allow the full utilisation of the female workforce, it poses an obstacle to economic and social development overall.

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Czechia

Salaries up by 11.3%

5 September 2021

According to the Czech Statistical Office, the average salary increased by 11.3% year-on-year in the second quarter of 2021, rising by nearly CZK 4,000 (EUR 158) to reach CZK 38,275 (EUR 1,512) per month. In mid-2020, the average salary was CZK 34,384 (EUR 1,358) per month. Adjusting for inflation and the rising prices of consumer goods, salaries have risen by about 8.2% in real terms.

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Denmark

Migrants required to work 37 hours to receive welfare benefits

8 September 2021

Some migrants will be required to work 37 hours a week in order to receive welfare benefits. It will be a requirement for those who have been on benefits for three to four years, and who have not reached a certain

level of proficiency in Danish. The government said the new plan was designed to help migrants assimilate into Danish society, but some have said the rules are misguided and unfair.

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Nurses continue protest after government puts an end to strike

6 September 2021

Although the government intervened to end the nurses' strike over wages and working conditions, dissatisfied healthcare workers continue to stage walkouts in defiance of an agreement that they say makes no meaningful change. In March, nurses rejected a government offer of a 5.02% wage increase over three years. In June they rejected a mediation proposal that would maintain the current pay scheme but establish a committee to examine the wage structure in the wider public sector.

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Estonia

Women's salaries growing faster than men's

15 September 2021

The salaries of women have been growing faster than those of men since the financial crisis. The salary of a woman was around 28% below that of a man during the 2007 real estate boom, but the gap had narrowed to 17% by 2019. The gender pay gap is an important indicator of the functioning of the economy, according to an economist of the Bank of Estonia. A considerable wage gap could point to market failures keeping society from moving to higher levels of prosperity. Controversy in the wage structure sends the wrong signal to labour market entrants, causing long-term problems for society. The gender wage gap has been closing mainly because jobs usually done by women are increasingly valued.

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

Finland

Union report: migrants suffer prejudice

24 September 2021

Engineering union TEK published a report illustrating that foreigners face prejudices on the labour market, unnecessary language requirements, discrimination, lack of recognition of their qualifications and lower pay than their Finnish counterparts. Many of the disadvantages they face derive directly from prejudice in recruitment practices and hiring on the part of employers.

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

Long-term labour visa to attract skilled workers

17 September 2021

The government proposed the introduction of a long-term national D visa in order to promote labour migration. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the new visa would first include specialists, growth or start-up entrepreneurs, together with their family members.

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France

SOS Médecins on strike for pay increase

27 September 2021

The at-home, 24-hour medical service SOS Médecins was suspended for 24 hours because of a strike. According to the Fédération d'associations de médecins libéraux SOS Médecins, the strike aims to "alert people to the fact that the service providing home visits could be at risk" if the pay for doctors who make home visits is not increased. This comes following pay evaluations during the Covid-19 health crisis, during which the government raised the rate for doctors visiting an elderly person at home from EUR 35 to EUR 57.60. SOS Médecins called for the change to be made permanent.

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Telework agreement in the pharmaceutical sector

21 September 2021

The pharmaceutical sector employers' federation, Les Entreprises du Médicament (LEEM) and five trade unions (FO, CFE-CGC, CFDT, CFTC, and UNSA) signed a framework agreement on telework for the sector, which employs some 124,000 workers. The agreement, which is intended to provide a framework for companies to negotiate their own terms and conditions, insists on telework being used under extraordinary circumstances and as a support for pregnant employees, family carers, those pursuing dual work-study programmes, and disabled employees working remotely.

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Germany

Agreement for retail sector in Hessen

30 September 2021

Union ver.di concluded a collective agreement with the employers' organisation HDE for the retail sector in Hessen. The agreement includes a backdated pay rise of 3% from 1 August 2021 and a further pay rise of 1.7% from 1 April 2022. The training allowances will increase in both years by EUR 30, corresponding to an average increase of 2.5 to 3.0% per year.

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Collective agreement for cooperative banks

13 September 2021

The two trade unions Ver.di and EVG (Eisenbahner- und Verkehrsgewerkschaft) concluded a collective agreement with the Verband der Sparda-Banken for the more than 100,000 employees of the Sparda-Banken. The Sparda banks in Germany are eleven cooperative banks that are united in the Verband der Sparda-Banken. They traditionally specialise in retail banking. The agreement includes a pay rise of 1.25% from 1 January 2022 and a further 1.25% from 1 April 2022, a special payment of EUR 400 and two extra days off.

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New collective agreement for railway sector

11 September 2021

Rail operator Deutsche Bahn (DB) and the GDL train drivers' union have announced the signing of a new collective agreement, marking the end of a dispute that gave rise to repeated strike action. The 32-month agreement provides for a 3.3% pay rise in two stages, as well as the payment of two so-called 'coronavirus bonuses'. The two parties also reached a compromise as regards the application of the collective agreement unity law (*Tarifeinheitsgesetz*), which was at the heart of the dispute.

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Greece

Gig workers face triangular labour relations

22 September 2021

An estimated 20,000 temporary employees have signed contracts with one of at least 13 temporary working agencies. They tend to be mostly employed in sectors such as food services, administration, call centres, sales and unskilled labour. This is a triangular labour relationship: companies hire workers which they then outsource to enterprises. The so-called 'gig economy' remains particularly limited in Greece, with the rate of 'gig workers' amounting to about 0.5% of all employees.

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Protests as unvaccinated health workers face suspension

1 September 2021

Roughly 10,000 health workers face suspension after missing the government-imposed deadline to get vaccinated against Covid-19. Inoculation became mandatory for health workers on 1 September, and those who don't comply will not be allowed to work. Protests broke out in front of hospitals throughout the country to oppose compulsory vaccinations and to highlight the consequences of mass dismissals on the country's health services.

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Hungary

Teachers still have to wait for wage hike

24 September 2021

Teachers' low wages have long been the centre of criticism. According to a recent comparison, their wages are so low that the basic salary of those working in the sector with 3-5 years of professional experience does not exceed the payment of the monthly minimum wage for skilled workers. A beginner teacher's gross monthly salary currently amounts to HUF 230,000 (EUR 644), while a teacher with an MA degree and 6-8 years of experience normally earns around HUF 263,000 (EUR 737) gross. In addition, and somewhat consequently, Hungary has long been affected by a teacher shortage.

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Real wages have started to drop

4 September 2021

According to the Central Statistical Office (KSH), year-on-year wage growth slowed to 3.5% in June from 8.2% in the previous month, which is below the inflation rate. The data for businesses and institutions with at least five people on the payroll show the average gross monthly wage for full-time employees stood at HUF 436,300 (EUR 1,300). The average net wage was HUF 290,200 (EUR 831). The gross median wage was HUF 350,000 (EUR 1,001). Real wages declined by 1.7% in June.

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Iceland

Wage law narrows gender pay gap

24 September 2021

A pioneering equal pay law has narrowed the gender wage gap, which has dropped from 15% in 2017 to 12.6% in 2020 – its lowest level ever. Adjusted for factors such as occupation, qualifications, and education, it has narrowed to 4.1% from 5% four years ago. Companies with more than 25 employees must provide documentation proving men and women are being paid equally. They also have to develop a gender equality plan, detailing how they calculate the value of an employee's work using objective criteria, such as seniority, education, experience or strenuousness.

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Most empowered female workers in the world

16 September 2021

New research from expat insurance providers William Russell has revealed the countries around the world where female workers are most empowered, with Iceland ranking at the top. In order to score countries and rank them, the team looked at a number of factors to create the Female Empowerment Score; this included the gender pay gap, the proportion of women who achieve tertiary education, the length of paid maternity leave and female representation in government.

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Ireland

Work Safely Protocol updated

17 September 2021

The Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment published an updated Work Safely Protocol as thousands began returning to the office. The updated protocol reflects the most up-to-date public health advice and reinforces the public health measures that have kept workplaces safe throughout the pandemic, such as the need to maintain the requirement for physical distancing, the wearing of masks, and ventilation. These measures remain critical to preventing the spread of Covid-19.

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Plan to move workers to jobseeker's benefit deferred

7 September 2021

According to the Minister for Social Protection, plans to move workers who are claiming the pandemic unemployment payment to Jobseeker's Benefit have been deferred until after 22 October. The Department of Social Protection said that the number of people receiving the pandemic unemployment payment (currently at 140,138) was continuing to fall.

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Italy

Covid health pass required for all workers

17 September 2021

Following weeks of negotiations with social partners, regional authorities, and the various parties that make up the governing majority, the Council of Ministers approved a decree that requires all workers to present a Covid-19 health pass – showing they have been vaccinated against Covid-19, are recovering from the virus, or have recently tested negative – in order to enter their place of work. The measure will apply from 15 October until 31 December 2021, when the state of health emergency comes to an end. Workers without a

health pass will be suspended without pay and those found in their workplace without a pass will be fined. It will be up to employers to organise checks. The move is the first of its kind by a European country.

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Amazon reaches agreement with trade unions

15 September 2021

Amazon has struck a deal with trade unions promising to engage with them regarding the running of operations. In a protocol Amazon Italia agreed to consult with trade unions on issues such as new openings, job training and industrial relations with authorities. 'An important agreement ... and recognition of the role of the unions, marking something new, at a world level, in relations with the e-commerce giant,' said the head of the CGIL union.

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Latvia

Few people work from home

24 September 2021

While working from home became more commonplace following the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic, Eurostat data suggests it was less common in Latvia than many might think. In 2020, 12% of employed people aged 20-64 in the EU usually worked from home, while in Latvia, it was less than 5% of the workforce.

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Liechtenstein

Test costs must not be passed onto employees

25 September 2021

So far, only a few companies require a Covid certificate at the workplace, mostly on a voluntary basis. Trade union LANV is nevertheless alarmed. The union stresses that there should be no unequal treatment in the workplace and that the employer should pay the costs for the tests they have ordered.

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Lithuania

Cabinet backs proposal to raise minimum wage to EUR 730

1 September 2021

The government approved the proposal of the Minister for Social Security and Labour to raise the monthly minimum wage by EUR 88 to EUR 730 from 1 January 2022. According to the ministry this would be one of the most significant minimum wage increases in a decade. Earlier proposals called for raising the minimum wage by EUR 61 (9.5%) to EUR 703.

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Luxembourg

Collective agreement for Luxembourg Institute of Health

22 September 2021

The Luxembourg Independent Trade Union Confederation (OGBL) and the Luxembourg Institute of Health have concluded a new collective agreement. The contract runs for two years, from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2022, and is subject to the framework agreement for the public research sector. A telework charter has been drawn up for the post-Covid period. This extends the possibility of working from home to the entire staff of the institute – if their work is suitable. Employees are allowed to work from home an average of four days a month and a maximum of 48 days a year.

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Malta

Union presents proposals for forthcoming budget

29 September 2021

The re-establishment of trade schools is one of the proposals being made by the UHM Voice of the Workers trade union for the 2022 budget. The union presented over 100 proposals for the budget including measures to help fight precarious employment and raise the quality of life. A new active labour market policy must be drafted in consultation with workers and unions. An internet portal hosting all employment contracts should be set up as part of the government's commitment to fight precarious employment. Mandatory union membership for workers earning less than the median wage should be introduced.

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Netherlands

Staff at academic hospitals strike for more pay and less work pressure

28 September 2021

All but essential operations have been cancelled at seven of the eight academic hospitals as medical staff go on strike for 24 hours and the hospitals operate a Sunday shift. The action is for higher pay and more measures to reduce pressure at work. The eight academic hospitals have a combined workforce of 80,000 and have their own collective agreement. Employers have offered a one-off payment of 3.5% of annual salary in January for all staff and a pay rise of 3.5% from August next year for nursing and other mid-level staff earning EUR 3,200 to EUR 4,200 a month. Union FNV calculates that more than 70,000 UMC workers will not be eligible for the 3.5% increase.

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Helping app cleaners are agency workers

22 September 2021

The Amsterdam appeals court decided that house cleaners hired via the app Helping are temporary agency workers and must be given paid sick leave and compensation if they lose their jobs. The court stopped short of including them in the collective agreement for cleaners which would have treated them as permanent workers. Trade union FNV brought the case together with a cleaner in 2019, arguing that the app is an employer and must pay its cleaners accordingly. The app, launched in 2012, allows households looking for domestic help to search its database for cleaners.

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Uber drivers are employees not freelancers

13 September 2021

Judges in Amsterdam ruled that drivers for the ride-sharing app Uber are employees of the company and fall under the taxi sector's collective labour agreement. The lawsuit was brought by trade union FNV, which filed a complaint in June, arguing that Uber was underpaying drivers and treating them as employees, rather than independent contractors. Uber argued that it is merely a technology company that connects riders to drivers, but the court was unconvinced. The court found that the legal relationship between Uber and these drivers meets all the characteristics of an employment contract.

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Norway

Seasonal workers allowed to stay longer

27 September 2021

The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has confirmed that seasonal workers who cannot return to their home countries due to restrictions related to the coronavirus will have their residence permit extended until the end of 2021. Currently, workers cannot apply for the renewal of their residence permits. Once the regulations enter into force, the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) will release information and guidelines for the application. As a result, the applicants can expect a simplified application process.

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Strike in cultural sector

10 September 2021

Performances were cancelled at theatres and the opera after a strike by workers in the cultural sector. A total of 435 workers went on strike to demand better pension benefits. The strike does not involve actors, dancers, singers or musicians, who were eager to get back on stage as lockdown measures have eased. It's rather key staff behind the scenes, such as stage technicians and instructors, who walked off the job after five years of negotiations failed to result in collective, life-long and gender-neutral pensions.

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Poland

Medical staff on strike

17 September 2021

Doctors, nurses and paramedics are on strike, demanding that the government increase spending on healthcare in the multiannual plan from 7% to 8% of the GDP. According to Eurostat, the EU average is 10%. The second demand is to increase the salaries in the medical sectors to the EU average so that the brain drain of doctors is contained. The third demand is to increase the number of personnel working in healthcare to the EU and OECD levels. Eurostat data shows Poland had the lowest level in the EU, with 238 physicians per 100,000 of the general population in 2018, while the EU average was 388. The protesters are also demanding to negotiate with the Prime Minister, who has been ignoring their demands. They refuse to negotiate with the Health Minister.

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Minimum wage up 7.5% in 2022

14 September 2021

According to the Family and Social Policy Minister, the minimum wage will go up by 7.5% in 2022. In absolute numbers this means an increase of PLN 210 (€ 46.1) to PLN 3,010 (EUR 660.7). The increase will

provide households with an extra PLN 4.6 billion (EUR 1 billion), leading to a tangible improvement in their finances. The minimum wage will grow systematically to keep it above inflation.

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Portugal

Four-day week imposed at factory due to lack of materials

29 September 2021

Over 500 workers at the Continental Vila Real factory have had their working week reduced to four days due to a lack of materials. Continental's Vila Real unit is one of the world's leading specialists and manufacturers of vehicle antennas and almost all of its production is exported. The director of Continental Advanced Antenna said that the interruptions caused by the crisis imposed by Covid-19 had provoked an “extreme volatility in the entire automobile industry”.

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Union confederation calls for wage rise

10 September 2021

The union confederation CGTP will demand a wage increases of EUR 90 for all workers in 2022 and the setting of the national minimum wage at EUR 850. The confederation's National Council approved this draft income policy for 2022 and it will serve as a guideline for CGTP unions in collective bargaining. The document defines all the demands of the union confederation and its trade unions, including the appreciation of wages, career development, the fight against precariousness, respect for labour rights, and reduced working hours.

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Romania

Little change in real wages

13 September 2021

According to the statistics office INS, the net average wage remained roughly flat in July compared to June 2021, and had edged up by 5.1% compared to July 2020. In real terms, corrected for inflation, the net wage increased by only 0.2% year-on-year – the smallest annual advance since 2013. In absolute terms, the average net wage was RON 3,545 (EUR 721). In the past 12 months, workers in IT, banking, utilities, air transportation, and oil and mining received the most substantial wage increases.

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Unions demand strengthening of social dialogue

14 September 2021

Trade unions demand the strengthening of social dialogue and collective bargaining rights. Collective bargaining has been under pressure for years, while sectoral bargaining has been made very difficult. The pandemic was used to prevent larger demonstrations and limit the right to strike in many sectors. These limits will soon come to an end and negotiations will re-start in many companies and sectors. With vaccination levels slowly going up, the government wants to impose mandatory vaccination of certain groups of workers. Unions voiced opposition to this.

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Serbia

Unemployment down to 2019 level

23 September 2021

According to data from the State Statistical Office, the unemployment rate has returned to the 2019 level. Compared to the same quarter last year, when the lockdown measures were in place, the number of unemployed this year decreased by 51.3%. Among young people aged 15-24, the number of unemployed declined in the second quarter of 2021. For trade unions, however, these data do not say much. The representative of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions (SSSS) stated that unemployment has been somewhat alleviated by state intervention but that this intervention has not been sufficient, especially in those economic segments that recorded a significant decline.

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No agreement on minimum wage for 2022

3 September 2021

The minimum wage will be 35,012 dinars (EUR 298) from 2022 onwards, which is a 9.4% increase from 2021, when it amounted to 32,000 dinars (EUR 272). However, at the meeting of the Economic and Social Council, no agreement was reached with the trade unions, who demanded a bigger increase. The president of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Serbia (SSSS) said that the trade union cannot accept this proposal: "Until the minimum wage equals the minimum consumer basket, we will not agree."

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Slovakia

Hundreds of nurses have left their jobs

14 September 2021

The Chamber of Nurses and Midwives (SKSaPA) reported that between January and September 2021, 772 nurses have left their jobs in healthcare. This represents 20% of nurses leaving their jobs compared to the same time frame in 2020. The EU's average ratio of nurses per 1,000 people is 8.4, but in Slovakia it is 5.7. If Slovakia is to achieve comparable figures to the rest of the EU, it would need a total of 46,000 nurses – the country currently only has 31,309.

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Labour inspectorate issues statement on vaccination of employees

9 September 2021

According to a statement issued by the Labour Inspectorate (NLI), employers are limited in their ability to request information from employees about Covid-19 vaccination or testing results. Although the NLI statement is an opinion with little legal impact, this guidance interprets existing Slovak and EU regulations and brings clarity to the issue of when employers can request proof of vaccination or negative tests from employees. Furthermore, the NLI states that promoting vaccination against Covid-19 must be based on non-discriminatory principles in terms of labour law.

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Slovenia

Building power for public service workers

14 September 2021

The union confederation KSJS organised a meeting between its affiliates and several European trade unions. The Slovenian unions expressed their concerns about the deteriorating social dialogue and collective bargaining climate. The Slovenian unions have been successful in mobilising together against several reforms, including of the pension system, but proposals might return to the table.

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Spain

Plans to lay off 500 telecom workers

28 September 2021

According to trade union sources, mobile and broadband operator Vodafone will shut all 34 of its proprietary stores in Spain by March 2022, as part of a wider plan to lay off over 500 workers in a hyper-competitive telecommunications sector. The telecom company announced earlier this month that it would negotiate the layoff of around 515 employees, some 12% of its Spanish workforce.

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Desigual plans to adopt four-day working week with a corresponding reduction in salary

13 September 2021

Fashion brand Desigual is offering staff a reduction of working hours by one day in exchange for a 6.5% cut in salary. The working hours offer applies to the 502 employees of the head office (from a total of 2,700 people) while excluding in-store, commercial, and logistics services sales staff. The employees concerned will vote on the new move on 7 October, and if at least 66% vote in favour the new work organisation will be implemented.

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Vocational training reform

10 September 2021

The Council of Ministers approved the final text of the legislative project to reorganise and integrate vocational training, which was prepared in collaboration with the social partners. The text should be approved in the coming months. It provides for the unification of initial and ongoing training and emphasises the importance of dual training, with at least 25% of time spent in companies, the overall goal of which is to develop an apprenticeship system that is better connected to the labour market.

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Sweden

Union welcomes skills support programme

20 September 2021

Union IF Metall welcomes a new basic “adjustment and skills support programme” by the government, which will enable more people to receive guidance for further career development. The adjustment study support means that people who are mid-career will be able to study for up to one year while retaining 80% of their salary. This means that people who have such expenses as children, a house or a car really get a chance to further their education or retrain.

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Collective agreement for Mälär train operator

23 September 2021

After months of intensive negotiations, union Seko and employer MTR Mälartåg have signed a local collective agreement. The agreement covers, among other things, new working time rules and new wage rates for train drivers and conductors. The new final salary for train drivers is SEK 38,400 (EUR 3,780) and for conductors SEK 29,500 (EUR 2,904).

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Switzerland

Fathers' right to paternity leave

30 September 2021

One year after a nationwide vote, most new fathers now have the right to two weeks of paternity leave – the legal minimum – to help look after a new-born child. However, unions complained about the large disparities between different sectors. According to a study by independent workers' umbrella organisation Travail.Suisse and the Bern University of Applied Sciences, 65% of employees have the right to two weeks of paid paternity leave, 19% can take between 11-19 days and 16% can take more than 19 days. Previously, men were not entitled to any statutory days off after the birth of a child, although they could request one or two days' leave under the code of obligations in Swiss labour law.

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Turkey

Solidarity with journalists preparing for strike

September 27, 2021

The unions of the Agence France-Presse (AFP) have expressed their solidarity with their colleagues at the AFP Turkey office, who have decided to go on strike. As the ongoing talks for a collective agreement between the Journalists' Union of Turkey (TGS) and the employer's representatives, which went on for more than three months, ended with no agreement, the union held a press conference in front of the AFP Turkey office, hanging a notice of the strike on the door.

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Union wins victory for smartphone workers

23 September 2021

Salcomp Turkey, who produces smartphones for Chinese company Xiaomi, the second largest smartphone maker in the world, fired 170 workers for joining a union. The union members took action and after six days, Salcomp agreed to reinstate all dismissed workers, withdraw from the lawsuit challenging the CBA certificate issued by the Ministry of Labour, and start collective bargaining negotiations on 1 October.

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United Kingdom

Uber drivers stage 24-hour strike

27 September 2021

Uber drivers went on a 24-hour strike in cities across the UK over issues including pay and claims that workers are being unfairly dismissed. The App Drivers and Couriers Union (ADCU) accused the company of

failing to implement a court ruling to pay waiting time, which it says makes up around 40% of an Uber driver's working time, and claims large numbers of drivers are being unfairly sacked. Uber insisted it is working with unions to raise standards for drivers. The union is also in dispute over the introduction of fixed price fares which it claims has led to reduced driver incomes.

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Employees to gain right to request flexible working

21 September 2021

The government is proposing to give all employees the right to request flexible working when they start new jobs. A consultation is to be launched on the proposals this week. The plan would allow all employees to request a flexible working arrangement from their first day at a new employer. At the moment, workers have to wait until they have been in their role for six months. The proposals would also see bosses have to respond to requests for flexible working more quickly than the current maximum of three months. It would also force firms to explain why any requests were refused.

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For more information, please contact Paul de Beer or Oana Ciuca, De Burcht (Scientific Bureau for the Dutch Trade Union Movement) p.t.debeer@uva.nl or the Head of communications at the ETUI, Mehmet Koksal mkoksal@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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