

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING NEWSLETTER



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This newsletter presents up-to-date information on collective bargaining developments across Europe. 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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AUSTRIA

Health sector union calls for proper training and higher pay

July 21, 2008

Better employment conditions and a new funding system are needed in order to improve the quality of health and social care, according to Wolfgang Katzian, chairman of the GPA-DJP union that represents workers in the private health and social care sectors. In the context of a major debate over the reform of healthcare funding, Katzian underlined the importance of having properly regulated providers with trained staff covered by a collective agreement. The sector is currently plagued by pseudo-self-employment that makes regulation very difficult and undermines attempts to maintain pay and conditions.

(English: http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=264#a3957;

German: http://www.gpa.at/servlet/ContentServer?pagename=GPA/Page/Index&n=GPA_0.a&cid=1216132122360)

BELGIUM

Federal government unions sign agreement for 2007-2008

July 21, 2008

In early July, the three main trade unions signed a new collective agreement covering federal government workers for the period 2007-2008. The deal includes a higher end-of-year payment and a basic agreement to work towards the introduction of a 13th month salary in future agreements. There is a particular initiative on low pay with an additional amount (Euro 328) added to the pay band that covers cleaning and catering staff. There are also improved allowances for workers with a second language, the first increases since 1991.

(English: http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=264#a3965;

Dutch: http://openbarediensten.acv-online.be/Images/SA%20federaal_tcm86-174977.pdf;

French: http://csc-services-publics.csc-en-ligne.be/Images/accord%20sectoriel%20f%C3%A9d%C3%A9ral%2009%2007_tcm90-174973.pdf;

<http://www.slfp.eu/pdf/accnt080709.pdf>)

CROATIA

Unions accuse government of ignoring poor

July 12, 2008

Trade unions are accusing the government of adopting measures that only benefit the rich, in response to an economic crisis resulting from soaring energy and food prices. Kresimir Sever, president of the NHS Trade Union Confederation, said that reducing the threshold for taxable incomes only meant an extra four Euro's for workers earning the minimum monthly salary (gross Euro 380), but Euro 80 extra for those earning over Euro 4,800. Ana Knežević, president of the Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia, used similar arguments. World Bank economist Sanja Madjarevic Susjter told local press, the measures taken were the "simplest to implement but will not be the most efficient in helping the poorest people". According to the national bureau of statistics, 16% of Croatian households are below the poverty line.

(English: http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5ggqngFBKdFtZB0WvuQyp4jl2_XXg via <http://www.labourstart.org>)

CZECH REPUBLIC

Union confederation lists strike successes

July 21, 2008

In an assessment of the one-hour warning strike of 24 June the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (CMKOS)

notes that the government is delaying and amending some of its planned health and public sector reforms. In particular, the confederation says that there has been a moderation of proposals on health care fees; the division of planned health care reforms into two phases giving unions more time to influence them; a strengthening of the system of pension insurance; and increased possibilities for early retirement. Public opinion polls showed that 60-70% of the general public supported the confederation's aims and that the strike has strengthened the position of the trade unions in their campaign against the government's privatisation, pensions and labour code reforms (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 5).

(English: http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=264#a3958; <http://www.cmkos.cz/homepage/1008-3>)

FRANCE

Strike in security sector

July 9, 2008

Security workers in France took strike action in high profile locations on 4 July as part of their national campaign for a new collective agreement. The workers are fighting for improved wages, additional compensation for night and shift work, and job security. Under the current system, up to 20% of employees lose their jobs when the contractor changes. Unions took action in key security hot-spots such as airports in Roissy, Orly, Bordeaux and Marseille, as well as a nuclear power site. Following the success of the strike on 4 July, workers decided to continue on 5 July. The strike was an initiative of the CGT confederation, supported by the other confederations CFDT, FO and CFTC. The unions followed the International Justice Day 2008 theme.

(English:

<http://www.uniglobalunion.org/unipropertyn.nsf/7f9bc1ab9d900747c1257044004ba821/dd979834a839b8d0c1257481003f7c30?OpenDocument>)

Discussions about SMIC

July 16, 2008

After a readjustment of the SMIC, the national minimum wage, from 1 May 2008 by 2.3%, the government decided to increase the minimum wage again from 1 July 2008, this time by 0.9%, taking the hourly rate to Euro 8.71. Meanwhile, there is a vivid debate about the revision of the SMIC. The current system is likely to be overhauled from 2010, with annual increases on 1 January instead of 1 July. The method of calculation is likely to change too, and a special committee is being set up to reassess the link with price trends (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 5).

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 7/2008;

<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2008/05/articles/fr0805049i.htm>;

French:

http://tempsreel.nouvelobs.com/actualites/economie/20080627.OBS0362/tout_ce_qui_change_le_1er_juillet.html?idfx=RS_S_economie)

GERMANY

Lufthansa strike ballot

July 23, 2008

From 15 to 24 July, the Ver.di union is balloting its members in five departments of the national Lufthansa carrier (cabin, technical, catering, cargo and bookings) on indefinite strike action. Ver.di claims that in total 60,000 aviation workers will be involved. Warning strikes in early July did not lead to an agreement in the fourth negotiation round. The union demands a 9.8% hike and improved profit sharing included in a one-year agreement, while the latest Lufthansa offer is a 6.7% increase for 21 months. Verdi lead negotiator Erhard Ott said, "In the last few years, workers have repeatedly propped up the company and made sacrifices. Now they want a share in the success of the company."

Moreover, there is a conflict pending between Lufthansa and the pilots of its Eurowings, Germanwings and Cityline subsidiaries, organised in the Vereinigung Cockpit union, demanding their wages come closer to those in Lufthansa. After a strike in mid-July already knocked out 600 flights, on 22 July a 36 hours' stoppage led to the cancellation of 990 Cityline

and Germanwings flights.

(English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/2347>; German: http://verkehr.verdi.de/luftverkehr/airlines/lufthansa#urabstimmung_bis_24._juli; <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,3505156,00.html?maca=en-aa-pol-863-rdf>)

Meat workers fight worsening conditions

July 18, 2008

Since 24 June, workers of the four Südfleisch meatpacking operations in Lauda, Bayreuth, Waldkraiburg und Traunstein are on strike action, fighting management efforts to radically lower working terms and worsening conditions. On 23 June, negotiations for a new collective agreement broke down over management's insistence on lengthening weekly hours from 38.5 to 42 without pay increase till 2011. Contrary to this, the NGG (Food and Allied Workers' Union) demands improved overtime pay and higher hourly wages. In 2005, Südfleisch was acquired by Netherlands-based VION. This gives added value to the active solidarity for the NGG action by IUF, the international food, farm and hotel workers federation, and EFFAT, the European Federation for Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions. After nine days of strike, actions on the four locations have been suspended in view of new negotiations on 31 July.

(English: http://www.iuf.org/cgi-bin/dbman/db.cgi?db=default&uid=default&ID=5223&view_records=1&ww=1&en=1;
German: <http://www.iufdocuments.org/www/documents/VionSudfleischpressrelease240608-d.pdf>;
http://www.ngg.net/branche_betrieb/fleisch)

HUNGARY

Railway union demands 'privatisation benefits'

July 15, 2008

The VDSZSZ union, one of six railway unions, called for a strike on July 14, demanding a 10% wage increase on top of the 6.9% hike already awarded for 2008, as well as a one-off 250,000 forint (Euro 1,083) payout to each of Hungary's 35,000 railway workers from the privatisation of the company's cargo unit promised in 2005 by former Transport Minister János Kóka. After the strike was suspended, VDSZSZ chairman István Gaskó said the union insisted on this last demand, as well as on a 10% "outsourcing benefit" at subsidiary companies which they would like to see distributed over three years.

(English: <http://www.forbes.com/afxnews/limited/feeds/afx/2008/07/13/afx5208955.html>;
http://www.caboodle.hu/index.php?id=12&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=11&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=5295
via <http://www.labourstart.org>)

IRELAND

Minimum wage cut would 'punish the poor'

July 15, 2008

Political parties and unions have criticised a proposal by the Small Firms Association (SFA) to cut the minimum wage by Euro 1 per hour. SFA director Patricia Callan called for the cut claiming that Ireland had "lost the plot" in the context of a competitive labour market and had become a "high-cost uncompetitive economy". The business lobby group claims the minimum wage is a contributing factor to the creation of youth unemployment. The largest union, Siptu, said a minimum wage cut was an effort "to punish the poor". Siptu's general president Jack O'Connor disputed the figures of SFA and denied the suggested close link between minimum wages and unemployment.

(English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/breaking/2008/0715/breaking2.htm> via <http://www.labourstart.org>)

ITALY

Transport strike presses for renewal of contracts

July 7, 2008

Italian trains, buses and subways ground to a halt on 7 July as workers staged a nationwide strike to demand a renewal of their expired labor contracts. In most cities, buses and subways were to suspend services for most of the day apart from the evening rush hour. Train workers began a 24-hour strike late on Sunday 6 July. "The unions are asking for the renewal of the national work contract for over 250,000 employees," said Francesco Lucirino, secretary general of the Cosnil union. "We've been waiting for more than seven months for a move by the government and we have not received any answer on renewing contracts."

(English: <http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSL0770025120080707> via <http://www.labourstart.org>)

LITHUANIA

Minimum wage directly linked to price trends

July 16, 2008

On 1 July parliament passed legislation creating a direct link between the rate of price inflation and the levels of national minimum wage and social benefits. Minimum pay and benefits will be adjusted in line with price rises if those exceed 3% in two years in succession, although the prices arrangements will be determined by the government at the time. The actual amount of the minimum wage has hitherto been set without a statutory formula for price compensation, by the government on the basis of recommendations of the Tripartite Council (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 5).

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 7/2008)

NETHERLANDS

New agreement for social work sector

July 8, 2008

A new long-term agreement for the social work sector (the so-called 'WSW') has been agreed, covering the period from 1 November 2007 to 1 March 2010. It includes a 3% pay increase from 1 March 2008 and a further 2.5% rise from 1 March 2009. Also agreed are an end-of-year payment in December worth 3% of salary (minimum Euro 540) and a one-off payment of Euro 125 in February 2010.

(English: http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=263#a3922; Dutch: http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/akkoord_voor_sociale_werkvoorziening)

Basic agreement for supermarkets

July 5, 2008

After tough negotiations, on 4 July FNV and CNV unions and the employers' association in the supermarket sector (210,000 workers in 5,500 stores) reached a basic collective agreement for the period of 1 April 2008 until 1 April 2010. The agreement includes a structural wage increase of 6.75%: 3.25% by 1 July 2008 and 3.5% by 1 June 2009. It starts in improving the wage position of youngsters, which actually are paid according to the very low youth wage scales (starting at age 15 with 30% of the adult wage), by adding for them pay according to experience. The employers withdrew their proposal to get rid of the bonuses for evening work between 8 and 9 PM. Based on these results, the largest union (FNV Bondgenoten) advises their membership to accept the agreement. On 1 August, the union will conclude the ballot.

(Dutch: http://www.cao.nl/cao_trajecten/branches/supermarkten/Nieuws/897799)

PORTUGAL

Demonstrations against undermining public sector rights

July 8, 2008

Trade unions affiliated to the CGTP confederation are continuing their campaign against government policies and in particular against revisions of the Labour Code and policies that undermine employment rights and pensions in the public administration. Private and public sector workers joined a national demonstration on 5 June and further action in at least 17 major cities and towns followed on 28 June.

(English: http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=263#a3925;
<http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2008/06/articles/pt0806049i.htm>)

ROMANIA

Minimum wage hike finally agreed

July 23, 2008

The announcement of the Romanian government in early July that macroeconomic conditions for the minimum wage rise laid down in the joint protocol of December 2007, from RON 500 to RON 540 (approximately Euro 152) per month, were not fulfilled led to union protests and the threat of the united five union federations to organise larger union rallies. After prolonged talks between the social partners and the government, including the Central Bank, the government revised its viewpoint and a hike to RON 540 from 1 July on seems to have been agreed. By July 23, three out of five trade union federations (Alfa Cartel, Meridian and CSDR) had decided to sign the agreement with the government on this hike.

Meanwhile, the government maintains the draft legislation proposal launched in June 2008 in which the minimum wage no longer serves as a reference point for the calculation of most social security benefits and allowances. With the aim of reducing the effect of minimum wage increases on public expenditure, this decoupling would be replaced by a new 'reference indicator'.

(English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2008/07/articles/ro0807019i.htm>; <http://www.mediafax.ro/tags/unions>)

SLOVAKIA

Union confederation calls for minimum wage hike

July 16, 2008

The Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic (KOZ SR) requests that the minimum wage be increased by 9.9%, from the current SKK 8,100 to SKK 8,900 (Euro 266) from 1 January 2009, vice-president Vladimír Mojš told a news conference on 8 July. If no agreement on this issue is reached with the employers' association, the rise from January 2009 will be 7.2%, in accordance with the new formula that came into operation earlier this year.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 7/2008;
http://www.spectator.sk/articles/view/32342/10/trade_unions_want_minimum_wage_of_at_least_sk8900_for2009.html)

SPAIN

Public service unions focus on pay

July 21, 2008

Although the issue wasn't initially on the agenda, public service unions called for government guarantees on pay at a 16 July meeting of the main public sector negotiating body. The unions are calling for a 2.5% increase in pay to compensate for the difference between forecast and actual inflation in 2008 and want purchasing power protected in the 2009 pay negotiations. The government said it will fulfil the agreements already signed on pay including the commitment to a Euro 1,000 minimum salary in the public sector. The unions also want to see the government maintain public sector employment through permanent jobs, stating that there is a risk of creating more precarious employment with a detrimental effect on the quality of services.

(English: http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=264#a3961;
Spanish: <http://www.fspugt.es/index.php/mod.noticias/mem.detalle/idnoticia.5153/idimagen.1759/relcategoria.7>)

SWEDEN

Bus strike ends up with new agreement

July 15, 2008

After one week of strike action across the country, on 15 July Kommunal, the large local authority workers' union affiliated to the LO confederation, and the Bussarbetsgivarna employers' group announced that they had signed a new agreement, ending the bus strike. "We at Kommunal have achieved improvements for bus company employees in all of our priority areas," said Kommunal vice chair Håkan Pettersson at a press conference. The new contract, covering 14,000 of Kommunal's members, starts from 1 June 2008 and includes a 10.4% pay increase over three years, the original demand being a 7.9% rise over 22 months. The agreement also contains improved rest provisions.

(English: <http://www.thelocal.se/13066/20080715>, Via <http://www.labourstart.org>; Swedish: <http://www.kommunal.se/press/Pressmeddelanden/17821>)

39-month deal for dock workers

July 16, 2008

After long negotiations and some strike actions, an agreement for dock workers covering 39 months (backdated 1 April 2008 till 1 July 2011) was reached between the Port Employers Association and the Swedish Transport Workers Union. It includes increases totalling SEK 3,000 (Euro 320) at two stages, Euro 160 from July 2008 and Euro 160 from 1 November 2009.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 7/2008; Swedish: <http://www.transport.se/home/trp2/home.nsf/pages/FC3CAE4247D51DA4C125746A0023A98C>)

UNITED KINGDOM

Union claims widespread support on second day of action

July 21, 2008

On 17 July, 500,000 members of public services union UNISON undertook a second day of action, shutting thousands of schools, town halls, libraries, leisure centres, and disrupting rubbish collections and council services across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. UNISON General Secretary, Dave Prentis, said that this showed the strength of feeling of the membership over pay. Moreover, he added, "Public support is on our side, so the employers must realise they have a fight on their hands." Earlier, UNISON members voted to reject the employers' pay offer which would have meant a 2.45% increase in 2008 as part of a three-year deal.

(English: http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=264#a3966;
http://www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=1220)

Civil service hit by strike action

July 21, 2008

On 18 and 19 July, workers in the immigration and asylum services, the maritime and coastguard services and the Land Registry took strike action over pay as agencies tried to impose the government's 2% pay limit on civil servants. The PCS union said up to 10,500 workers were involved in the immigration and asylum one-day strike while the coastguard stoppage was due to last 48 hours. PCS members in the Coastguard are particularly angry about the agency's rejection of a report that argued that workers in the service should be paid in line with similar jobs in other emergency services. For example coastguard watch assistants, who actively participate in search planning and other duties in response to emergency calls, only earn the national minimum wage.

(English: http://www.epsu.org/spip/cob.php3?id_mot=264#a3962;
http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/index.cfm/id/C3686A6D-ABDF-4099-95775B5F2A97FD20)

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