

collective bargaining

Issue 6/2009 June

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.



AMSTERDAM INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED LABOUR STUDIES
UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM



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Austria

Leather goods collective agreement signed

June 10, 2009

On 10 June, the Austrian Union GMTN (metal, textile, food) union signed a collective agreement for workers in the leather goods and luggage industries, to be implemented as of June 1, 2009, and with one year duration, laying down an increase of both the collectively agreed minimum wage and the actual wages of 2.2%.

English: information EUCOBAN network European Metalworkers' Federation (EMF);

German: [http://www.gmtn.at/servlet/ ...](http://www.gmtn.at/servlet/)

Belgium

Unions succeed to put controversial plan on hold

June 10, 2009

Targeted industrial action by dockers over employers' inclusion of a controversial "five-point plan" in bargaining negotiations has won an agreement to put the proposal on hold. The workers represented by two unions, Transcom, affiliated to ACV-CSC and BTB, affiliated to ABVV/FGTB, took part in stoppages on 8 June. The Antwerp, Ghent and Zeebrugge ports were affected. The dock workers disputed employers' insistence on including a plan with provisions to: hire workers several times a day, rather than for every shift; change the functions of some dock workers so that they no longer have "registered docker" status; reduce docker-specific social security allowances when work is not available, and cut weekend and night-time working allowances. The plan would seriously impact on the dockers' wages and working conditions. Yet, the employers' have agreed to put the plan on hold and continue with normal collective bargaining negotiations.

English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/3390>;

Dutch: [http://www.btb-abvv.be/NL_wegvervoer/ ...](http://www.btb-abvv.be/NL_wegvervoer/);

French: [http://www.btb-abvv.be/FR_wegvervoer/ ...](http://www.btb-abvv.be/FR_wegvervoer/)

Bulgaria

Union protest over government response to crisis

June 18, 2009

Just three weeks ahead of the parliamentary elections of 5 July, the CITUB trade union confederation organised a

national demonstration in Sofia on 16 June in protest at the government's failure to protect the poor, low-paid and unemployed in the current crisis. Workers from across the public and private sectors joined the demonstration. CITUB and its affiliates have criticised government plans to freeze public sector pay instead of implementing an agreed 10% pay increase, a step that will affect about 400,000 public servants. CITUB also emphasized the need to increase investments as well as to guarantee pension, health and educational systems. Vice-president of CITUB, Plamen Dimitrov, finally asked government to increase the minimum monthly wage to 340 leva per month (Euro 174) in July and then again to 400 leva in October 2009. The current minimum wage is 220 leva.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/312>;

http://www.sofiaecho.com/2009/06/19/737789_ups-and-downs;

<http://www.reuters.com/article/marketsNews/idUSL80487220090616>

Denmark

Union threatens local authority with legal action

June 18, 2009

The FOA public service union is threatening the Silkeborg local authority with legal action unless it ensures that it will pay local allowances to its employees. The FOA co-ordinated strike action among educational workers and teaching assistants last spring, secured a slightly higher increase than in the municipal agreement. However, the union says that Silkeborg appears to be trying to cut local allowances while implementing the national agreement. This could cost the workers affected as much as DKK 1,400 (Euro 188) a month.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/312>;

Danish: <http://www.foa.dk/sw497631.asp>

Estonia

Union protests over Labour Contract Act

June 18, 2009

On 16 June, the Estonian Confederation of Trade Unions (ECUTU) organised a string of protests against the government's plans to weaken employee protection through changes in the Labour Contract Act. Union demands also included improvements to redundancy compensations and unemployment benefits. Besides in public transport, strikes were held in power and metallurgy plants. Harri Taliga, the president of ECUTU, said: "Our objective is not to cause damage to employers, but since the government is leaning towards employers in terms of enforcing the new contract act, we have no choice" (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 May 2009).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/312>;

http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/markets_and_companies/?doc=14898;

http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/baltic_news/?doc=3352

Finland

Railway strike against state's corporate ownership policies

June 22, 2009

On Monday 22 June, a 24 hours' strike by railway workers aimed at bringing all rail services in Finland to a halt. The industrial action by the Railway Workers Union and the Railway Salaried Staff's Union was meant as a protest the state's corporate ownership policies. "The idea that the main task of VR (the state-owned railway company) is to transport people and goods safely has been excessively supplanted by market-driven thinking", Vesa Mauriala, chairman of the Railway Workers Union, explained. The unions are also protesting previously announced temporary redundancies among personnel. The strike does not seem to have caused major traffic jams.

English: [http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Protest ...](http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Protest...)

[http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Railway ...](http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Railway...)

France

Unions review campaign in light of 13 June mobilisation

June 18, 2009

Saturday 13 June was the fifth of this year's series of national mobilisations over pay, public services and the crisis in France. The eight main national trade union confederations (CGT, CFDT, FO, CFTC, CFE-CGC, FSU, UNSA et Solidaires) and their affiliated unions have tried to maintain the level of support, but are aware they need to take stock of their campaign. Unions estimate on 13 June some 150,000 people took part in 159 actions around the country and one opinion poll indicated that nearly three in four of the population backed the demonstrations. However, unions are discussing on how to maintain the pressure on the government in the lead up to their planned meeting with President Sarkozy in early July (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 March, April and May 2009).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/312>;

French: [http://www.force-ouvriere.fr/page_principal/semaine/ ...](http://www.force-ouvriere.fr/page_principal/semaine/);
<http://www.spterritoriaux.cgt.fr/spip.php?article3235>

Strike action in energy sector to continue

June 18, 2009

Energy unions FNME-CGT and FNEM-FO have denounced the EDF energy company for resorting to the courts, in order to try to undermine the industrial action taking place across the sector. Both unions have made their determination clear as to maintain their campaigns of strikes and demonstrations in support of their claim for a 5% pay increase and payment of a Euro 1,500 lump sum. At sectoral level, the employers have so far refused to make any offer after having implemented a 0.3% pay increase at the beginning of the year (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 May 2009).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/312>;

French: <http://www.fnme-cgt.fr/pages/communiqué.php?id=14>;
<http://www.fnem-fo.org/content/view/499/1/>

Germany

Massive demonstration of social and childcare workers

June 18, 2009

Services union ver.di general secretary, Frank Bsirske, has called on local authority employers to take positive steps to end the current dispute in the social work and childcare sectors. The union wants to negotiate a new collective agreement that addresses the threat to the health and wellbeing of workers as a result of increased workloads and responsibilities. Over 30,000 workers joined the national demonstration in Cologne on 15 June while thousands of others continued their strike action across the county. Bsirske said that strike action would be intensified and that as a result there would be more consultation of parents in the planning industrial action. He also welcomed the support of a number of leading national politicians who had called for an urgent re-evaluation of the occupational status of workers in the sector (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 May).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/312>

German: <http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/show ...>

EON action day to protest over job cuts

June 18, 2009

Under the motto "We Are One", using the public relations slogan of the EON energy company, services union ver.di on 18 June launched an EON Action Day, including a demonstration outside the EON headquarters in Düsseldorf. The protest is over the company's "savings" programme that unions fear could lead to the loss of 6,000 jobs across Europe with outsourcing affecting a further 4,000 employees who are likely to find themselves covered by poorer collective agreements or by no collective agreement at all. Unions are particularly critical of the company because it recently announced substantial profits and a 10% increase in its dividend payments. Union representatives from EON companies in the UK, the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Italy, Hungary and Romania joined the protest in Düsseldorf. Sven Bergelin, ver.di and President of the EPSU energy group said: "There should be no redundancies. EON is to have a positive relation with the trade unions and respect collective agreements European-wide".

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/312>; <http://www.epsu.org/a/5313>;

German: <http://presse.verdi.de/pressemitteilungen/show ...>

Pilot retail agreement agreed

June 10, 2009

After months of negotiations, the services union ver.di and the HDE employers' association in retail have agreed upon a 2% pay rise in September 2009 in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia. It will also give the 440,000 retail employees involved a 1.5% increase in September 2010 and a one-off payment of Euro 150. The agreement, that will run for 24 months, could pave the way for similar agreements in other parts of Germany.

English: <http://www.forbes.com/feeds/afx/2009/06/11/afx6531381.html>

German: <http://www.fair-heisst-mehr.de/meldungen/ ...>

Greece

Union pressure leads to increase in employment

June 18, 2009

The PPC national power company has decided to create 2,300 new jobs in addition to the 2,300 jobs that it has already advertised. The company's initiative comes in the face of determined demands from the GENOP energy union to take on an additional 7,000 workers. The union has been arguing that a shortage of trained workers and an increasing reliance on contractors have undermined health and safety in the company – four workers have been killed since the beginning of the year.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/312>;

<http://www.reuters.com/article/rbssIndustry ...>

Greek: http://www.genop.gr/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=595&Itemid=1

Ireland

Union confederations disappointed but not walking away

June 24, 2009

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) has said that it is disappointed with aspects of the governments' most recent proposals for economic recovery. However speaking after a meeting of ICTU's executive council, general secretary David Begg said that the Government proposals were "the only show in town". Mr Begg said the ICTU's members would not expect to walk away when it could influence events, though he also stipulated that ICTU did not have sufficient information to make judgements on the proposals and would be seeking clarifications. The union leader said that there were also concerns at the government proposal to suspend a review of the minimum wage until 2011. However he said it would continue to be a floor for wage formation in the economy (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 April and May).

English: <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/breaking/2009/0624/breaking30.htm>

via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Ireland

Italy

Unions sign local government agreement

June 18, 2009

The three main public service federations – FP-CGIL, FPS-CSIL and UIL-FPL – have signed a new two-year agreement covering over 500,000 workers in local and regional government. The general increase is Euro 63.20 a month, worth an average of 3.2%. However, there is the possibility of higher increases of up to Euro 90 a month in a productivity-linked deal that depends on the extent to which local authorities stay within budget guidelines.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/312>;

Italian: <http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/10735>

Netherlands

Job security secured at Dutch Railways

June 10, 2009

Arrangements concerning job security are central in the new collective agreement FNV Bondgenoten agreed with NS (Dutch Railways). There will be no forced lay-offs until 31 December 2012, and the number of full-time equivalents actually worked by temp workers will be changed into permanent jobs. The new 18 months' agreement, covering 15,000 workers, starts backdated 1 May 2009, and provides for a 1.7% pay increase by that date, followed by 0.5% by 1 January 2010. Compensation for irregular hours will be increased stepwise by 20%.

Dutch: <http://www.fnvspoor.nl/>; press sheet FNV Bondgenoten

Progress in provincial government negotiations

June 18, 2009

The ABVAKABO public services union reports that after a poor start some progress has been made in negotiations covering provincial government. The employers have responded positively on four issues: extra jobs targeted at the unemployed; the introduction of training budgets for individual workers; changes to the pay structure that will particularly benefit employees who are on the top of their scale; and new arrangements for carers so that they can temporarily change their working hours. The union warns, however, that some hard bargaining remains over pay and employment security (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2 May).

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/312>;

Dutch: http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/goede_onderhandelingen_cao_provincies/

Unions pleased with short-term deal in energy sector

June 4, 2009

Public services union ABVAKABO FNV has agreed a 10-month deal for the energy sector with a basic pay increase of 1.3%. The current two-year agreement expires on 30 June and the new agreement will only run from 1 July to 30 April 2010. It is seen as a transitional agreement that covers the current difficult economic circumstances and is in line with the national social accord of March 2009. There will also be a payment worth 0.75% of salary on 1 January 2010 which is part of a new scheme allowing workers the choice of having additional pay or more time off. Other elements in the deal include an extension of parental leave from 13 to 26 weeks and various initiatives on training. The WENb employers' organisation will undertake a study of the implications of changes in the energy sector for employment and industrial relations. ABVAKABO FNV will be involved in the study.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/310>;

Dutch: [http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/ ...](http://www.abvakabofnv.nl/cao/bericht/)

Broad protest leads to prolongation of part-time unemployment scheme

June 25, 2009

The new part-time unemployment scheme that the government introduced as of 1 April seemed already to come at its end by 23 June, when Jan-Hein Donner, Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, announced a halt because of the reserved Euro 375 million had been spent. The announcement led to a broad protest, including the major three trade union confederation FNV, CNV and MHP, and the employers' association VNO-NCW. Obviously because of this pressure, two days later the Minister announced the prolongation of the scheme, be it applying more tight criteria for companies willing to use the scheme. For the time being, the social partners are opposing such tightening (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 2, March, April and May).

Dutch: De Volkskrant, June 23 and 25, 2009

English: [http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/business/news/ ...](http://www.monstersandcritics.com/news/business/news/)

Norway

Public sector unions manage to retain pension scheme

June 4, 2009

Planned strike action by public sector workers was called off when negotiations were finally concluded on 4 June. The unions involved were pleased with the outcome, as it means that there are no major changes to the pensions arrangements in the public sector. Pay negotiations were also concluded, with local government workers set to get 3.1% with a minimum increase of NOK 9,000 (Euro 994) a year.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/310>

Norwegian: <http://www.frifagbevegelse.no/fagbladet/article4374683.ece>;

[http://www.ntl.no/portal/page/portal/PG_NTL_NO/ ...](http://www.ntl.no/portal/page/portal/PG_NTL_NO/)

Poland

Strike in energy company

June 22, 2009

On 22 June, over 3,000 workers of the Enea energy company went on strike over alleged breaches of Poland's labour law. Protests took place in the Wielkopolska, West Pomerania, Kujawy-Pomerania and Lubuskie provinces in the west and north of the country. "The company is violating basic rules of the Labour Code," claims Piotr Adamski, head of the Solidarity trade union at Enea. "Although the law guarantees Enea's employees a pay rise, the company has not increased salaries as yet. Besides, Enea keeps on prolonging contracts for a specified time with newly employed workers, which is illegal," maintains Adamski.

English: http://polskieradio.pl/thenews/business/artykul110580_energy_workers_on_strike_.html

via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Poland

Spain

Protest against government recruitment freeze

June 18, 2009

Public service union FSC-CCOO has reacted angrily to a council of ministers decision to freeze recruitment across the general state administration as part of the government's austerity package. The union argues that a freeze will undermine public services as many departments already have many unfilled vacancies while it further undermines the conditions of workers who are struggling to maintain services despite inadequate employment levels. FSC-CCOO is also concerned about the way the decision was announced and says that it undermines the right to collective bargaining over this kind of issues.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/312>;

Spanish: <http://www.fsap.ccoo.es/webfsap/menu.do?Inicio:60344>

Sweden

Young employees seem to favour individual wage negotiations

June 4, 2009

A considerable share of young workers in Sweden seems to favour negotiating pay individually rather than having their wages set by a central agreement, a new study may indicate. According to a recent study carried out by the Novus Opinion polling company on behalf of the Swedish Organization for Managers (Ledarna) and the Almega employers' association of Swedish Engineering Industries, only 10% of young Swedish workers are satisfied with the way their salaries are set. More than half of the 1,500 workers between 25- and 30-years of age included in the study replied that the setting of salaries ought to be more individualized than it is today. Currently, six of ten respondents to the survey said they had the ability to influence their pay.

English: <http://www.thelocal.se/19864/20090604/>

via http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/show_news.pl?country=Sweden

Switzerland

Protest against anti-union lay-offs

June 9, 2009

With a symbolic action in front of the Headquarters of the ILO Conference in Geneva, on 9 June, the Swiss Trade Union Confederation (STUC/SGB/USS) recalled that the complaint it lodged in 2003 against its government emphasized the fact that the host country of the International Labour Office does not provide proper protection against anti-union dismissals, which is in breach of ILO Convention No. 98 concerning the right to organise and to collective bargaining. Vasco Pedrina, Head of the Swiss Workers delegation at the ILO Conference 2009 and BWI Vicepresident stated: "We hope that the symbolic protest action today

will make the Swiss government realise that it is time to change course. The workers of our country are not asking for charity, but rather are demanding what is rightly theirs, namely to freely exercise the trade union rights that form a part of human rights.” In the context of the current crisis, anti-union dismissals are multiplying across the country, said Pedrina.

English: <http://www.bwint.org/default.asp?Index=2318&Language=EN>;

German: <http://www.bwint.org/default.asp?Index=2313&Language=DE>;

French: <http://www.bwint.org/default.asp?Index=2314&Language=FR>

United Kingdom

National Grid back industrial action to block offshoring

June 18, 2009

Members of the GMB general union employed by the National Grid transmission company in the North East of England have supported strike action against offshoring in a consultative ballot. The union is angry that the company is looking to close a site and offshore 181 jobs to India despite making massive profits. Gary Smith, GMB National Secretary speaking at the GMB Congress at Blackpool said, “This proposed site closure is nothing but an act of irresponsible corporate greed.”

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/312>;

<http://www.gmb.org.uk/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=98700>

Refuse collection pay dispute ended

June 18, 2009

Refuse collectors in Bristol in South West England, contracted by Sita, have gone back to work after taking strike action over pay. The members of the Unite trade union agreed to a new three-year deal that will pay a minimum of 2.75% for the year November 2008 to October 2009. The remaining years of the agreement and various procedures to improve industrial relations will be negotiated in a process of binding arbitration that will be overseen by UK's Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, Acas.

English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/312>;

[http://www.thisisbristol.co.uk/homepage/Bristol ...](http://www.thisisbristol.co.uk/homepage/Bristol...)

Broad support for Lindsey strike

June 24, 2009

On 23 June, hundreds of engineering construction workers at the Lindsey oil refinery of Total burned dismissal notices on Monday after they were sacked for going on strike. The latest dispute began two weeks ago, when a subcontractor for Total made 51 workers redundant while another contractor was hiring 61 staff on the same project. After hundreds stopped work in protest and unofficial strikes spread by text and flying pickets across the UK, 647 workers were sacked. Consequently, across the energy sector thousands walked out in protest. Among others, more than 1,000 contract builders at the new Ensus biofuel refinery on Teesside decided to stay on unofficial strike after receiving text messages on a grapevine set up by members of the GMB and Unite unions. The unions prepare to ballot 30,000 workers to turn the wildcat walkouts into an official strike.

English: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/jun/24/strike-action-recession>

<http://www.minimumwage.org.uk/news.asp>;

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2009/jun/24/lindsey-sympathy-strikes>

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