

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

Call for bargaining to get underway

September 19, 2008

The GÖD public sector union has written to the finance ministry asking for the annual pay negotiations to start soon to ensure that pay increases will be implemented as normal from 1 January 2009. The union also underlines the need for negotiators to take account of the agreed measures of inflation and national productivity growth in the 12 months to September 2008. The union's specific wage demand will be confirmed during the course of the negotiations.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/269>;

German: http://www.goed.at/files/877/Gehaltsabkommen_2009.pdf)

BELGIUM

Union wants to see proper negotiations over health care jobs

September 19, 2008

The SETCA/BBTK trade union has called for proper negotiations in response to the health ministry's plans to improve the attractiveness of healthcare professions. The union welcomes the initiative but argues that issues covered in the plan -- such as reducing workloads, tackling stress, training and qualifications and pay-- should all be the subject of collective bargaining. The union is also concerned about any proposals to single out particular professions for special treatment as it is important to see how the various professions complement each other.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/269>; Dutch: <http://www.bbtck.org/nieuws/Pages/News-De%20aantrekkelijkheidZorgberoepen.aspx>; French:

<http://www.setca.org/News/Pages/attractivit%C3%A9%20soins%20sant%C3%A9.aspx>)

Nationwide strike announced in Belgian public transport

September 24, 2008

The public transport network will be heavily disrupted on 6 October when unions plan to protest against the alleged government's failure to respond to rising prices, union officials said on 24 September. Unions are urging the government to take steps to alleviate the impact of inflation after it hit a 24-year high of 5.9% in last July, and hope the planned strikes will send a clear signal to the government before it presents its 2009 budget to parliament on 14 October.

(English: <http://www.reuters.com/articlePrint?articleId=USLO22647820080924>, via <http://www.labourstart.org>)

BULGARIA

Minimum wage to rise 9%

August 13, 2008

The national minimum wage is due to go up by 9% to BGN 240 (Euro 120) a month from 1 January 2009 under the terms of next year's draft budget, presented by the government to employers' associations and trade unions for their comments. The package also envisages a possible new approach to public sector pay increases, with a 10% increase in over-all wages rather than across-the-board rises for individuals. That will allow awards scheduled for 1 July 2009 to be linked more closely to personal performance. The government proposes a net cut in total social insurance charges of 2.4%-points, with reductions in employer contributions to the wage guarantee fund and to pensions, and an increase in the combined healthcare contribution from 6% to 8%. The draft forecasts economic growth in 2009 of 6.5% and inflation of 4.2%.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 8/2008)

CROATIA

Agreement reached with Alstom

August 19, 2008

After a year of negotiations, the Metal Workers' Trade Union of Croatia concluded a collective agreement with Alstom Hrvatska, securing wage rises for all 678 workers. The agreement sets the lowest contractual wage at this subsidiary of the transnational Alstom group at 4,050 Kuna gross, about Euro 560. It is agreed that wages will increase annually based on inflation rates and will include an extra increase depending on productivity in the previous year. In addition, workers will receive 1% annual increase for each year of service, which is applied as of 1 April, 2008.

(English: <http://www.imfmetal.org/main/index.cfm?n=47&1=2&c=18120>)

CYPRUS

New agreement signed in banking sector

July 16, 2008

In July, after over six months of bargaining, a new collective agreement was reached for the banking sector, which will be effective backdated from 1 January 2008 until 31 December 2010 and covers 9,000 employees. On 16 July, a 99% majority of members of the Cyprus Union of Bank Employees (ETYK) voted in favour of the agreement. It provides for a total increase of 6% in basic pay as it stood on 31 December 2007, to be paid in three equal installments per year, with a minimum total increase in basic monthly pay of Euro 90. In ETYK's view, the increase will notably improve the situation of low-paid employees.

(English: <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/2008/07/articles/cy0807049i.htm>)

CZECH REPUBLIC

Union confederation wants 4% real wage rise

August 13, 2008

The major Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (CMKOS) has indicated that it will be seeking wage settlements resulting in a 4% increase in real earnings for 2009. The target implies nominal wage increase of about 10%, according to current forecasts.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 8/2008)

DENMARK

Global agreement signed with Danske Bank

September 9, 2008

On 9 September, the UNI global union signed a global agreement with the Danish-based finance multinational Danske Bank, covering 24,000 workers. The agreement -negotiated by UNI Finance president Allan Bang with the help of six unions in Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Norway and Sweden- recognizes the competitive benefits for the company of good relations with trade unions and guarantees labour rights for workers worldwide. Dialogue is a key union priority in managing change, and Danske Bank commits itself to integrating employment and social consequences into strategic decisions and to use internal mobility measures to avoid or limit lay-offs.

(English:

[http://www.uniglobalunion.org/unifinance.nsf/\\$webDocuments/A6EF6A66FD2A816FC12574BF004F3731?OpenDocument](http://www.uniglobalunion.org/unifinance.nsf/$webDocuments/A6EF6A66FD2A816FC12574BF004F3731?OpenDocument))

ESTONIA

Minister promises teachers' pay hike

September 26, 2008

In late September, the Estonian minister of education, Tonis Lukas, has promised to increase teachers' wages in 2009 despite the country's economic problems. "I'll propose to the government to raise minimum salaries of teachers by 8%, which exceeds the average wage growth forecast of the Finance Ministry", Lukas told the daily Eesti Päevaleht in an interview.

(English: *The Baltic Times*, 26 September 2008)

Wage agreement for Estonian seafarers

September 24, 2008

About 2,000 Estonian seafarers are set to benefit from a three-year wage deal, covering 1 January 2008 till 31 December 2010, following nine months of negotiations has been agreed between the Estonian Seamen's Independent Union (ESIU) and the transnational ferry company Tallink Group. The settlement follows a one-hour warning strike on 4 August when five Tallink ferries were stopped in Estonia's capital Tallinn, as well as in Helsinki and Stockholm, where Finnish and Swedish unions organised solidarity action. The deal will provide the seafarers with a 25% pay increase in September 2008, 9% in 2009 and a further 6% in 2010. Workers with more than four and nine years' service will also receive a seniority bonus of five or 10% respectively, from 1 April 2009.

(English: <http://www.itfglobal.org/news-online/index.cfm/newsdetail/2611>)

FINLAND

Tax cuts linked to collective bargaining

August 13, 2008

The government is due to finalize its draft budget for 2009 shortly and will include cuts in personal income tax in an attempt to sustain economic growth at around 2%. However, at least part of the reductions will be dependent on the outcome of collective bargaining to take place towards the end of 2009, a ploy traditionally used to encourage moderate settlements in central wage agreements. This has led to speculation that ministers want a new \central deal when the pay provisions in current sector-level accords come up for review. The return to centralized pay norms is controversial. The main employer federation EK has more or less ruled out such a return. The SAK union federation might prefer to go back to the old approach, but its affiliates and other union federations appear content with the results of the sector-level agreements. These ended up in average pay rises for 2008 of about 4.2%, still ahead of price inflation, just over 4% in June.

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 8/2008)

FRANCE

Figures show loss of pay for public sector workers

September 19, 2008

Figures produced by the FO civil service union federation show how different groups of workers are losing out because of below-inflation pay increases in the public sector. Last year's 0.8% rise was below the 1.5% inflation rate, meaning that workers were losing between Euro 136 and Euro 198 in purchasing power. This year the situation is worse with a 0.8% rise compared to 3.2% inflation. Over the two years workers will be up to Euro 880 worse off. The union believes that things will only get worse with 0.5% wage increases foreseen for the following three years.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/269>;

French: <http://www.fo-fonctionnaires.fr/2008-09-10-pouvoir-achat-toujours-moins.html>)

Public service federations reject cuts to pension scheme

September 19, 2008

The CGT, FO and FSU public service federations have rejected government proposals to cut pension entitlement for public sector workers. The workers affected are public employees who do not have civil service status and who are covered by the IRCANTEC pension scheme. The government wants to reduce the IRCANTEC pension in terms of the level of salary it replaces from 75% to 67.3%. The unions argue that it is possible to maintain the replacement rate at 75% particularly if the government increases the employers' contribution, which is currently much lower than it is for civil servants who are covered by a separate scheme.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/269>;

French: http://www.ugff.cgt.fr/ftp/ircantec/cgtfp_08_09_04.doc;

<http://www.fo-fonctionnaires.fr/2008-09-03-Communique-UIAFP-Ircantec.html>)

GERMANY

Unions join hospital campaigning alliance

September 19, 2008

The verdi public services union and Marburger Bund doctors' union have joined a "save our hospitals" campaign to argue for increased funding. The unions point to 50,000 job cuts, excessive overtime and workloads and poor working conditions resulting from cutbacks in recent years. There has been a series of local actions and demonstrations with a national demonstration in Berlin on 25 September.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/269>; German: <http://www.rettung-der-krankenhaeuser.de>)

Germany continues to suffer falling real wages

September 19, 2008

The latest analysis from the WSI trade union research institute based on European Commission data shows how pay developments in Germany have fallen behind all other EU member states. Since 2000 real wages in Germany have fallen by 0.8%, the only EU member state where there has been a decline. Several countries, particularly among the New Member States, recorded increases over this period of more than 30% and even seven of the EU-15 countries saw real wages increase by more than 10%. The report suggests that negative wage drift is a particular German problem with some locally negotiated increases falling below what is agreed at sectoral level.

The day before publication of the WSI results, a report in the German weekly Die Zeit pointed out that, following internal calculations, the European Commission has concluded that German wages would need to increase by 6% annually for several years to match up with the level of other Eurozone.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/269>; German: http://www.boeckler.de/pdf/impuls_2008_14_1.pdf; Marc Bost / Claas Talje, Immer auf die anderen, *Die Zeit*, 18 September 2008, No. 39).

Wage demands IG Metall

September 23, 2008

The Central Committee of the IG Metall (Metal Workers' Union) has decided about the wage claim for the new collective agreement on pay for 3.6 million workers in the engineering industry: an increase of 8% for a period of 12 months. The current collective agreement is valid until 31 October 2008. First negotiations start on 2 October. IG Metall states that most likely warning strikes will start from 1 November onwards. Current accords in the automobile, IT and household goods industries all end on October 31.

(English: European Metalworkers' Federation, message to members EUCOBAN network;
<http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,2144,3667120,00.html>)

GREECE

POEM unions gain substantial rises in metal industry

August 5, 2008

The POEM union administration concluded, after a period of tough bargaining, four collective agreements in the metal industry implying substantial wage rises from 1 January 2008 till 31 December 2009, with cumulative increase varying from 13.43% to 14.04%. These increases are mostly composed by increases of 3% per 1 January of both years and 3.5% per 1 July of both years. POEM notes that these agreements apply to the minimum salaries, and that the affiliated unions retain the right to further improve wages through company agreements.

(English: European Metalworkers' Federation, message to members EUCOBAN network)

HUNGARY

Negotiations over minimum wage hike

September 24, 2008

The government is willing to discuss an increase in the minimum wage with the MSZOSZ union federation, state secretary of the Social and Labour Ministry Gábor Simon said in an interview with business daily Napi Gazdasag. He expects this to be a lengthy discussion. The current minimum wage was set per 1 January 2008 on HUF 69,900 (Euro 274) per month. Simon also said that the skilled minimum wage (an extra 20-25% on top of the minimum wage for jobs requiring high school diplomas or special training) could become a victim of the negotiations as to reach consensus. Union representatives disagreed, stating that "MSZOSZ always said and will always say that wages should be in sync with the level of expertise required for a particular job".

(English: <http://www.budapestimes.hu/content/view/9236/2195.html>)

IRELAND

Unions divided over public sector pay deal

September 27, 2008

Impact, the largest public services union, is recommending that members accept a pay deal that will give them a 6% increase over the next 21 months although no increase for the first 11 months. Lower paid workers --those on less than Euro 11 an hour -- will get an additional 0.5%. Impact general secretary Peter McLoone said that this was the best deal available in difficult circumstances even though it entailed a "special sacrifice" from public servants in the form of an 11-month pay freeze.

Yet a week later Unite, the country's second largest union, proved to recommend to its members that they should reject the deal in a forthcoming ballot. The Unite executive believes the deal, besides effectively representing a pay cut for members, also does not meet demands it had set out in advance of the talks in areas such as mandatory union recognition and improved pension arrangements.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/269>; http://www.impact.ie/iopen24/newsdesk_info.php?newsdesk_id=162;

<http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2008/0927/1222419966687.html>)

ITALY

Italian unions mobilise over massive cut in pay budget

September 19, 2008

A series of assemblies have been organised over the next few weeks for different groups of workers in the public sector to discuss how to react in response to massive cuts in the public sector pay budget. The government claims that it is ready to negotiate over public sector pay increases for 2008-09. However, trade unions argue that government figures reveal a shortfall of Euro 1.7 billion in the public sector pay budget and that on this basis workers can only expect a pay cut in 2009.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/269>;

Italian: <http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/7883>;

<http://www.fpcgil.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/7852>)

LATVIA

Doctors, teachers and police officers demonstrate

September 26, 2008

On Friday 26 September, medical workers, teachers and police took the streets of Riga, capital of Latvia, to demand higher wages. The protests were called in effort to have the government reverse its plan to freeze all public sector wages in 2009. An estimated 1,500 medical workers and teachers took part in the first protest. In a meeting between Prime Minister Ivars Godmanis and Valdis Keris, chairman of the Latvian Health and Social Care Workers' Union, following the demonstration, the prime minister reportedly said that he would "try" to find ways to increase medical workers' salaries, but that he could not make any promises. Later that day, about 200 police officers gathered to protest low wages. On 4 October, the police plans a much larger protest.

(English: *The Baltic Times*, 26 September 2008)

NETHERLANDS

Mobilisation campaign for truckers' pay hike

September 25, 2008

On the eve of the new bargaining round for a road freight transport agreement, the FNV Bondgenoten union started a mobilization campaign, including a petition to the employers. The union points at a report produced by AWWN, the employers' service institute, stating that the monthly wages of (international) truck drivers are lagging on average 18% behind those in comparable occupations in a number of Dutch industries, as well as at the shortage of truck drivers. The current collective agreement, covering about 140,000 truck drivers and warehouse staff, expires on 1 October, and the unions, FNV Bondgenoten and CNV Bedrijvenbond, demand a 6% wage increase for one year. In the first bargaining round the employers offered 3% per year, called "totally unacceptable" by the union negotiators as this offer remains even below the expected inflation rate.

(Dutch:

http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/branches_bedrijven/branches/vervoer/beroepsgoederenvervoer/actie_tegen_beloningsachte_rstand/; http://www.nieuwsbladtransport.nl/nieuws/id23199-Wegvervoer_op_dieptepunt,_meer_loon_uit_den_boze.html)

Refusal to sign second agreement in home care

September 5, 2008

In December 2007, most unions and the major employers' association ActiZ (350,000 employees) agreed on a basic accord in the so-called VVT sector (elderly and care homes, home care). However, the BTN employers' association (13,000 employees, only in home care) and the CNV Publieke Zaak union did not sign this basic agreement, which meant

that the 'old' home care agreement remained applicable until 1 October 2008. Recently, BTN and CNV Publieke Zaak arranged to produce a second home care agreement. According to the largest union, ABVAKABO FNV, this second agreement includes a number of deteriorations compared to the earlier VVT agreement, like a 1% lower wage increase. Therefore, ABVAKABO FNV refuses to sign the second agreement, and will try to have the VVT agreement mandatory extended.

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

POLAND

Security workers stage art exhibit at Polish Parliament

September 23, 2008

The Solidarnosc security workers union used children's art to send the message that most security workers have no time to spend with their families. Part of the union's campaign to raise working conditions in the industry, the exhibition "Fathers return home: Our children need their fathers" took place in front of the Sejm, a chamber of the Polish parliament. As the majority of security workers only earn Zloty 5-6 (Euro 1.40-1.70) per hour, they have to work multiple jobs in order to make ends meet. This often means working more than 300 hours per month, doing back-to-back shifts of 12 hours. A union delegation delivered an appeal to the Speaker of the Sejm, pointing out that under Polish law public institutions are obliged to choose those (security) contractors offering the lowest price, thus exerting downward pressure on wages and working conditions. The Speaker met the delegation and viewed the exhibition, after which he asked the union for a letter with concrete proposals of changes in the law.

(English:

<http://www.uniglobalunion.org/unipropertyn.nsf/7f9bc1ab9d900747c1257044004ba821/4c9da75e43e81b1cc12574cd00280985?OpenDocument>)

PORTUGAL

National strike planned for 1 October

September 19, 2008

Public sector workers affiliated to the CGTP confederation will join a national strike on 1 October in protest at government policies that they claim are undermining their employment rights. The protest is over falling purchasing power of public sector workers and the increase in precarious forms of employment in the sector.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/269>; Portuguese: <http://www.stal.pt/artigo.asp?id=978>)

ROMANIA

Minimum wage hike finally effected

August 13, 2008

Our last message on the issue of the Romanian national minimum wage, stating that the first planned uplift of the minimum wage of 8%, to RON 540 (Euro 159) a month, seemed likely to be effected from 1 July 2008, was obviously too optimistic. This is now to take place on 1 October 2008. The second uplift, to RON 600 (Euro 167) is scheduled for 1 January 2009 (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 6).

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 8/2008)

SLOVAKIA

No accord on minimum wage

August 13, 2008

Recently passed legislation establishing a default formula for calculating rises in the national minimum wage, looks likely to come into play for the first time, as social partners did not agree on the size of the uplift due on 1 January 2009. Under the formula, the increase will be 7.3%, taking the rate to SKK 8,690 (Euro 263) a month. The government will seek the approval of the social partners, but will impose it if that is not forthcoming. In July, the unions have demanded a hike of nearly 10%, to SKK 8,900 (See also this *Collective Bargaining Newsletter* Year 1 No. 6).

(English: Watson Wyatt Data Services, *New Industrial Relations Europe*, 8/2008)

SPAIN

Pay and employment at top of social dialogue agenda

September 19, 2008

Public sector unions met with government representatives for the first time since the general election with a view to maintaining continuity in the discussions over pay, jobs and services in the public sector. The general pay increase for public employees is set at 3% for 2009 with those employed by the general state administration getting 3.875%. However, unions have called for this to be reviewed towards the end of the year in the light of increasing inflation. The unions also expressed concern at government plans to cut jobs in response to current economic difficulties. They argued that in fact it was crucial to maintain public employment during an economic downturn and that any reduction in jobs would impact upon service quality.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/269>; Spanish:

<http://www.fsap.ccoo.es/webfsap/menu.do?Actualidad:Sindical:Actualidad:35345>;

<http://www.fspugt.es/index.php/mod.noticias/mem.detalle/idnoticia.5463/cat.1028>)

UNITED KINGDOM

Civil servants balloted over strike action

September 19, 2008

PCS, the main civil service union, is balloting 270,000 members over industrial action on pay and the government's imposition of a 2% limit on public sector pay increases. PCS holds that anger has grown over the government's policy which is disproportionately hitting some of the lowest paid in the public sector. In the strike ballot running to 17 October, members will be asked to back plans for a national civil service wide strike followed by a rolling programme of targeted industrial action that will extend into the new year.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/269>;

http://www.pcs.org.uk/en/news_and_events/news_centre/index.cfm/id/E34196E5-329F-466A-96D89821B57A2D32)

One-day strike in Scottish local government claimed a success

September 27, 2008

Local government workers in Scotland have organised another one-day strike on 24 September and agreed to further action if the employers do not respond with an improvement on their 2.5% offer. UNISON, the largest council staff union, claims the action by around 150,000 staff across Scotland a success. Local authority employers' group Cosla called on the unions "to bring more realistic demands to the table", but the unions claimed that notably Cosla's failure to improve their offer after the first strike led to the action.

(English: <http://www.epsu.org/cob/269>; <http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/news/2008/septoct/1709.htm>;

<http://www.gmb.org.uk/Templates/Internal.asp?NodeID=97519>; <http://www.amicustheunion.org/default.aspx?page=9167>;

<http://news.scotsman.com/scotland/Council-workers-stage-second-strike.4523320.jp>)

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