

collective bargaining

Issue 7-8/2021 | July-August

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.

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European sources

Report on key working conditions Directive

August 6, 2021

The Expert Group on the transposition of the Directive on transparent and predictable working conditions published a new report. The new Directive (EU) 2019/1152 is a direct follow-up to the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights. It aims at improving working conditions by promoting more transparent and predictable employment, while also ensuring labour market adaptability.

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

Many Europeans can't afford to take holidays

August 5, 2021

An analysis by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) showed that a majority of low-income families in the European Union can't afford to take a holiday. The analysis, which used data from the EU's statistical office Eurostat, suggested that 28% of people over 16 years old lack the financial means to enjoy a one-week holiday. For those whose income falls below Eurostat's at-risk-of-poverty threshold, that number rises to 59.5%.

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

Tackling labour shortages in the EU

July 20, 2021

Eurofound published a report which looks at labour shortages in the EU and classifies the types of measures being taken to address those shortages. Amongst other things, the report found that the pandemic aggravated shortages in the health and care sectors, and that all European countries reported an insufficient supply of nurses, general practitioners and long-term care workers. The new research aims to identify practices tackling shortages in these specific sectors and extract lessons on what does and does not work in different contexts.

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

Effects of Covid-19 on social dialogue and collective bargaining

July 6, 2021

The European Commission published its annual review 'Employment and Social Developments in Europe', which outlines some of the key effects of the pandemic on jobs, employment conditions and social dialogue. The impact on national social dialogue and collective bargaining varied, with countries with strong social dialogue institutions favouring the early involvement of social partners in setting up measures such as short-time work schemes. In some EU countries, health concerns placed constraints on traditional collective bargaining procedures, while in others the involvement of social partners increased in the light of urgent public interventions. The review found that the pandemic highlighted long-standing gender inequalities, with women experiencing a steeper fall in working hours than men in the second quarter of 2020, continuing to take on the largest share of caring responsibilities, and facing challenges in balancing work and private life.

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

Austria

Unions publish open letter on Covid-19 measures in education

July 21, 2021

The trade unions representing workers in early years education in the public and private sectors joined forces with the trade union confederation ÖGB to publish an open letter to the Minister of Education that poses five key questions for the government to answer. In the light of the continuing pandemic and the challenges faced by workers in the sector, the unions want to know about plans for nationwide Covid-19

testing; what regulations will apply regarding the vaccination of staff; what measures are planned to contain the virus; when workers will receive a bonus for the extra efforts they have made and the risks they have faced; and what guarantees can be made that unions will be able to present their concerns to the advisory board for elementary education.

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Union puts four-day week on collective bargaining agenda

July 8, 2021

The GPA union is calling for the adoption of a four-day week and will raise this demand in the upcoming autumn bargaining round. Noting the success of the four-day week in Iceland and the establishment of the right to a four-day week in the retail sector in Austria, the GPA argued that employers should consider the positive impact on productivity, while workers will get the benefit of a better work-life balance. The union also underlined the potential for the four-day week to have an impact on climate change through its effect on commuting patterns.

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

Belgium

Health unions urge employers to sign collective agreements

July 13, 2021

The CNE/CSC trade union criticised health sector employers for failing to sign five key collective agreements to improve working conditions. The agreements were negotiated following the major social agreement signed last year which allocated more than €1 billion to the sector. A new salary structure has been put in place in the federal health sectors and many health staff have seen a significant increase in pay, some over 10%. However, the employers have since failed to sign agreements covering, among other things, the fixing of work schedules and employment contracts, a commitment to five days of continuous training per year until 2027, the obligation to agree on a joint training plan, and better training of staff representatives to deal with the increasing complexity of regulations.

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

Government launches consultation on platform work

July 9, 2021

The government announced that it is to launch a forum for consultation on how platform work should be regulated. The consultation will be conducted via an online forum, where platform workers as well as users, partner traders and the platforms themselves will be invited to submit their contributions. The aim is to “offer better social protection” and improve the working conditions of these self-employed people, of which there are currently between 10,000 and 80,000, according to government figures. The initiative will lead to the drafting of a legislative bill in 2022.

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

Bulgaria

Continuation of job retention measure

July 29, 2021

The government allocated an additional budget of BGN 160 million (€81.9 million) to the 60/40 job retention measure. The 60/40 job retention measure was introduced in March 2020 to soften the impact of the coronavirus crisis on employment. The state will continue to finance 60% of the job retention allowance

and of the social insurance costs of employees remaining on the payroll during the Covid-19 crisis, while the employer will pay the remaining 40%. According to government estimates, this will save 80,000 jobs.

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

Unemployment continues to decline

July 15, 2021

The level of registered unemployment continued to decline and reached 5.2% in June, according to the National Employment Agency. This is 0.5 percentage points lower than in the previous month and 3.1 percentage points lower compared to June 2020.

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Croatia

Average earnings rise

August 20, 2021

In June 2021, the average monthly net earnings per person in paid employment amounted to 7,175 kuna (€956), which represented a nominal and a real increase of 1.0%, as compared to May 2021. The average monthly gross earnings amounted to 9,671 kuna (€1,289), a nominal and a real increase of 1.2% compared to May 2021. The average monthly gross earnings were also nominally higher (by 4.6%) and in real terms (by 2.5%) in June 2021 compared to the same month last year.

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

Cyprus

Port workers back on strike

August 11, 2021

Only a week after the signing of a collective agreement which put an end to a strike, workers at DP World Limassol, which manages the general cargo and cruise terminals at Limassol port, went back on strike after the company decided to fire four employees. According to the workers, the original strike was over management's non-compliance with collective agreements but also due to a number of unilateral additions and subtractions that took place shortly before the agreement was signed.

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

Czechia

Labour shortages are back

August 3, 2021

Many businesses reported that the labour shortages that had blighted the economy before the pandemic were already becoming an issue again in the earliest stages of reopening. The tight market means that the cost of labour continues to rise. In May, the average monthly wage rose by 3.2% compared with a year earlier, and analysts expect this rise to accelerate sharply.

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

Denmark

Nurses' union extends strike

August 9, 2021

The DSR union announced an extension of its strike action over pay to more health institutions around the country, and it also organised a national demonstration. Members of the union voted to reject the national public sector collective agreement earlier this year because it failed to tackle the longstanding issue of the underpaying of nursing occupations.

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

Union backs four-day week experiment

July 16, 2021

The HK Kommunal union welcomed the opportunity given to local government employees to work a four-day week. Workers will have the choice of coming to the office, working from home or taking a full day off. The only requirement is that they maintain a working week of 37 hours. The municipality argued that the scheme will help to recruit and retain competent staff. HK Kommunal welcomed the possibility of more flexibility for employees but emphasised that no scheme should be introduced as a cost-cutting measure.

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

Estonia

Wages rise by 7.3%

August 27, 2021

According to data from Statistics Estonia, the average salary rose to €1,538 (a rise of 7.3%) in the second quarter of 2021. The last time there was an increase in average monthly gross wages and salaries this high was in the third quarter of 2019. Compared to the second quarter of 2020, average monthly gross wages increased the most in mining and quarrying (17.7%) and in human health and social work activities (13.2%). The lowest increase was recorded in the energy sector (0.3%) and in financial and insurance activities (1.8%).

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Nurses consider strike

July 22, 2021

The Estonian Nurses' Association (Eesti Õdede Liit) considered strike action after a long-running labour dispute broke down earlier in the summer. At the heart of the matter were nurses' working conditions. The health minister said that while his ministry would listen to the nurses' union's grievances, a collective agreement (which was struck without the union's involvement) was still considered a *fait accompli* for the next two years. According to the union, this agreement did not reflect certain significant developments in health care and did not cover the remuneration of specialist nurses and care workers with specialist training, which were essential elements of the proposal for a collective agreement by the union.

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

Finland

Union sues food delivery platform over employment status

July 12, 2021

The Service Union United (PAM) announced that it had asked a district court to rule on the case of one of its members who had worked as a courier for Wolt, a food delivery platform. PAM revealed that the action revolved around the question of whether the courier could be considered to have had an employment relationship with Wolt.

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France

Energy unions achieve victory

July 29, 2021

Energy unions and their allies achieved a victory when the government withdrew its plan to dismantle energy company EDF. The government had proposed a restructuring plan, formerly called “*projet Hercule*” then rebaptised “*grand EDF*”, aimed at splitting up the national public company Électricité de France. EDF is a majority state-owned company. Mobilising support from across society, the unions are demanding that energy be a public service, which is also seen as the best way to address climate change and ensure a just transition with strong workers’ and union rights.

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

Framework agreement on telework at bank

July 23, 2021

Bank BNP Paribas struck a framework agreement on telework, which will allow eligible staff to work remotely two and a half days per week from September. The banking sector union SNB and the CFDT union centre agreed to sign the deal, while the third trade union representing staff at the bank, the CFTC, opted against doing so. Negotiations commenced on implementing the agreement across BNP Paribas’ various subsidiaries. The agreement forms part of a policy on ‘smart working’ that seeks to change working methods at the banking group.

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Public service unions sign telework agreement

July 13, 2021

Nine public service trade unions signed a new agreement on telework covering the whole of the public sector. The framework agreement requires employers in the public sector – local authorities, ministries and hospital services – to begin negotiations to implement the agreement at local level by 31 December this year. The agreement covers such key issues as the voluntary nature of telework, health and safety, gender equality, data security and privacy, working time, and the right to disconnect.

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Germany

Union demands 5% more pay for public service workers

August 26, 2021

Union ver.di will demand a 5% pay rise, with a minimum of €150 extra per month, for the 1.1 million employees, 48,000 trainees and around 1.2 million civil servants who work in the public services of the federal states (Länder). Negotiations will begin on 8 October in Berlin. In order to continue to attract urgently needed young people to the public sector, training allowances should be increased by €100 per month, according to the union. The members of the federal bargaining commission of ver.di, who decided on

these demands at their meeting on 26 August in Berlin, are aiming for a collective agreement term of twelve months.

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Rail strike

August 10, 2021

The Train Drivers' Union GDL announced a nationwide strike following failed negotiations with rail operator Deutsche Bahn, in which the GDL had demanded a 3.2% wage increase. The company had agreed, but at a slower rate than the union had demanded. According to the GDL, around 80% of train drivers and 40% of train attendants belong to the union.

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Pay raise of 5% in fine ceramics industry

July 15, 2021

The union IG BCE and employers in the fine ceramics industry in west Germany agreed on a collective agreement. The 17,000 employees in the industry will receive a pay rise that adds up to a total of 5.05% through several pay steps, one-off payments and increases in Christmas bonuses and demographic funds. As of 1 January 2022, wages and salaries will rise by 2%. A further pay increase of 1.3% will follow on 1 January 2023. Depending on a company's performance, there will be a one-off payment of €250, €500 or €650, which should be paid out as a 'corona bonus'. Apprentices will receive 50% of the one-off payment.

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3.8% pay raise for energy workers

July 2, 2021

Around 30,000 mainly energy workers covered by the AVEU collective agreement will receive a 3.8% pay rise over the next two years. Pay will rise by 2.3% from 1 June 2021 and by 1.5% from 1 November 2022. The agreement runs until 31 August 2023. There will also be a 'corona payment' of €600, to be paid by January 2022 at the latest, with a pro-rata amount for part-time employees. All union members are to get two days off to attend specialist events and training courses. The AVEU agreement covers around 130 companies in eastern Germany. The ver.di union saw the results as positive in a difficult negotiating environment and underlined the importance of mobilising workers during the negotiations.

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Greece

Metro strike postponed

July 7, 2021

A planned work stoppage on the Athens metro was postponed by the metro staff union. The management of train operator STASY took the case to the courts to declare the strike illegal. The union said it decided to call off the strike to give management a chance to address the problems raised by train drivers and other company employees. According to a union announcement, the drivers had called the strike because they are forced to drive trains where the air conditioning in the driver's car is not functioning, and also to work on their days off in order for the schedule to run on time.

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Hungary

Health workers' protest

August 30, 2021

Several trade union confederations sent a solidarity message to the MESZK chamber of healthcare professionals in support of its protest march in Budapest. The demonstrators called for pay increases for nurses in line with those already awarded to doctors and argued this was crucial to help stem the migration of nurses to western Europe.

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Government attack on the right to strike

August 5, 2021

The government issued two decrees denying air traffic control staff the right to strike. An appeal court judgment confirmed the union's legal right to strike. However, six days later the two decrees were published, which not only dismissed the decision of the Appeal Court but also violated Article 28 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) condemned the government and strongly emphasised that collective representation and collective bargaining are basic labour rights that must be equally respected within all 27 EU Member States.

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

Iceland

Workers satisfied with shorter working week

August 3, 2021

According to a survey reported by the BSRB public services federation, nearly two out of three public employees are satisfied with the shortening of the working week. The results show that satisfaction is much higher among state and local government employees than among employees in other sectors. A total of 64% of civil servants say they are very or rather satisfied with the cut, with about 17% saying they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and about 18% saying they are very or rather dissatisfied. The difference between sectors appears to relate to the different way in which the cuts in working hours were agreed upon.

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Ireland

Union rejects offer from Department of Education

August 3, 2021

The Fórsa trade union rejected what it described as a 'derisory' offer from the Department of Education in a long-running dispute over the pay and conditions of school secretaries. The union has been campaigning for years to end the unequal treatment of school secretaries employed by the Department of Education and those employed by schools. The latter are on much lower pay rates and have inferior rights to sickness and annual leave. Fórsa did not rule out the possibility of industrial action. Meanwhile, social care workers in intellectual disability services voted for industrial action in a dispute over outsourcing.

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Unions welcome implementation of remote work policy

July 13, 2021

The Fórsa and SIPTU public service unions welcomed the government's new 'Blended Working Policy Statement,' which would see the civil service switch from pandemic-related remote working provisions to long-term 'blended working' arrangements between September 2021 and March 2022. However, both

unions want to see a rapid roll-out across the entire public sector, rather than it being confined to government departments and agencies. They also underlined the importance of the commitment to a consistent approach and to transparency and fairness on access to remote working, along with the implementation of essential measures relating to working time, the right to disconnect, health and safety, privacy and data protection rights.

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

Italy

Collective agreement in textiles and clothing sector

August 30, 2021

Social partners in the clothing and fashion industries signed an agreement to renew their national collective agreement, which will apply to some 46,000 companies and 400,000 employees. The agreement, signed by the employers' organisation SMI and the Filctem-Cgil, Femca-Cisl and Uiltec trade unions, provides for an average salary increase of €74. This increase will be delivered in three tranches, starting with €20 (1 April 2022), followed by €25 (1 January 2023), and concluding with €27 (1 April 2023). These increases will go unchallenged, even if inflation turns out to be lower than forecast over the period concerned. In addition, as of 1 January 2023, companies will contribute €2 per employee to a new insurance scheme catering for age-related loss of autonomy.

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Union calls for more firefighters

August 2, 2021

With forest fires and flooding posing increasing demands on the fire service, the Fp Cgil public service union called for an increase in jobs to 40,000. The union argued that the current number of 35,000 is inadequate, with many firefighters working double shifts, longer hours and more overtime. Fp Cgil said that excessive workloads leave workers no time for training. It also stressed that recruitment is crucial to reducing the average age of the workforce (currently 47) and also that investment in vehicles and equipment is urgently needed. Furthermore, firefighters need additional insurance against accidents and occupational disease.

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

Social partners sign agreement with hotel company

July 15, 2021

The social partners in Italy signed a renewal of the collective agreement of hotel group Marriot International. The deal implements innovative measures geared towards overcoming the deep crisis endured by the hotel sector and fostering the post-pandemic recovery. Applicable until the end of 2024, the agreement introduces greater flexibility in the use of fixed-term contracts but seeks to protect quality employment, in particular by providing stability for regular seasonal workers. The performance bonus will not be paid this year, but the social partners will set up a corporate welfare programme.

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Latvia

Employers will have to justify payment of low wages

July 19, 2021

In a bid to do more to tackle the practice of paying parts of salaries in the form of cash, the State Revenue Service (VID) will be submitting amendments to the Law on State Social Insurance in the forthcoming Finance Law that will see a shift in the burden of proof over to employers, requiring them to justify why

declared salary levels are low. The amendments target companies paying significantly lower wages than the average level in their sector.

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

Liechtenstein

New agreement for bus drivers

July 7, 2021

Companies Liemobil and BUS Ostschweiz Philipp Schädler (BOS PS Anstalt) concluded a new agreement for bus drivers with the union LANV which improves employment relations for bus drivers; all staff will now be employed by the new operator BOS PS Anstalt.

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Lithuania

Wage developments

August 30, 2021

Data published by the Central Statistical Bureau showed that in the second quarter of 2021 the average monthly gross wage and salary for full-time work was €1,237, which means that compared to the second quarter of 2020, it increased by €115 or 10.2%. Compared to the first quarter of 2021, it increased by 2.6%.

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

Luxembourg

Union accuses government of misinformation

July 26, 2021

The confederation of trade unions of civil servants (CGFP) accused the government of disseminating targeted disinformation, by claiming that an agreement that had been adopted only applied to the higher levels in the organisation and in no way was also binding to individual members. According to the union, individual ministers announced that no “sectoral improvements” would be possible until the end of 2022.

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Malta

Framework agreement on active ageing

July 29, 2021

The Chamber of Commerce, Enterprise and Industry and the General Workers’ Union signed a framework agreement on active ageing. The agreement emphasises an intergenerational approach to ensure a healthy, safe and productive working environment, to enable workers to remain in the labour market, and to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and experience between generations. The two social partners acknowledged the strong need for labour market policies to ensure that valuable human resources and experience are retained for as long as possible. They will promote good practices through a digital tool which will be made available to the public.

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

Netherlands

Pay agreement in metal and electrical sector

August 31, 2021

Unions and employers reached a new collective agreement in the metal and electrical industry. The agreement put an end to strikes that had been going on for seven months at many companies across the country, including a pay rise of 2.3% as of 1 July 2021, and 3% as of 1 February 2022. Employees will receive a one-off payment of 2.3% of the equivalent of seven monthly salaries on 1 October 2021 if they have been employed by the same employer since 1 December 2020. Moreover, around 2,400 agency workers will be offered a contract with the company they work for.

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

Upward trend in wage agreements

August 11, 2021

The employers' association AWWN reported that the upward trend in collective labour agreements continued in July, with an average wage raise of 2.3%. The July average was the highest monthly average of the year so far. The average negotiated wage increase for the whole year would therefore be 1.9%. A great variety can be seen in the collective labour agreements concluded this year. The most frequently made wage agreement is 2.0%, but there are also quite a few agreements without a pay rise. This diversity reflects the state of the economy: some sectors and companies are doing very well but others are struggling.

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

New collective agreement for provincial councils

July 13, 2021

Several trade unions (the FNV, CNV, AVV and CMHF) negotiated a collective agreement covering workers in provincial councils that will run to 31 December 2021 (and backdated to 1 January). Salaries rise by €50 from 1 January 2021, with a further increase of 1.2% from 1 July. There will also be a one-off payment of €750 (pro-rata for part-timers) on 1 September in appreciation of the flexibility shown during the Covid-19 crisis. The agreement also includes provisions to ensure sustainability of employment, covering parental leave, measures to support older workers and help for employees facing major life events.

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Norway

Court victory for care workers

August 9, 2021

The Fagforbundet union celebrated a victory in the Court of Appeals for 22 of its members in a case against the Stendi care company. The ruling means that the workers were falsely categorised as 'consultants' rather than employees and so were denied key employment rights such as holidays and pension entitlement. The union believes that the judgement will have important implications for the private care sector and urged the NHO employers' organisation to ensure that its members note the ruling and end the practice of classifying some workers as 'consultants'.

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Poland

Labour market tightens and wage pressures rise

July 19, 2021

Employment in the business sector grew by 0.3% month-on-month in June, at the same pace as the month earlier. The labour market is relatively tight as unemployment is set to fall below 6%. Wage pressures are building even though the job protection mechanism from PFR Financial Shield – anti-crisis support granted to companies a year ago – started to be phased out in June. The bargaining power of employees remains strong, heralding high wage growth at least until the end of the year.

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Portugal

New collective agreement in municipal service company

July 23, 2021

The SINTAP trade union negotiated a new collective agreement with the Inova company, which provides waste, water and other municipal services in the Coimbra district. Highlights includes the progressive reduction of working hours in 2022 and 2023 to 35 a week; changes to the scheduling of night work; and additional holiday entitlement (an extra day for every 10 years of service and a general increase in annual leave to 25 days by 2023). There will also be increases to meal and other allowances as well as higher pay.

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Romania

Trade unions push for 10% hike of minimum statutory wage

July 26, 2021

The National Trade Union Block (BNS) demanded an increase of the monthly statutory minimum wage by 10.4%, starting in 2022. Another confederation of trade unions, Cartel Alfa, proposed a similar minimum wage, but the two organisations had different suggestions about how to increase the minimum wage. The BNS proposed a change in taxation so that the costs for the employer would not increase too much, whereas Cartel Alfa wanted an increase without any fiscal changes.

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Workers stage a 2,000 kilometre protest against low pay

July 5, 2021

A group of trade unionists completed a four-day protest march of over 2,000 kilometres between Bucharest and Brussels over the low wages forcing their fellow citizens to make similar journeys to find decent work. The “Caravan of Social Rights”, made up of 13 members of the Cartel Alfa trade union, made stops in Budapest, Vienna, Munich and Luxembourg along the way to stage protests outside Romanian embassies with the support of local trade unions.

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Serbia

Trade unions demand higher minimum wage

July 28, 2021

The Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions, along with employers, invited citizens, social movements and NGOs to support trade union demands for a minimum wage increase to the level of the minimum

consumer basket. Representatives of the Employers' Association, the government and the trade unions were due to start negotiations on the minimum wage in mid-August in the Social-Economic Council, and the amount of next year's minimum wage will be determined by 15 September at the latest. Labour law stipulates that the minimum wage needs be determined according to the 'existential and social needs of workers and their families expressed through the value of the minimum consumer basket'.

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Re-introduction of 8-hour shift in metal company

July 5, 2021

On the order of the Labour Inspection, the factory Aptiv decided to reintroduce the 8-hour shift, to replace the current 12-hour one, following talks with the Autonomous Metal Workers Union. The 8-hour working shift was introduced on 5 July and additional bonuses were provided. The president of the trade union said that around 900 out of 4,000 workers were currently on sick leave.

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Slovakia

Companies report difficulties in recruiting adequately skilled employees

August 27, 2021

According to a recent Eurofound report on 'Tackling labour shortages in EU Member States', more than nine out of ten establishments with 10 or more employees report difficulties in finding suitable candidates for open positions. This is the highest proportion in the EU.

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Minimum wage raise after tripartite negotiations

August 25, 2021

The national minimum wage will rise to €646 a month in 2022, the government announced following tripartite negotiations with trade unions and representatives of business. The rule that the minimum wage should be no less than 57% of the average wage from two months ago will be upheld, meaning that there will be a year-on-year growth of €23.

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Slovenia

Lack of social dialogue on proposed amendment to the Health Care Act

July 12, 2021

Health unions and trade union confederations criticised a proposed amendment to the Health Care and Insurance Act. The unions argued that the amendment is effectively revenge for recent trade union protests against government policy and that it will deny worker representation in health institution management bodies. Trade unions across all sectors have been engaged in protests over the refusal of the government to engage in social dialogue. According to the unions, this is just the latest example of the government failing to consult trade unions and putting forward measures to limit their role. Health unions said they are more than willing to engage with the government over measures needed to reform the health service.

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Spain

Agreement on right to disconnect in medical company

July 27, 2021

The FeSP-UGT public services union signed an agreement with the Fresenius Medical Care company setting out a “digital disconnection” procedure, which will be applied to all workers in all of Fresenius’ centres and clinics. It states the company’s commitment to guarantee this right during holidays and daily and weekly rest periods, based on the digital rights legislation of 2018.

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Collective agreement for department store

July 22, 2021

Department store El Corte Inglés signed an agreement with the CCOO and UGT trade unions, which establishes the framework for their collaboration in the application of international labour standards and regarding the compliance of their suppliers in third-party countries. The agreement guarantees information exchange and joint efforts to ensure dignified work which is consistent with ILO standards, and also to seek solutions, establish training plans and resolve disputes.

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Sweden

Unemployment insurance fund can increase compensation

August 26, 2021

Union IF Metall welcomed the government’s decision to investigate the concept of a collectively agreed unemployment insurance fund. The idea is that the money paid into a collectively agreed unemployment insurance would go to the raising of benefit levels, instead of the fund being a “cash cow” for the state.

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Agreement in local rail transport

July 14, 2021

Arriva Sverige AB and Seko, the Service and Communications Union, reached an agreement regarding the local train system Pågatågen, which is operated by Arriva. The agreement means that Arriva and Seko have reconciled the disputes they had and can now put a conflict-filled period behind them. The agreement covers several points, including the settlement of two cases in the Labour Court and significant financial compensation to Seko's members.

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Switzerland

Union sets off on ‘Road to Strike’ in health sector

August 8, 2021

The vpod/ssp public services union launched an initiative to support its local activists in mobilising to achieve better pay and employment conditions for health workers across the country. A strike at the CHUV University Hospital in Lausanne helped to instigate the union’s “Road to Strike” organising campaign. Vpod/ssp argues that the situation in health establishments has worsened due to the pandemic, with many

workers facing burnout and leaving the sector. The persistent staffing shortages and company profit-seeking are undermining working conditions.

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Turkey

Union rejects wage offer for the public sector

August 16, 2021

The KESK public sector union rejected the offer made by the government for public sector-wide pay increases in 2022 and 2023. The Ministry of Labour offered increases of 5% and 6% in 2022 and two increases of 6% in 2023, with further adjustments for inflation. However, KESK had already highlighted the extent to which public sector pay has fallen behind inflation (currently over 17%) and it also questioned whether the official inflation figure really reflects living costs for most workers. KESK organised two marches to the capital to highlight its collective bargaining agenda.

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United Kingdom

Union discontent over inadequate pay offers

July 27, 2021

Public service union UNISON expressed discontent over a series of pay offers that they argued failed to compensate workers for inflation or for the massive efforts made to maintain services during the pandemic. The 3% pay offer for health workers was widely condemned. The unions pointed out that the pay rise was too low to have any impact on the serious staff shortages that persist across the health sector. Local government employers made a small increase in their pay offer, but this still meant only a 1.75% increase for most workers (2.75% for the lowest paid) in contrast to the 10% pay demand submitted by unions.

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Scottish government workers support a four-day week

July 30, 2021

Nearly nine out of ten Scottish government workers support a move towards a four-day week according to research by the think tank Autonomy. The report's findings suggest that moving to a four-day week would boost productivity to such an extent that many departments could make the change without having to employ new staff. The research shows a range of benefits for the government, including better retention and recruitment of staff, being seen as a pioneer in setting new working time standards for the economy, and having a healthier workforce.

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Union ends dispute with gas company

July 20, 2021

The GMB union declared an end to its dispute with British Gas over its aggressive policy of firing and rehiring workers. GMB members voted three to one to accept a new deal. Around 7,000 gas engineers staged 44 days of strike action after the company threatened to dismiss them if they didn't sign up to detrimental changes to their terms and conditions. The new deal offers improvements to overtime rates and unsocial hours payments, places limits on the amount of unsocial working undertaken, reverses the decision to close the defined benefit pension scheme to new starters, and opens the door for the 500 who were dismissed to return.

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