
Collective Bargaining News: 2nd Quarter 2015

Wage negotiations

- **The Netherlands:** Negotiations have broken down and industrial action is ongoing in a number of sectors. There is a big difference between the parties both on wages and job quality issues. By 15th June 2015 over 10,000 workers had been on strike. [Read more](#)
- **Iceland:** The Federation of General and Special Workers in Iceland (SGS) has been left with no option but to call extensive strike action to force through the renewal of collective agreements. They started on 30th April 2015 with some 10,000 workers involved in a half-day action. The main demand is for the lowest paid workers to be given higher wages. [Read more](#). A wave of strikes followed in May and June. These have already generated results in some sectors in the form of a 7.2% wage increase to be fully implemented by 2018. [Read more](#)

EU policies

- **European Commission:** In June 2015 the Commission adopted an action plan to make corporate taxation fairer, more efficient and more transparent. The plan is designed to tackle tax avoidance and to promote growth. [Read more](#)
- **European Commission:** Eleven EU Member States were given recommendations on wages and 19 EU Member States were sent recommendations on their labour markets in the draft country specific recommendations (CSR) published by the Commission in May 2015. The European Trade Union Confederation continues to criticise the EU's unbalanced approach. The CSRs were endorsed by the Council in June 2015. [Read more](#)
- **European Commission:** In May 2015 the European Commission launched a public consultation on the future of the Blue Card Directive (work permits for highly skilled non-EU citizens). The aim of the consultation is to gather opinions on economic migration in order to develop a new European policy and to review the Directive. [Read more](#). Explanatory text [here](#).

National policies

- **Finland:** In April 2015, 65% of the parliamentary candidates in Finland were in favour of a basic income. These candidates mainly represent the new government parties (the Centre Party, the Conservatives and the True Finns) but also the Left Alliance and the Swedish

People's Party. Numerous models for a basic income have been launched. It now seems likely that regional experiments will be initiated. The Social Democrats and the trade unions are opposed to this idea, partly because a basic income would replace other existing earnings-based social benefits and might lower the general wage level. [Read more](#)

Economic and social data

- **OECD:** The gap between the rich and the poor has never been greater. The richest 10% of people in the OECD countries make ten times as much money as the poorest 10%. This inequality hampers economic growth, according to the OECD. [Report here](#), OECD web site [here](#).

- **The European labour market:**
 1. The employment rate in the EU stood at 69.2% in 2014. It is still below the 2008 level and far below the EU 2020 target, which is 75%. [Read more](#)
 2. Unemployment is still a major problem in Europe despite a slight improvement in the last year. 23.5 million people were unemployed in April 2015. 4.7 million of these people were under 25 years old. Half of the EU Member States have youth unemployment rates of more than 20%. [Read more](#)
 3. The highest unemployment rates in Europe were recorded in Spanish regions in 2014. Andalusia, with an unemployment rate of 34.8%, was worst hit. In one Greek region youth unemployment stood at 69.8%. [Read more](#)
 4. 9.8 million part-time workers were underemployed in 2014. In Greece, 72.1% of the part-time workers were underemployed. In addition, 9.5 million people were available to work but not seeking work. 3.3 million of these people were in Italy. Far more women are underemployed than men. [Read more](#)

- **Europe's economy:** The Commission's spring forecast for 2015 indicates that Europe is slowly recovering after the banking crisis in 2008. But there are still severe problems such as unemployment, a lack of investment and a lack of real wage increases to reward workers for growth in productivity. [Read more](#)

- **Global labour market:** International Labour Organisation (ILO): Wage and salaried employment accounts for only half of total employment. Nearly 60% of these employees are either in part-time or temporary employment. There is a close link between precarious work, inequality and poverty. [Read more](#)

Study reports

- **ETUI:** The European Commission is stepping up efforts to do what it refers to as ‘simplifying’ EU law and to replace it with what it calls ‘smarter regulation’. The ETUI has published several papers which critically assess this field of the EU’s work and explain what is at stake for the workers. [Read more](#)

- **Eurofound:** In June 2015 Eurofound published a report entitled ‘Opting out of the Working Time Directive’. It mainly describes the general opt-out and where it is applied. [Read more](#)

- **Eurofound:** 20% of workers are in poor quality jobs, putting their health at risk and increasing the probability that they will leave the workforce early. This was highlighted in Eurofound’s yearbook entitled ‘Living and working in Europe 2014’, which was published in May 2015. [Read more](#)

- **Eurofound:** Increasing the length of people’s working lives necessitates changes in social protection systems. According to Eurofound, the definition of ‘sustainable work over the course of a person’s life’ is that working and living conditions are such that they support people in engaging and remaining in work throughout an extended working life. [Read more](#)

- **Hans Böckler Stiftung (WSI):** Five factors have been identified in order for a system of minimum wages in Germany to be successfully implemented. [Read more](#). Database on minimum wages [here](#)

Legal issues¹

- **European Court of Justice:** The social partners have the right to restrict temporary agency work in collective agreements. This follows a ruling of 17th March 2015. It was a complete victory for the Finnish trade unions, who took the case to court, and the whole of the European trade union movement. [Read more](#)

- **European Court of Justice:** The Posting of Workers Directive guarantees the minimum rate of pay of the host country. In February 2015, 186 Polish electricians working in Finland won a case against their Polish employer. Wages paid in Finland had been made universally applicable. [Read more](#)

¹ Decisions taken by the CJEU can be downloaded in full text in all official EU languages from the [Curia](#) website. The respective numbers of the three cases above are: C-533-13 and C-396-13.