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# Collective Bargaining News: 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2015

## Wage Negotiations

- **The Netherlands:** Protests and industrial actions continue after collective bargaining stalled in July 2015. The strikes are being intensified. A three-day strike was organised at lorry manufacturer DAF from 28 September 2015. In total 22 000 workers have participated. [Read more](#)
- **The Czech Republic:** On 29 September 2015 a strike was called in the company IG Wateeuw in Brno. A collective agreement had still not been concluded after 11 rounds of negotiations. The union (OS KOVO) wanted an end to the employer's misuse of working time accounts. [Read more](#) The strike was a success. It lasted until 7 October 2015. [Read more](#)

## Trade Union Actions

- **Europe:** IndustriAll Europe affiliates took actions on 7 October 2015, the World Day for Decent Work, to raise awareness about the fight against precarious work. [Read more](#)
- **Belgium:** On 7 October 2015 a national demonstration was organised by the three Belgian trade union confederations. They presented their alternatives to an antisocial government policy: social protection, social dialogue and free collective bargaining. [Read more](#)
- **Belgium:** The annual week of action to support the rights of temporary workers will take place from 12 to 16 October 2015. During this week, actions will be carried out by various coordination groups both at the federal and regional levels. [Read more](#)

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## European Union Policies

- **The social partners at European level** will negotiate a framework agreement on active ageing. This is a key element of their Work Programme for 2015 until 2017. The four organisations have also undertaken to strengthen their cooperation in other areas. [Read more](#)
- **European Commission:** A proposal for a new Maternity Leave Directive, which had been stuck in the legislative process for seven years, was formally withdrawn on 1 July 2015. If it had been adopted, the Directive would have granted pregnant workers the right to maternity leave of at least 18 consecutive weeks. In August 2015 the Commission presented a new, broader initiative, namely a roadmap with three different options. [Read more](#)

## National policies

- **Finland:** The government has announced a number of measures that it claims will improve competitiveness: the first day of sick leave without pay, lower pay for Sunday work, two fewer bank holidays, etc. Unions describe this as an attack on the autonomy of social partners and organised massive demonstrations on 18 September 2015. Together with IndustriALL Global Union, IndustriAll Europe sent a letter of protest to Finland's Prime Minister Juha Sipilä. [Read more](#)
- **Lithuania:** The Lithuanian trade unions took to the streets on 10 September 2015 under the slogan 'No to Slavery at Work'. Current plans by the government foresee drastic cuts in employee guarantees and the liberalisation of labour relations. IndustriAll Europe sent a protest letter to Prime Minister Algirdas Butkevičius requesting that the proposed legislation be withdrawn and that substantial amendments be made. [Read more](#)
- **The United Kingdom:** The government has published a Trade Union Bill which contains wide-ranging measures designed to restrict the ability of unions and their members to organise collectively and to take industrial action. [Read more](#)
- **The United Kingdom:** Unite has issued a press release expressing sharp criticism of the Conservative government's latest budget proposal. Despite a new minimum living wage, the poorest families will lose out due to cuts in state benefits. [Read more](#)

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## **Economic and social data**

- **Eurostat:** The EU-28's annual level of inflation was 0.0% in August 2015. Negative annual rates were observed in eleven EU Member States, three fewer than in July 2015. [Read more](#). The EA-19 inflation rate was -0.1% in September 2015. Energy prices fell by 8.9%; to a large extent this accounts for the deflation. [Read more](#)
- **Eurostat:** Government debt is still increasing in the EU despite austerity measures. In the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2015 it stood at €12 400 trillion, corresponding to 88.2% of GDP. This amounted to an increase of two percentage points in one year. [Read more](#)
- **Eurostat:** There are big differences in the EU with respect to government expenditure as a share of GDP. Finland had the highest share in 2014 (58.7%), and Romania and Lithuania the lowest (34.9%). [Read more](#)

## **Study reports**

- **Friedrich Ebert Stiftung:** Collective bargaining in Greece is being decentralised and dissolved in large parts of the economy. The government's attempts to restore it have so far failed because of resistance from the Troika. [Read more](#)
- **New Economics Foundation:** Declines in trade union densities and falling shares of wages in GDP have led to loss of output in the UK, according to a recent study. [Read more](#)
- **Eurofound:** Wage increases have been modest in recent years compared with those observed before the crisis, according to a Eurofound report on collectively agreed pay. There is an obvious connection between wage developments and changes to wage-setting mechanisms. [Read more](#)
- **Eurofound:** Collective agreements are important for regulating working time, according to a recent Eurofound study. France has the shortest working week (35.6 hours), while five countries had working weeks of 40 hours. There is still a gap between the EU-15 and the new EU Member States that have joined the EU since 2005. [Read more](#)
- **ETUI:** Within the framework of the new European economic governance, neoliberal views on wages have influenced various reforms of collective bargaining rules and practices. As the

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crisis in Europe came to be largely interpreted as a crisis of competitiveness, wages were seen as the core adjustment variable. [Read more](#)

- **ETUI:** Driving down public sector wages is not the right way for the EU to get out of the crisis. There is a need for a strong public sector to boost aggregate demand and to provide a modern infrastructure. [Read more](#)
- **Eurofound:** European Jobs Monitor 2015 shows that more jobs are being created in Europe, in particular low-to-mid-paid jobs. A marked increase in part-time work is the main cause of destandardisation in employment relationships. [Read more](#)

## **Legal issues**<sup>1</sup>

- **Court of Justice of the European Union:** Journeys made by workers without a fixed place of work constitute working time. Mobile workers must therefore be paid for travel time, according to a recent judgment concerning Spanish installation workers. [Read more](#). See also [article](#).
- **Court of Justice of the European Union:** A recent judgment makes it easier for governments to restrict economic benefits to job seekers. However, they may not expel EU citizens who are seeking employment and have a real chance of getting a job. [Read more](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Decisions taken by the CJEU can be downloaded in full text in all official EU languages from the [Curia](#) website. The case numbers of the judgments below are C-266/14 and C-67/14 respectively.