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Thorstern Schulten

The current European Collective Bargaining Report of the WSI gives an overview on recent trend in collective bargaining in the European Union in the years 2003 and 2004. Against the background of current economic conditions the report analyses the development of nominal and real wages and the exhaustion of the national margin of distribution in the various EU member states. Moreover, the report examines the development of statutory minimum wages and the current level of collectively agreed and actual working time.

Marc van der Meer

Coordinated decentralisation of wage setting in the Netherlands
The Netherlands is a classic example of a country following the principles of the process of coordinated decentralisation in wage-setting. Central agreements have paved the way for further differentiation and decentralisation of collective bargaining. In addition to the characteristics of the coordination of collective bargaining at the national level, this article presents two prominent examples of modernisation in wage-setting at the decentralised level. One is the process which led to the introduction of the layered or multi-level collective agreements that were developed in the late 1990s, both in the printing and media sectors and in the multinational company Unilever. The second example refers to the introduction of the multiple choice or à la carte agreement which has made fast progress since 2001. In conclusion, several potentials and pitfalls of the current developments are discussed.

Jos Benders, Lei Delsen, Jeroen Smits

Dutch experiences with ‘à la carte’ collective agreements
In the past few years, new “à la carte” collective agreements have been introduced in various sectors in the Netherlands. The principle of an “à la carte” agreement is quite simple: employees are offered the right to exchange certain items within the agreed package of working conditions according to their preferences. In this article, the actual choices of all employees at the University of Nijmegen in the years 2002-2004 are analysed. The results give cause to doubt both the usefulness of the arrangement for a majority of the employees as well as on the efficiency for the company. The large scale swapping of days off for additional pay also calls into question the policy of working time reduction and wage moderation that is favoured by the Dutch trade unions.

Jens Lind

The Danish system of collective bargaining – between cohesion and fragmentation
In recent decades collective bargaining in Denmark has become increasingly decentralised. Sectoral bargaining is still taking place at national level, where the overall framework for pay levels and other working conditions are set. National collective agreements include all the general and social elements that are regulated by collective agreements, such as pension schemes, maternity leave, number of
holidays etc. Local bargaining has become more important in the sense that more flexible pay systems and flexible working time arrangements can be negotiated and implemented at company level. In some areas “a la carte” agreements have been introduced, but they are still not a widespread phenomenon in Denmark.

Werner Pramstrahler

**Structure and change in the Italian system of collective bargaining**

This article analyses the development and the current state of the Italian collective bargaining system. A successful social pact in the collective bargaining system in the early nineties contributed decisively to the revitalisation of the Italian economy, but it has been less successful in the distribution of the productivity gains. Since 2001 the collective bargaining system has been exposed to politically induced modification pressure, which contributed to a new wave of the conflicts between the unions and also industrial action. Relations between the actors involved are currently improving; interesting proposals are under discussion which would lead to a renewal of the bargaining structure in a country with great socio-economic differences.

Heribert Kohl

**Slovenia: the future of the effective system of collective bargaining remains open**

Slovenia with the highest per capita income of all CEE new member states has proved to have a highly effective system of collective bargaining and agreements at different levels (national, sectoral, enterprise). Contrary to the prevalent erosion of branch contracts in Western Europe (and their obvious deficiencies in other acceding countries) this country displays stable and differentiated structures of collective regulations, which will nevertheless be exposed to new challenges in the future. Some of these problems are analysed: for example the question of minimum wages, the hitherto dominant role of the chambers of commerce and crafts in bargaining policies as well as the basic developments and indicators. In the face of inconsistencies between deregulation tendencies, a strong tripartite corporatism and recent efforts by trade unions to gain higher priority for branch collective agreements, future developments in this Slovenian multi-level model remain open.

Alpay Hekimler

**The Turkish system of collective bargaining in a time of reform**

Turkey has entered a period of comprehensive reform in which much existing legislation (including the Turkish labour and social law) is being adapted to European norms. The article describes the development of the Turkish collective bargaining system and discusses the current proposals for amendments to the Turkish Collective Agreement Act. The present legal provisions give trade unions and employers only limited room for manoeuvre in any autonomous regulation of working conditions. However, the current proposals mark, at best, the beginning of a more comprehensive reform of the Turkish collective bargaining system.
The collective agreements concluded in the first half of 2003 have led to only moderate pay increases. This is the main result of the interim bargaining report of the Collective Agreement Archive of the Institute of Economic and Social Research (WSI) within the Hans-Böckler-Foundation. The average pay increase amounts to 1.6%. Calculated on an annual basis, the provisional average collectively agreed pay increase will be around 2.0% in 2004 (taking into account pay increases coming into effect in 2004 agreed in the 2003 bargaining round). The cost neutral margin of distribution of 3% (inflation rate of 1.6% plus productivity rate of 1.5%) will therefore not be exhausted. New pay agreements concluded by trade unions affiliated to the Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB) in the first half of 2004 cover about 5.6 million employees.