

German unemployment up, skilled worker shortage a problem

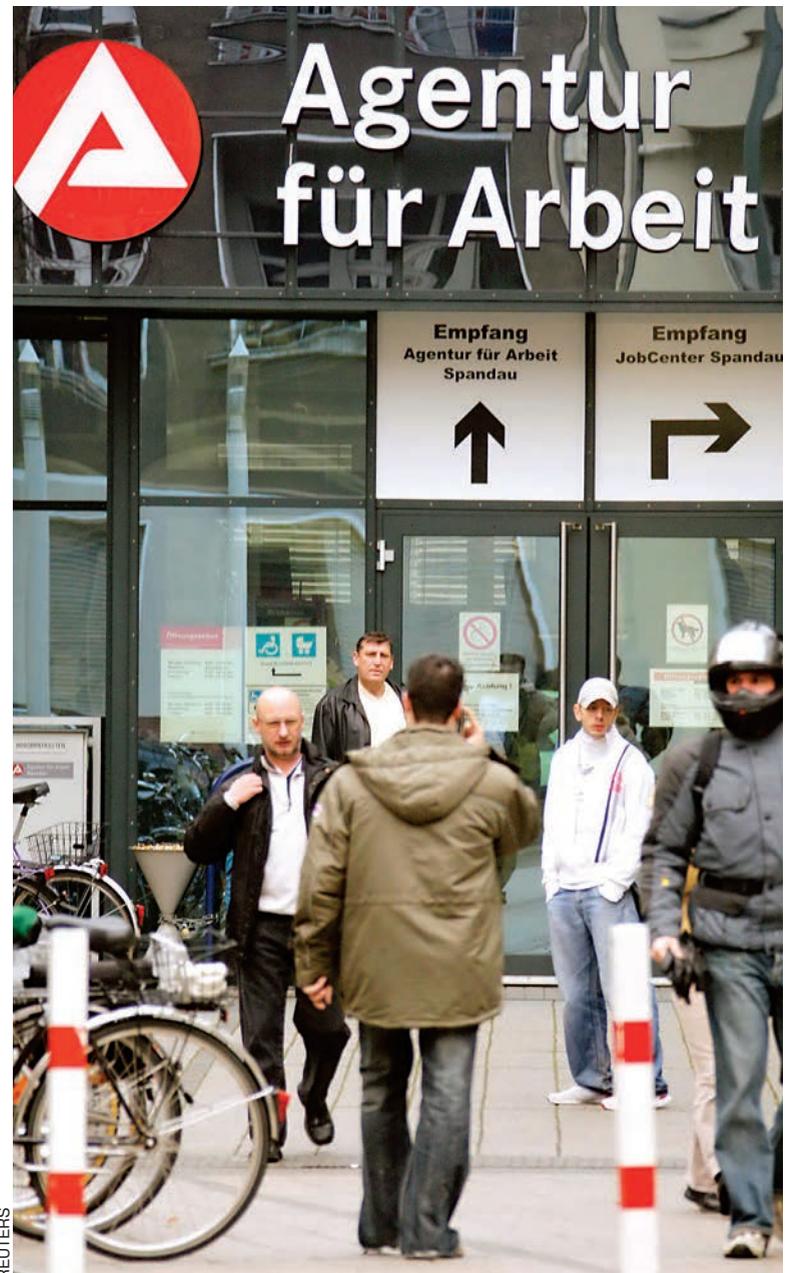
Slightly more people were out of work in Germany in August than a month ago, but the unemployment rate was just 6.8 percent of the workforce — near its lowest in two decades

Joblessness rose by some 7,000 to 2.943 million in seasonally adjusted terms. It was the first rise in the total since May and the Federal Labour Agency blamed a hiring lull due to the summer holiday. A lack of skilled workers remains a problem and Labour Minister Ursula von der Leyen explained the efforts there, “More older people are working. The participation of women in the workforce and immigration of skilled workers is also progressing well, but does need to be expanded.”

Germany has been focusing on getting older workers back into the workforce, along with women and migrants to address the skills shortage. With low birth rates, it is estimated the country will lack around 5.5 million skilled workers by 2025. Training programmes are bringing in students from countries with high unemployment such as Spain.

Alberto Coronado, the project co-ordinator at one such programme for heating engineers near Frankfurt, said it is a win-

win situation, “Young people in Spain don’t know where to go, they have no future. And that’s why we think this is a way to help with the problems in Spain and address the future shortage of skilled labour here.” A recent survey of small and medium sized German companies by consultants Ernst and Young reported they are finding it difficult to fill jobs with qualified workers. It is calculated that is costing those businesses around 33 billion Euros a year in lost revenues.



People walk in front of a job centre in Berlin



At the exhibition devoted to Leonardo da Vinci

Leonardo da Vinci famous drawings go on show in Venice

Fifty two drawings by Leonardo da Vinci — including his famous study of the body — have gone on show in Venice

Leonardo da Vinci: The Universal Man includes the original image of his *The Vitruvian Man*, which has not been seen in public in 30 years. The exhibition at the Galleria dell'Accademia is a collection of the Renaissance painter's artistic and scientific research. It also features preparatory drawings for some of da Vinci's famous works.

Curator Annalisa Perissa Torriani said she hoped the show would provide visitors with an insight into the inner workings of the artist's mind. She said it shows da Vinci 'reasoning and translating from his brain to his hand but always retracing his steps to add corrections and

additions'. Da Vinci, who was born in 1452, was a polymath whose talents covered painting, sculpting, architecture, mathematics and botany among many others.

The Vitruvian Man was based on the writings of the ancient Roman architect Vitruvius, who correlated the measurements and design of the human body into architecture. Despite it being among Da Vinci's most famous works, the fact that it is drawn on paper means that it is rarely put on public display over fears of lasting damage. The exhibition has been made possible with works from the Venice museum's own archives as well as from the collections of the British Royal Family, Oxford's Ashmolean Museum, the British Museum in London and the Louvre in Paris.

US fast food workers on nationwide strike over pay

Fast food workers in dozens of US cities are on strike, union leaders say, in what could be one of the industry's biggest walkouts

Workers want to be paid \$15 (£10) an hour, double the rate for many employees at fast food chains. In New York City, about 300 protesters flooded into a McDonald's near the Empire State Building. The strike comes amid calls by President Barack Obama and some lawmakers to raise the US minimum wage. Those members of Congress suggest bringing the current rate up to \$9 an hour from \$7.25, previously set in 2009.

Labour Secretary Thomas Perez, who is taking a lead role in the Obama administration's minimum wage push, said, “For all too many people working minimum wage jobs, the rungs on the ladder of opportunity are feeling further and further apart.” In addition to a walkout at fast food chains in 60 cities, including New York, Chicago and Detroit, employees at retail firms in some cities were expected to join, say union leaders. Other cities included Boston, Atlanta, Hartford, Los Angeles, Milwaukee and St Louis. But turnout varied significantly across the nation, with some targeted restaurants appearing to operate normally while others were unable to do business.

Many workers say they cannot live on the minimum wage, which would net \$15,000 a year for full-time work. But many note they are rarely scheduled for full working weeks. In Raleigh, North Carolina,



Thousands of workers are on strike

about 30 fast food workers picketed outside a Little Caesars pizza restaurant. Julio Wilson said he earns \$9 an hour and had worked there for about six months. He said that pay was insufficient to support himself and his five-year-old daughter. “I know I’m risking my job, but it’s my right to fight for what I deserve,” Mr. Wilson said. In addition to advocating for \$15 an hour, workers are calling for the right to unionise without interference from employers.

In statements, McDonald's and Burger King Worldwide said they did not make pay decisions at the majority of US restaurants that operate as independent franchises. The firms have argued that rais-

ing entry-level wages would lead to higher overall costs and higher prices. A spokesman for the National Restaurant Association, a restaurant lobbying group, told the Associated Press news agency that low wages reflect the fact that most fast food workers tend to be younger and have little work experience. But Mary Kay Henry, of Service Employees International Union (SEIU), a labour group supporting the strike, says many fast-food workers are no longer only teenagers.

The US fast food industry has come under increasing scrutiny because part-time jobs have made up most of the job growth since the recession.