



**Collective bargaining and renewals in Estonia during the
Covid-19 Pandemic: Observations based on the Collective
Agreements Database**

Country Report

June 2023

BARCOVID

The BARCOVID project aims to improve knowledge about the content of collective agreements in Europe and to undertake research activities to enhance the collection of comparative information on collective bargaining outcomes. The project takes into account the Covid-19 impact on industrial relations in Europe, which is approached from different angles, such as government measures and occupational health and safety. Lead partner is the University of Amsterdam/AIAS. The Central European Labour Studies Institute (CELSI), Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies and WageIndicator Foundation are the project's key actors.

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AIAS-HSI is an institute for multidisciplinary research and teaching at the University of Amsterdam (UvA), the largest university in the Netherlands. AIAS-HSI has as its objective the coordination, implementation and stimulation of interdisciplinary research into the practice of labour law and social security law. Therefore it combines insights from the social sciences, legal dogmas and legal theories in its research.

Central European Labour Studies Institute (CELSI)

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WageIndicator Foundation collects, compares and shares labour market information through online and offline surveys and research. Its national websites serve as always up-to-date online libraries featuring (living) wage information, labour law and career advice, for employees, employers and social partners. In this way, WageIndicator is a life changer for millions of people around the world.

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Bibliographical information

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Collective Bargaining and Industrial Relations during the Pandemic: Limited Evidence from the Collective Agreements Database

As for the report on Turkey, also in this case the WageIndicator Collective Agreements Database has been utilized as a primary resource for analyzing Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs).¹ The database, built by the WageIndicator Foundation (WIF), offers a comprehensive collection of annotated CBAs from around the globe. As of April 2023, it contains 2300+ CBAs in 27 different languages, originating from 67 countries. The database provides a unique opportunity to closely examine and compare agreements across countries, industries, and different bargaining levels.

The collection process for the CBAs involves downloading from national registries, conducting smart Google searches, and directly requesting full-text agreements from bargaining social partners. The annotation process of CBAs in the database is based on a comprehensive coding scheme with more than 800 variables related to fourteen macro topics. This scheme is constantly evolving and is updated according to the most relevant topics emerging from public debates worldwide. Each CBA is annotated by professionals, usually native speakers of the language used in the documents, with knowledge and understanding of industrial relations and collective bargaining. For more detailed information on the coding scheme and variables used in the annotation process, the WageIndicator Collective Agreements Database Codebook (Ceccon and Medas, 2022) can be consulted as a reference.

Given the lack of survey data on Baltic countries and the scarce availability of agreements, this report focuses on the information available in the CBA Database on 19 collective agreements signed in Estonia after the explosion of the pandemic.²

In what follows, we investigate for each agreement: i) the number of signatories, ii) the type of signatories; iii) whether direct reference is made with respect to the pandemic for what concerns the process of agreement renewal.

¹ See: <https://wageindicator.org/about/researchlab/cba-database>

² In the case of Austria, France, Italy, The Netherlands, and Spain, richer information was collected through the diffusion of an online survey – the Barcovid Negotiator Survey - on the process of renewal (please see Jansen et al., 2023 for further details).

First, let us briefly describe the Estonian CBAs database. As shown in **Table 1**, the agreements under analysis cover different sectors, with almost half of them belonging to the sector of Education and Research. Indeed, when looking at the type of organization, 16 out of 19 CBAs result to cover the public sector, government institutions or government funded organizations, while only 2 CBAs cover private organizations (**Table 2**).

Table 1 Estonian CBAs by sector

Sector of the CBA	Number of CBAs
Education, research	7
Entertainment culture and sport	1
Extraction, mining and quarrying	1
Healthcare, caring services, social work	2
Public administration, police, interest	3
Publishing, printing, media	1
Transport, logistics, communication	3
Waste treatment, sanitation, supply	1

Table 2 Estonian CBAs by type of organization

Type of organization	Number of CBAs
Private	2
Public	10
In the government sector	5
In a government funded organisation	1
n.a.	1

Concerning the type of signatories illustrated in **Table 3**, the evidence shows a prevalence of single employers or single employers' association. Trade unions are almost always present as signatories, while professional associations appear only in one case.³

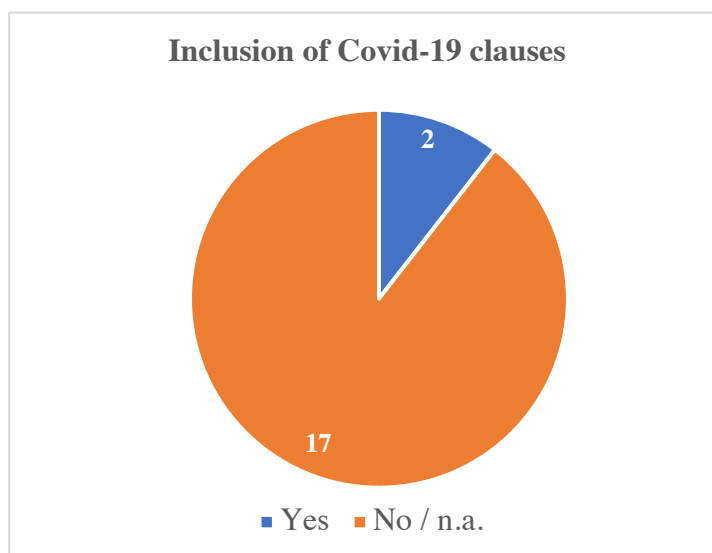
Table 3 CBAs Signatories and process of renewal (Post-Covid agreements)

Information on signatories	Yes	No
Single employer/company	14	5
Trade unions	18	1
Professional associations as signatories	1	18

³ The analyses presented in this report depend on data made available once the process of CBAs annotation was completed by the coders.

Despite all the agreements have been signed after the explosion of the pandemic, as shown in **Figure 1**, only 2 agreements out of 19 (respectively belonging to the public sector and the healthcare sector) make specific reference to Covid-19. More precisely, these two agreements mainly discuss about vaccines, masks and protective equipment required to avoid the diffusion of the virus. No specific clause on the exercise of trade union rights during the pandemic is found in the texts under analysis.

Figure 1 Estonian CBAs by Covid-19 related clauses (number)



References

Ceccon, D., Medas, G. (2022). Codebook WageIndicator Collective Agreements Database – Version 5 – February 2022. WageIndicator Foundation, Amsterdam.

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