



# Collective Bargaining in France during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Observations from a Negotiator Survey

*Country Report*

June 2023

**BARCOVID**

**AIASHSI**

•• WageIndicator

CELSI

Central European  
Labour Studies  
Institute

 **Sant'Anna**  
School of Advanced Studies - Pisa

## 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 in 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.

### University of Amsterdam/AIAS-HSI

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)

Central European Labour Studies Institute (CELSI) is a non-profit research institute based in Bratislava, Slovakia. It fosters multidisciplinary research about the functioning of labour markets and institutions, work and organizations, business and society, and ethnicity and migration in the economic, social, and political life of modern societies. CELSI strives to make a contribution to the cutting-edge international scientific discourse.

### Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies

Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies is a public university institute - with special autonomy - working in the field of applied sciences: Economics and Management, Law, Political Sciences, Agricultural Sciences and Plant Biotechnology, Medicine, and Industrial and Information Engineering. The School promotes the internationalization of didactics and research with innovative paths in the fields of university education, scientific research and advanced training.

### WageIndicator Foundation

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.



### Funding

BARCOVID (VS/2021/0190) is funded by the European Commission through its Social Dialogue Program. The views and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union and the European Union cannot be held responsible for them

### Bibliographical information

Cetrulo, A., & Jansen, G. (2023). *Collective Bargaining in France during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Observations from a Negotiator Survey*. Country Report. University of Amsterdam, Central European Labour Studies Institute, Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies, WageIndicator Foundation.

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## Collective Bargaining and Industrial Relations during the Pandemic: Limited Evidence from the Barcovid Negotiator Survey

### 2.1 Data Collection: Negotiator Survey

We collected the data for this study through the *Barcovid Negotiator Survey*, which is an international survey conducted among negotiators and signatories of collective bargaining agreements in five European countries. The survey was conducted to investigate the impact of the Covid19 pandemic on industrial relations. We used an online questionnaire created using Qualtrics, and fieldwork was conducted between January 16 and March 10 2023. The survey questions were designed to understand the renewal process of CBAs during the pandemic and the wider implications of the pandemic on relations between social partners.

To recruit respondents, we identified signatory parties (employee and employer organizations) for all collective agreements in the CBA Database for Austria, France, Italy, The Netherlands, and Spain, and collected their email addresses via web search. If possible, information on individual negotiators (name and professional email address) was retrieved. We sent invitations to these organizations/individuals between in January 2023, and we also sent two reminders in February and March. Invitations were sent to only the first five signatory parties involved with a CBA, and only one negotiator was contacted in case multiple signatories/negotiators were listed for one organization.

For France, we sent invitations to 151 signatories (or other negotiators or officials involved with the collective agreement). The invitation emails and questionnaires were presented to respondents in their own language, in this case in French. Yet, in total, we only received 3 (partially) completed responses (response rate 2%). This is notably lower than the average response rate across the 5 countries under study (13%), slightly lower than the case of Spain (3%) and much lower than the highest response rate in the Netherlands (response rate 29.8%). Additional efforts were made to increase the response rate for France (additional email invitations were sent out and targeted telephone calls were made). Unfortunately, however, these efforts did not result in a substantially higher response. More details about the data collection and the questionnaire can be found in the overarching report and the questionnaire appendix (cf. Jansen, Cetrulo and Szüdi 2023).

Because of the low number of responses, the data will not be analysed statistically. Statistical analysis on such a low number of responses is not meaningful. However, only for some key questions in the questionnaire, we will report the answers provided by the 3 French respondents, as they represent an original source of information. These responses should only serve as an illustration and should not be generalized beyond the participants of this study. For this reason, the responses are only listed, and are not interpreted. For general patterns about the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the negotiation process, we refer to the comparative report by Jansen et al. (2023).

## 2.2 Some observation regarding the impact of the Covid19 pandemic on collective negotiations in France (N=3).

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*To what extent did the covid19 pandemic make it more difficult to reach an agreement?*

Neither more difficult, nor easier	2
Missing (DK/NA)	1

*The Covid19 pandemic made it easier for negotiators to accept each other's terms*

Neither agree, nor disagree	1
Don't know / Not applicable	2

*How important was the covid19 pandemic compared to other factors that affected the negotiation process?*

Not important at all	2
Missing (DK/NA)	1

*How would you describe the relations between social partners at the time of negotiations?*

Bad	1
Good	1
Missing (DK/NA)	1

*How have the relations between social partners changed since the beginning of the Covid pandemic (in 2020)?*

Worsened	1
Stayed about the same	1
Missing (DK/NA)	1

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## 2.2 Responses to open questions regarding the impact of the Covid19 pandemic on collective negotiations in France.

Is there anything else you would like to share regarding the CBA renewal process in general and regarding the Covid pandemic specifically?

*“Our collective agreement on long-term partial activity was only negotiated in 2021, it is quite late compared to the crisis that began in 2020. This conventional arrangement was negotiated and signed to support companies in [sector] that were struggling to restart their activities (...). Few companies in the sector have implemented this measure, as the aid mechanisms put in place by the government have been rather effective in maintaining employment and ensuring a certain level of salary”.*

- Employer representative, France

## References

Jansen, G. & Cetrulo, A. and Szüdi, G (2023). *Collective Bargaining during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Evidence from an International Negotiator Survey*. Comparative Report. University of Amsterdam, Central European Labour Studies Institute, Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies, WageIndicator Foundation