

Collective Bargaining in Turkey during the Covid-19 pandemic. Evidence from CBAs 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 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.

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Bibliographical information

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Table of contents

INTRODUCTION	3
DATABASE ON TURKISH CBAs	3
THE IMPACT OF THE COVID19 PANDEMIC ON CLAUSES	4
JOB TITLE, TRAINING AND APPRENTICESHIPS	4
SOCIAL SECURITY AND EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT	4
SICKNESS AND DISABILITY, HEALTH AND MEDICAL ASSISTANCE	5
WORK/FAMILY BALANCE ARRANGEMENTS	5
GENDER EQUALITY	6
WORKING HOURS	6
WAGES	7
CLAUSES ON COVID	7
CONCLUSIONS	7
REFERENCES	8
LIST OF TABLES	8

Introduction

This report investigates the change in the content of Turkish collective agreements renewed after the explosion of the Covid-19 pandemic. Turkish CBAs were collected both through direct contact with national trade unions and employers and through documents' retrieval on their official websites. Moreover, collective agreements covering civil servants were collected through official institutional sources ("gazette") as these documents are made publicly available once they come in force.

Database on Turkish CBAs

The Turkish database used for the Pre/Post Covid comparison is made of 12 pairs of agreements. The most represented sector is Waste treatment, followed by Transport, logistics and communication, as shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1 Turkish CBAs by sector

Sector of the CBA	Number of CBAs
Manufacturing	1
Waste treatment, sanitation, supply of water	5
Transport, logistics, communication	2
Financial services, banking, insurance	1
Education, research	1
Trade, fuelling and repair of motor vehicles	1
Entertainment, culture, sports	1

The vast majority of Turkish CBAs under analysis covers public companies (**Table 2**).

Table 2 Turkish CBAs by type of organization

Type of organization	Number of CBAs
Private	1
Public	9
Semi-public	2

The impact of the Covid19 pandemic on clauses

In the following section, we will illustrate the observed changes in the number of clauses included in Turkish collective agreements, comparing pre and post Covid agreements. Consistently with the structure defined by the Wage Indicator codebook (Ceccon and Medas, 2022), we distinguish ten main domains of interest: 1) Job titles; 2) Training; 3) Social security and pensions; 4) Employment contracts; 5) Sickness and disability; 6) Health and medical assistance; 7) Work/family balance arrangements; 8) Gender equality issues; 9) Working hours and 10) Wages. Notice, however, that the descriptive analysis presented in this report strongly depends on the type of data made available once the process of CBAs annotation was completed by the coders. Some inaccuracies might be due to the different understanding and interpretations of the texts provided by the coders.

Job title, training and apprenticeships

As illustrated in **Table 3**, clauses on job description and training are quite diffused and do not record a significant change after the pandemic. Clauses on apprenticeships are less usual and increase by one in Post-pandemic CBAs. Conversely, clauses on training funds – that were included in one CBA before the pandemic - are not included in any CBA after the pandemic.

Table 3 Clauses on job titles, training and apprenticeship contract (Pre/Post Covid comparison)

Clause	Pre-covid	Post-covid
Job description/job classifications system	10	10
Training programs	12	12
Apprenticeships	6	7
Training Fund	1	0

Social security and employment contract

Clauses on employment contract, trial periods and severance pay are diffused in all or almost all the Turkish CBAs under analysis. Their frequency does not change in the post-pandemic scenario. No

clauses on free legal assistance and specific provisions regarding temporary workers are included in the agreements (**Table 4**).

Table 4 Clauses on social security and employment contract (Pre/Post Covid comparison)

Clause	Pre-covid	Post-covid
Employment contract	12	12
Trial period	11	11
Severance pay	11	11
Free legal assistance	0	0
Specific provision on temporary workers	0	0

Sickness and disability, health and medical assistance

Clauses related to sickness leave, work accidents, health and safety policy are quite frequent in the Turkish CBAs. Less usual are clauses on health and safety training and return to work after serious illness. No change is observed in pre- and post-Covid comparison. (**Table 5**).

Table 5 Clauses on sickness, disability, health and medical assistance (Pre/Post Covid comparison)

Clause	Pre-covid	Post-covid
Sickness leave	12	12
Return to work after serious illness	1	1
Pay in case of disability because of work accident	9	9
Free or subsidized medical assistance for sick employees	9	10
Health insurance	1	0
Health and safety workplace policy	12	12
Health and safety training	4	4

Work/family balance arrangements

Clauses related to work and family balance arrangements are relatively frequent in Turkish CBAs, despite some heterogeneities can be found with respect to the diffusion of specific provisions. However, it is worth underlining that some of these clauses - as in particular maternity leave - are regulated by Turkish regulation (Guler, 2023). Thus, their absence in the CBAs does not imply workers are not entitled to these rights. As shown in **Table 6**, no change is observed in post-Covid renewals.

Table 6 Clauses on work/family balance arrangements (Pre/Post Covid comparison)

Clause	Pre-covid	Post-covid
Paid maternity leave	6	7
Paid paternity leave	12	12
Paid leave to care for dependent relatives	9	9
Paid leave in case of death of relatives	12	12
Paid leave in case of the worker's marriage	8	12
Time-off breastfeeding	8	8
Job security for women after maternity	0	0

Gender equality

The set of Turkish CBAs under analysis shows a scarce diffusion of provisions related to gender equality issues. Indeed, only 4 CBAs contain clauses against discrimination at work and 3 CBAs have clauses addressing sexual harassment at work. No CBA has clauses on monitoring gender equality or providing equal opportunity for female career developments. Among those with gender related clauses on CBAs, no change is observed before and after Covid, as illustrated in **Table 7**.

Table 7 Clauses on gender equality (Pre/Post Covid comparison)

Clause	Pre-covid	Post-covid
Addressing discrimination at work	4	5
Equal opportunities for promotion of women workers	0	0
Equal opportunities for training of women workers	0	0
Addressing sexual harassment at work	3	3
Special leave for workers subjected to domestic violence	0	0
Monitoring gender equality	0	0

Working hours

Clauses on working hours and paid annual leaves are included in all Turkish CBAs under analysis. No change is observed in pre-post Covid comparison. On the contrary, clauses on flexible work arrangements are very rare since they were included in only 1 CBA signed before Covid, and no CBA contains any clause on remote working (**Table 8**).

Table 8 Clauses on working hours (Pre/Post Covid comparison)

Clause	Pre-covid	Post-covid
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Working hours (per week, month or year)	12	12
Paid annual leave	12	12
Rest period	11	11
Paid leave for trade union activities	12	12
Flexible work arrangements	1	0
Remote work	0	0

Wages

For what concerns clauses on wages, once only extra payment, allowances for seniority and overtime, no changes are observed in the agreements under analysis. As shown in **Table 9**, almost all if not all contain this type of provision.

Table 9 Clause on wages (Pre/Post Covid comparison)

Clause	Pre-covid	Post-covid
Wages	12	12
Structural wage increase	12	12
Once only extra payment	11	11
Seniority allowance	11	11
Overtime work allowance	12	12

Clauses on Covid

Table 10 Clauses on the Covid-19 pandemic

Clause	Number of CBAS
Specific clause on covid	1
Exercise of trade unions rights during the pandemic	0

The only CBA with a clause related to Covid contains a provision regarding the possibility for the worker of performing remote working in the case her/his child is affected by Covid-19.

Conclusions

As shown in the tables presented above, very few changes in the number of clauses included in the agreements renewed after the explosion of the Covid-19 emerge, if compared to the same agreements signed before the pandemic. Reversely, most of the clauses remain stable in terms of their frequency, according to data provided by Wage Indicator within the BARCOVID project. These results cautiously suggest a relative stability in the main provisions included in the collective agreements.

Nevertheless, no further interpretation of these findings can be provided, given the very limited number of agreements under analysis.

References

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List of tables

<i>Table 1 Turkish CBAs by sector</i>	3
<i>Table 2 Turkish CBAs by type of organization</i>	4
<i>Table 3 Clauses on job titles, training and apprenticeship contract (Pre/Post Covid comparison)</i>	4
<i>Table 4 Clauses on social security and employment contract (Pre/Post Covid comparison)</i>	5
<i>Table 5 Clauses on sickness, disability, health and medical assistance (Pre/Post Covid comparison)</i>	5
<i>Table 6 Clauses on work/family balance arrangements (Pre/Post Covid comparison)</i>	6
<i>Table 7 Clauses on gender equality (Pre/Post Covid comparison)</i>	6
<i>Table 8 Clauses on working hours (Pre/Post Covid comparison)</i>	6
<i>Table 9 Clause on wages (Pre/Post Covid comparison)</i>	7
<i>Table 10 Clauses on the Covid-19 pandemic</i>	7