

Belgium

Main indicators and characteristics of collective bargaining

This note presents the main indicators and characteristics of collective bargaining in Belgium for 2019 or the latest year available. The purpose of this note is to provide a snapshot of the functioning of collective bargaining in Belgium that can be used for comparisons with other countries in the database. Therefore, this note does not provide a precise description of the legal provisions or standard practices in Belgium but only a general summary.

The first version of the OECD and AIAS, Institutional Characteristics of Trade Unions, Wage Setting, State Intervention and Social Pacts (ICTWSS) database has been released in February 2021 and has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Innovation “EaSI” (2014-2020), VS/2019/0185. The views expressed herein can in no way be taken to reflect the official opinion of the European Union.

The OECD/AIAS ICTWSS database together with its codebook, a note on methodology and sources and a glossary is publicly available at www.oecd.org/employment/ictwss-database.htm. For any information or correction, please contact CollectiveBargaining@oecd.org.

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The actors and scope of collective bargaining

<i>Trade union density (% of employees)</i>	49.1% (in 2019)
<i>Adjusted bargaining (or union) coverage rate (% of employees with the right to bargain)</i>	96% (in 2019)
<i>Employer organisation density (% of employees)</i>	83.8% (in 2014)

Wage setting

<i>The predominant level at which wage bargaining takes place (in terms of coverage of employees)</i>	Intermediate or alternating between central and industry bargaining
<i>The combination of levels at which collective bargaining over wages takes place</i>	Cross-sectoral (entire economy or private sector), sectoral and company, with company agreements that specify/deviate from sector agreements, and sector agreements that specify/deviate from central agreements
<i>Reach or incidence of additional enterprise bargaining</i>	Additional enterprise bargaining on wages occurs only in large firms
<i>Favourability</i>	Lower-level agreements must by law offer more favourable terms, but derogation is possible under defined conditions
<i>Opening clauses in sectoral collective agreements</i>	Sectoral agreements contain opening clauses, allowing the renegotiation of contractual non-wage issues (working time, schedules, etc) at enterprise level
<i>Crisis-related, temporary opening clauses in collective agreement</i>	Agreements contain no opening clauses
<i>Mandatory extension of collective agreements to non-organised employers</i>	Extension is virtually automatic and more or less general (including enlargement)
<i>Is there a statutory minimum wage in your country?</i>	Yes, there is one or more statutory minimum wage rate(s) that cover(s) all or most employees

Wage co-ordination

Coordination of wage-setting

Binding norms regarding maximum or minimum wage rates or wage increases issued as a result of a) centralized bargaining by the central union and employers' associations, with or without government involvement, or b) unilateral government imposition of wage schedule/freeze, with or without prior consultation and negotiations with unions and/or employers' associations

Type of coordination of wage setting

Government-sponsored bargaining (this includes pacts)

Works councils and employee representation in the enterprise

Status of works council

Existence and rights of works council or structure for (union and non-union based) employee representation within firms or establishments confronting management are mandated by law or established through basic general agreement between unions and employers

Involvement of works councils (or similar structures) in wage negotiations

Works councils is formally (by law or agreement) barred from negotiating (plant-level) agreements and involvement of works councils in negotiating (plant-level) agreements is rare

Social pacts and agreements

A social pact or central agreement is signed in specified year

Yes (refers to the year in which the pact or agreement is signed, which needs not be the year in which the pact or agreement is applied)

Existence of a tripartite council for the purpose of negotiation, consultation or information exchange over social and economic policies

No permanent council