

Collective bargaining beyond pay

An analysis of collective agreements in selected low-paid sectors

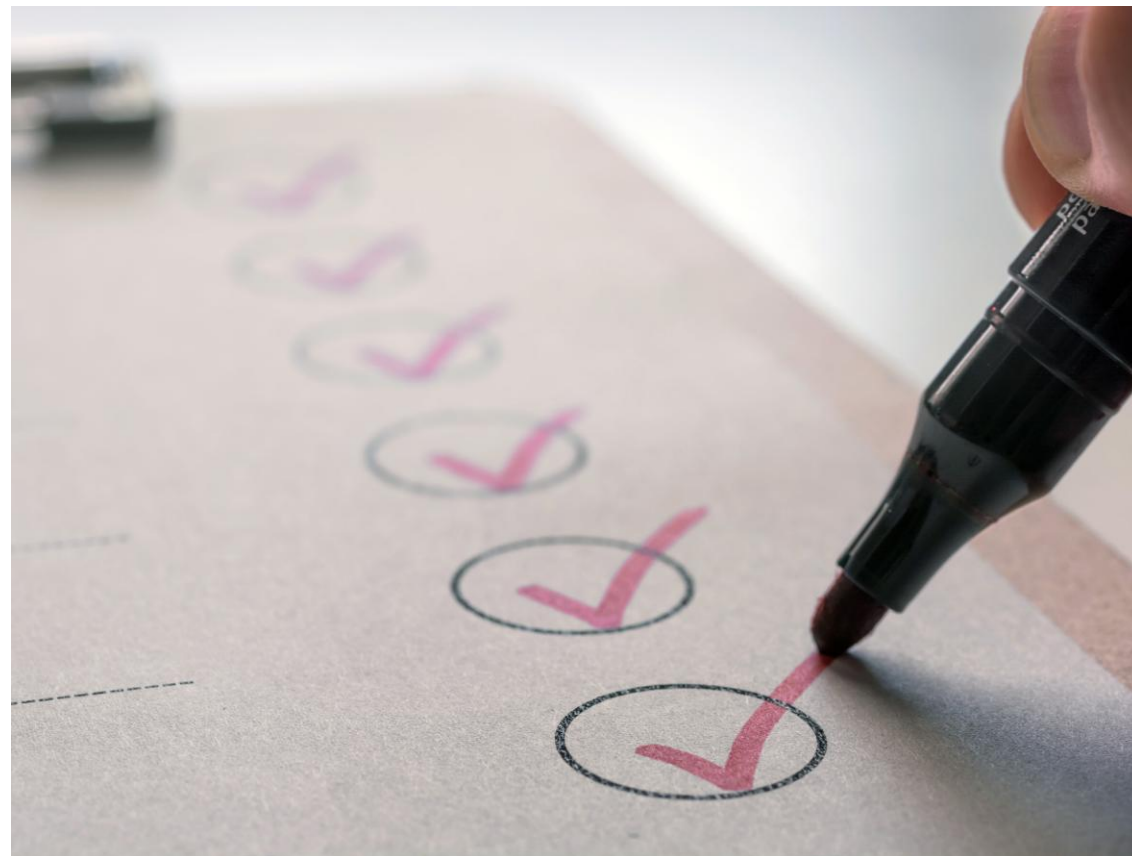
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Research Officer, Eurofound

Delivering Quality Jobs in Europe: The Expanding Role of Collective Bargaining, 24 March 2026

Outline of the presentation

1. Project overview and main research question
2. Data and methodology
3. Selected results: key issues in collective agreements for low-paid workers
4. (Selected) examples from the agreements
5. Q&A



Collective bargaining beyond pay (CBBP): project overview

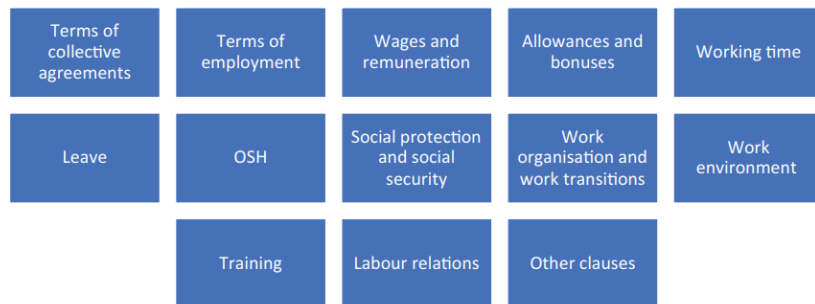
- A ‘spin-off’ of the Pilot Project on Minimum Wages and its ‘**Database on minimum wages for low-paid workers in collective agreements**’:
 - comparative data on pay rates in 692 CBAs in the EU-27, covering a time series of observations from 2015 to 2027
- CBBP looks **beyond the pay set** within CBAs and analyses the **content** of collective agreements
 - **Duration:** 2023 – 2025
 - Developed with input from the **Network of Eurofound Correspondents (NEC)**
 - **Main RQ: What other aspects of working conditions – beyond pay – are regulated in collective agreements across Europe?**



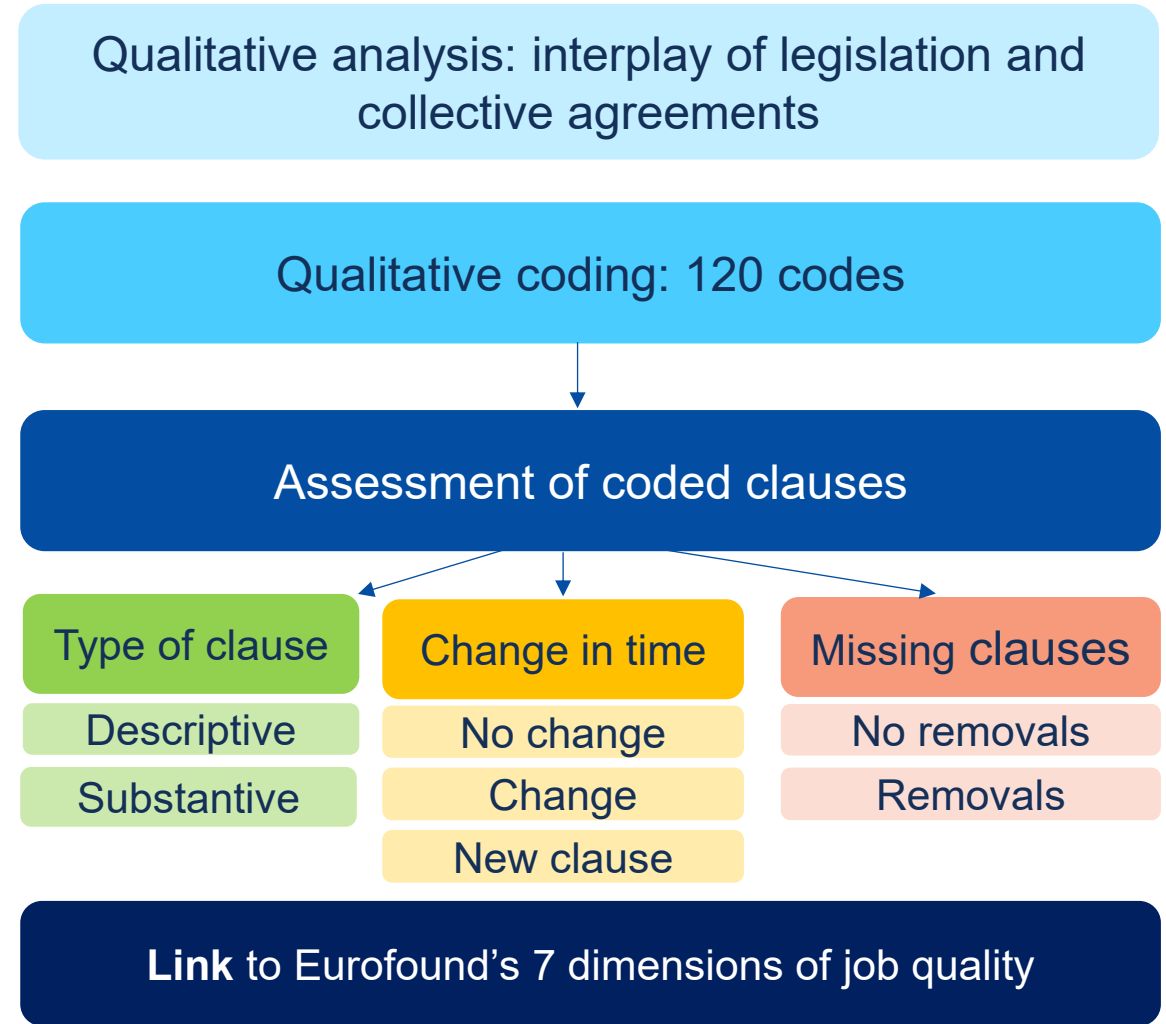
Methodology: content analysis of collective agreements

- **94** collective agreements
- **3** low-paid sectors:
 - Manufacture of food, leather, textiles and clothes (42)
 - Residential and social care (25)
 - Retail (27)
- **12 countries:** 11 Member States (AT, BE, CZ, ES, FI, FR, HR, IT, NL, PT, SK) and Norway
- Clauses coded into **13 main topics/main codes**; **120 codes** overall

Figure 2: Main topics analysed in collective agreements (level 1 codes)



- **Results:** more than **13,347** coded clauses categorized as descriptive/declarative and substantive/transformatory and their change over time (2015 vs 2022)



[Link to Eurofound's 7 dimensions of job quality](#)

Residential and social care / Domestic personnel

Database on minimum wages for low-paid workers in collective agreements

NACE one-digit	Group name for the database	NACE two-digit code	NACE two-digit sector	Estimated size of the low-paid segment (number of employees in the EU27 (thousands))	Share of low-paid workers (%)*	Share of women employees in the sector (%)	Share of low-paid women among all woman employees in the sector (with information on income)(%)
Q – Human health and social work activities	Residential and social care	87	Residential care activities	1,651.7	41	82	43
		88	Social work activities without accommodation	2,515.6	52	82	54
T – Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services producing activities of households for own use	Domestic personnel	97	Activities of households as employers of domestic personnel	1,420.4	81	89	83

* Proportions of low-paid workers (belonging to the three lowest earnings deciles) for 20 low-paid sectors range from 33% (postal and courier activities) to 81% (domestic personnel) of employees in the sector.

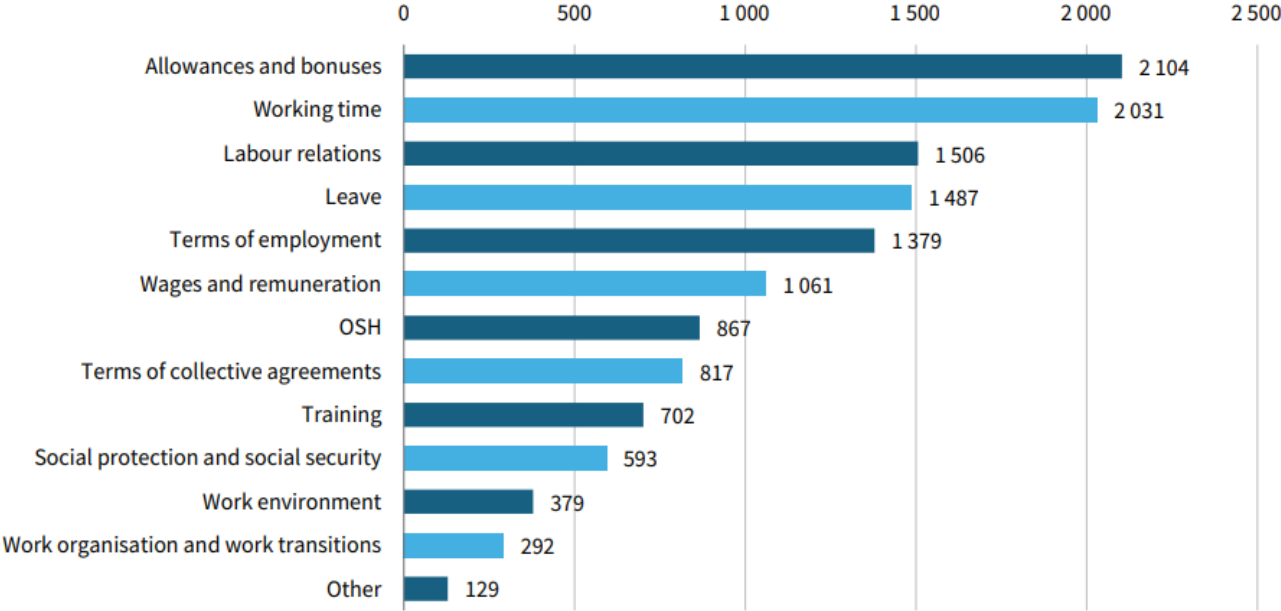
Source: Eurofound (2024), Minimum wages for low-paid workers in collective agreements

Coding tree

7	7.	Occupational safety and health	10	10.	Work environment	
7	7.1.	General clauses on health protection and prevention	10	10.1.	Anti-discrimination and inclusion	
7	7.1.1.	Rights and obligations of workers	10	10.2.	Gender equality and protection of women	
7	7.1.2.	Right and obligations of employers	10	10.3.	Protection of (other) vulnerable groups	
7	7.2.	Occupational service/physicians	10	10.4.	Gender-based violence	
7	7.3.	Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)	10	10.5.	Other clauses on work environment	
7	7.4.	Workplace safety	11	11.	Training	
7	7.5.	Unforeseeable events and emergencies (e.g. COVID-19)	11	11.1.	Apprenticeship and internships	
7	7.6.	Ergonomics	11	11.2.	Training and skills development	
7	7.7.	Occupational injury	11	11.2.1.	Training related to upskilling	
7	7.8.	OSH committees	11	11.2.1.1.	Upskilling due to green transition/GREEN SKILLS	
7	7.9.	OSH related training	11	11.2.1.2.	Upskilling due to technological transition and technological change/TECHNOLOGICAL SKILLS	
7	7.10.	Psychosocial risks and support	11	11.2.1.3.	Upskilling to improve DIGITAL SKILLS	
7	7.11.	Work-life balance	11	11.2.1.4.	Upskilling due to other transition/other reasons	
7	7.12.	Other OSH related clauses	11	11.2.2.	Training related to re-skilling	
8	8.	Social Protection and Social Security	11	11.2.2.1.	Reskilling related to green transition/GREEN SKILLS	ct (part-
8	8.1.	Unemployment protection	11	11.2.2.2.	Reskilling related to technological transition	
8	8.2.	Income protection	11	11.2.2.3.	Reskilling related to DIGITAL SKILLS	
8	8.3.	Health insurance, sickness insurance and health related services	11	11.2.2.4.	Reskilling due to other transition/other reasons	
8	8.4.	Pension scheme/contributions	11	11.3.	Life-long/continuous learning	
8	8.5.	Solidarity fund	12	11.4.	Other clauses on training	
8	8.6.	Other clauses on social protection and security	12	12.	Labour relations	
9	9.	Work organization and work transitions	12	12.1.	Trade union security/role of trade unions	
9	9.1.	Teleworking/ remote work/hybrid work	12	12.2.	Non-union employee representation/works councils' role and security	
9	9.2.	Clauses on just/green transition	12	12.3.	Employer role and commitments	
9	9.3.	Clause on technological transition	12	12.4.	Participation in joint committees	
9	9.4.	Clauses on digital transition	12	12.5.	Compliance monitoring and management	
9	9.5.	Clauses on surveillance and artificial intelligence (AI)	12	12.6.	Dispute resolution	
9	9.6.	Clause on productivity and performance	12	12.7.	Other clauses on labour relations	
9	9.7.	Work re-organization/Restructuring	13	13.	Other	
9	9.8.	Other clauses on work organization and work transitions	13	13.1.	Innovative clauses	
			13	13.2.	Suggestions for additional NEW coding categories	

Allowances and bonuses are the most frequent topic ...

Figure 8: Number of coded clauses by main topic (level 1)



Note: Total number of coded clauses = 13 347.
Source: CBBP Database 2025.

BUT but wages feature in all CBAs

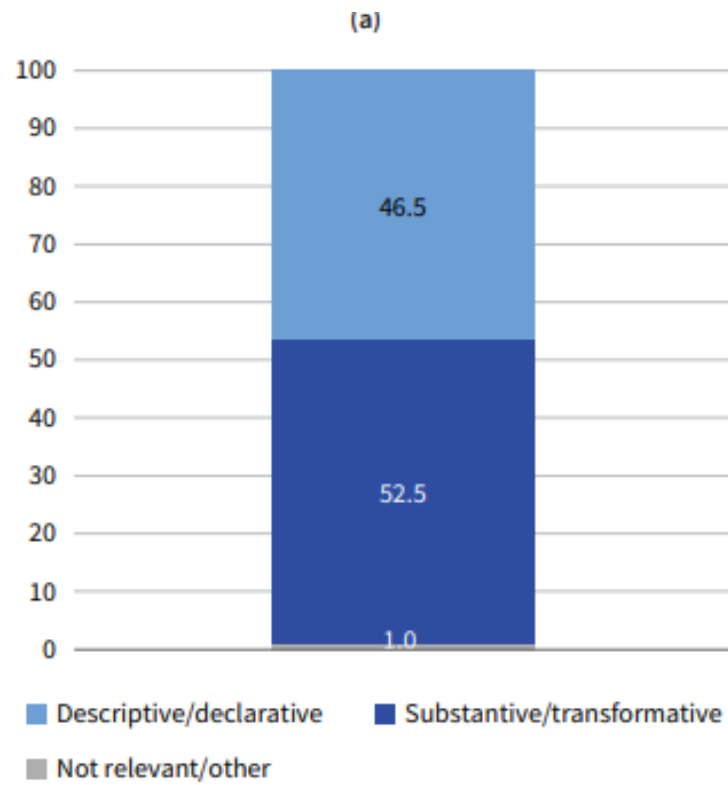
Main topic	Share of CBAs
1. Wages	100%
2. Allowances and bonuses, Leave	97.9%
3. Working time	95.7 %
4. Terms of collective agreements	94.7 %
5. Labour relations	93.6 %
6-9. Terms of employment, OSH, Training	92.6%
10-11. Social protection and social security, Work environment	86.2%
12. Work organisation and work transitions	62.8%
13. Other	42.6%

Total = 13,347 coded clauses

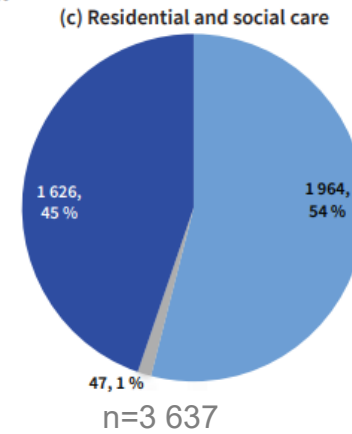
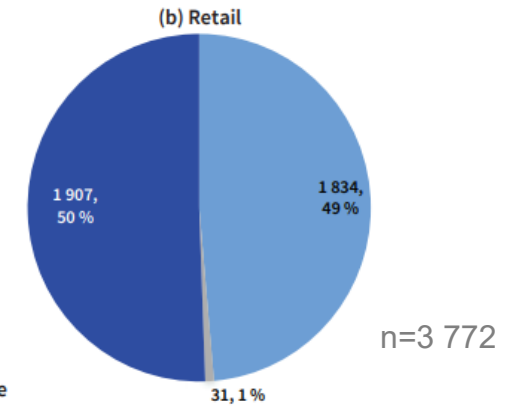
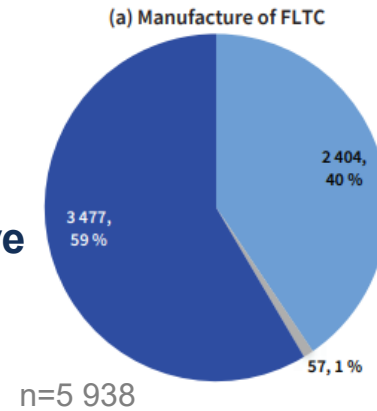
- Most frequent topic in Care: working time (in 92% of CBAs)

Type of clauses

Proportions of clauses coded as descriptive or substantive (total)



n=13 347



■ Substantive/transformative
■ Descriptive/declarative
■ Not relevant

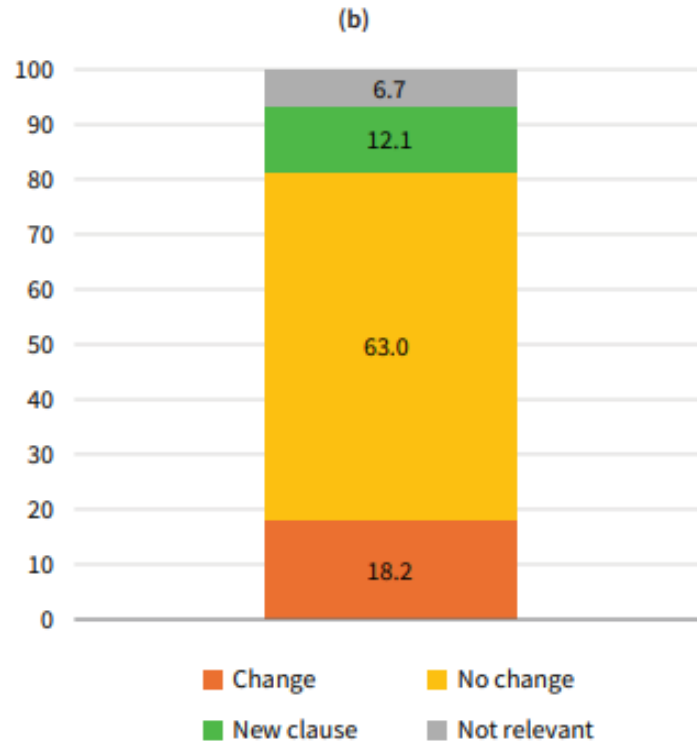
Source: CBBP Database 2025.

- Significant cross-country differences

	Descriptive	Substantive	N.A.
AT	27%	72%	1%
BE	64%	33%	3%
CZ	65%	35%	-
ES	21%	79%	1%
FI	76%	24%	2%
FR	74%	21%	5%
HR	73%	27%	-
IT	35%	63%	2%
NL	70%	30%	-
NO	21%	79%	-
PT	14%	86%	-
SK	53%	47%	-

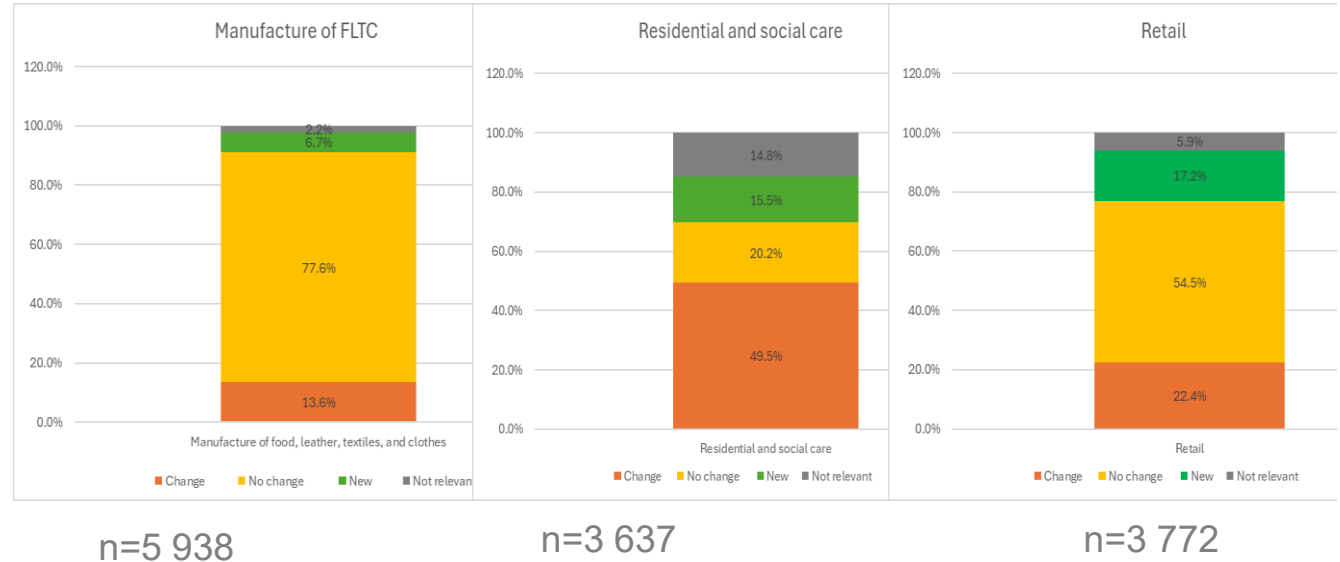
Change (2015 vs 2022): CBAs are relatively stable over time, with evidence of incremental change

Proportion of clauses that are new, changed or not changed (total) (%)



n=13 347

Patters of change vary across sectors



Change over type by country

- Collective agreements remain **very stable** over time in Portugal (96.7%), Croatia (92.2%), Czechia (86.3%) and Slovakia (77.3%)
- High rates of clauses **changing** their meaning or form over time in the Netherlands (47.2%), Italy (34.1%) Norway (25.7%), Spain (20.1%), Belgium (19.1%)
- The largest share of **new clauses** are found in agreements in Belgium (19.3 %), NL (18.3%), Austria (16.8%), France (15.6%), Finland (13.8%)

Key issues in collective agreements for low-paid workers

- Allowances and bonuses
- Working time
- Training
- OSH
- Labour relations



Allowances and bonuses: substantial provisions for low-paid workers to improve their earnings

- **Found in 15.8% of all references in 97.9% (92) CBAs**
- Crucial for supplementing basic wage of low-paid workers
- **High number of additional allowances** on top of pre-defined individual-based, job-based and group-based allowances and bonuses
 - E.g. most common 1) holiday allowance; 2) bonus related to business travel; 3) end-of-year/Christmas bonus;
 - plenty other (eco-vouchers (BE), language bonus (FI/ES), hardship/cold-room supplements; money handling allowance, etc.)
- **Top-up for non-standard work**
 - temporary workers in Austria's Manufacture of FLTC
 - seasonal workers in Italy's Manufacture of FLTC)
- **Emerging themes across all 3 sectors:**
 - new clauses that compensate for irregularity, work on weekends and public holidays and overtime work across all three sectors
 - new clauses in all three sectors reward additional roles and tasks (functional mobility)
- **Sectors specific new clauses:**
 - **Retail:** flexible trade-offs to improve either the work-life balance or the earnings of employees
 - **Manufacture of FLTC:** allowances related to the transport of workers and personal training
 - **Care:** rewards for work in short notice, wage supplements for middle-income earners, rewards for quality of care



Issues also relevant for PHS sector

Working time: addressing stability, flexibility, irregularity

- **15. 2% of all references in 95.7% (90) CBAs**
(leave =11.1% refs. in 97.9% CBAs)
- Provisions on standard working time still the most prominent (in 90.4% CBAs), followed by clauses addressing flexibility, irregularity/ atypical working hours and resting periods/breaks
- Often, WT provisions are complex and overlapping with other topics
 - E.g. time for leave clauses
- **Emerging themes across all 3 sectors:**
 - New clauses addressing flexible working time (e.g. flexible full time standard 36-40 hrs)
 - Work-life balance and well-being of employees (e.g. limits on evening work for retail workers)
 - Protections for young or older workers (e.g. older workers (≥ 55 years) are not obliged to work overtime (CA in NL, Manuf. FLTC))
- **Sector specific WT clauses:**
 - **Retail:** replication of legislation content into CBAs; right to disconnect (ES retail)
 - **Care:** on-call/standby work is a core feature of WT regulation and is more prominent than in FLTC or retail sectors
 - **Manufacture of FLTC:** Clauses that address flexible work organisation to cover all days necessary for production (e.g. 'bridging teams' in BE)

Example:
Special leave provisions in collective agreements from the manufacture of FLTC sector in Croatia and Spain

Table 33: Comparison of paid leave provisions found in two collective agreements

Leave type	Member State	
	Spain	Croatia
	Sector-level agreement: CA-ES-1207 (Article 50)	Company-level agreement: CA-HR-1146 (Article 61)
Marriage	15 calendar days	5 working days
Birth of a child	3 days only if the worker is not entitled to the standard financial birth benefit	5 working days
Death – immediate family	3 days (spouse or children) + up to 4 days with travel or if abroad	3 working days
Death – extended family	2 days (with travel up to 4 total); more time unpaid	2 working days
Serious illness – immediate family	2 days; extended with travel or up to 6 more unpaid days for cross-border events	4 working days
Natural disasters	Not specifically mentioned	5 working days
Relocation (same city/area)	1 day	1 working day
Relocation (different city/area)	Not specified	2 working days
Marriage of children, siblings	1 day	Not specified
Blood donation	Not mentioned	1 working day per donation (with rules about scheduling and informing employer) ^(a)
Public duty	Time required for mandatory public and personal obligations	Not specified
Union/staff representation	Right to paid union activity	Right to paid trade union activity – up to 9 days of paid leave Training or education for works council/union permitted (mentioned under employer-supported training)
Medical appointments	Up to 10 hours per year (e.g. for specialist visits or accompanying dependents)	Not mentioned
Other notable provisions	Leave days begin on working days and are continuous; clarifies leave if event occurs while abroad	Maximum of 7 working days annually for personal events unless otherwise agreed; broad definition of immediate and extended family

^(a) Blood donation leave in Croatia is granted by law; the agreement simply repeats this provision.

Sources: Company-level agreement CA-HR-1146 in the manufacture of FLTC sector and sector-level agreement CA-ES-1207 in the manufacture of FLTC sector (meat industry).

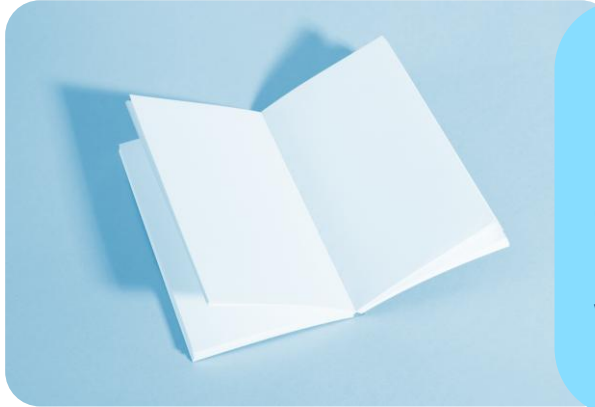
Training clauses: responsive to labour market transitions

- **5.3% of all references in 92.6% (87) CBAs**
- **Most dynamic topic of all:** 22% of training clauses are new and 16.1% are changed, reflecting rapid evolution
- Most regulated are apprenticeships, internships (in 74.5% of all CBAs)
- Specific references to upskilling or reskilling remain limited
- Targeted support for low-skilled or unskilled workers:
 - skills development plans should pay particular attention to training of unskilled workers (FR, care);
 - discussion on competence gap in Norway (meat industry);
- **Emerging themes across all 3 sectors:**
 - clauses on personalised training
 - early career development
 - more clauses dedicated to budgets for training, days for training and training leave
- **Sector specific WT clauses:**
 - **Retail:** training committees or training groups, which approve and/or monitor training initiatives for employees
 - **Care:** emphasise continuous, lifelong training or structured career paths to secure jobs in a 'higher' category
 - **Manufacture of FLTC:** training for innovation and increased competitiveness

Healthy and safe working conditions: essential factor contributing to work performance

- **6.5% of all references in 92.6% (87) CBAs**
- However, OSH is the topic regulated most frequently through legislation (in 11 of 12 countries)
- Agreements reinforce legislation with detailed clauses on employer/worker obligations, safety committees, accident procedures, and PPE provision
- Many clauses address hazardous or difficult working conditions and sometimes provide additional compensation
- **Increasing attention to psychosocial risks:** stress, burnout, reintegration after illness
- **Work-life balance protections**
 - Right to disconnect
 - Breastfeeding leave
 - Protection if work after 8 p.m. poses health risks (retail workers)
- **Residential and social care:**
 - Addressing work intensity and work pressure

Examples from the agreements



Example 1: Why Words Matter? A collective agreement that is addressing YOU

“Pull out the preamble of your Collective Bargaining Agreement. Read it through the eyes of a new employee or new front-line supervisor. Is your first impression that the words convey an atmosphere of safety and inclusion? Does it set a welcoming tone for a trusted work relationship?”

(Workshop on Words Matter by the trade unionists from USA, ILERA 2024 NYC)

Example 2: Working time bank in Finland’s collective agreement for the private residential and social care sector (2022–2024)

- includes 35 new clauses on flexible working time arrangements

Example 3: Supporting mental health of workers in low-paid sectors

- Only 17 ref. across 12 CBAs in the residential and social care sector

Example 4: Allowance calculator for different profiles of workers

- enables data analysis and the creation of different scenarios



Connecting the evidence from CBAs to Eurofound's 7 dimensions of job quality

- monitoring of improvement of working conditions in Europe through the European Working Conditions Survey

Figure 34: Eurofound's seven dimensions of job quality with the indicators composing each dimension and corresponding codes from the CBBP Database



Sources: Eurofound (2021) and CBBP Database 2025.

- Collective bargaining is one of the regulatory tools that can influence working conditions at the job level (Eurofound, 2021)
- **Work intensity= job quality dimension least covered by collective agreements**

Conclusions & policy pointers

- **Collective bargaining in low-paid sectors goes far beyond wages**
 - Wages and bonuses remain a priority for collective agreements
 - Attention to well-being and work–life balance is evident
 - Agreements in the three low-paid sectors mirror national industrial relations models
- **Collective bargaining is both a stable and adaptable regulatory mechanism**
 - CBAs are relatively stable over time, with evidence of incremental change
 - Training clauses are the most dynamic (22% new), while topics linked to major transitions (digitalisation, automation, or the green transition) remain scarcely addressed
- **There is untapped potential for the inclusion of new topics in non-wage bargaining**
 - Emerging themes such as work-life balance, protection for younger/older workers, compensation for irregular hours, and flexible work arrangements, are appearing but unevenly
 - Key areas like work intensity, measures for digital and green transition, and psychosocial risks are rarely included despite their growing relevance
- **Measures to improve job quality should consider collective bargaining an important mechanism for negotiating quality jobs**

Implications for the PHS sector

CBAs in the sector can focus on:

- ✓ Better pay through structured allowances and bonuses
- ✓ Stronger working-time rights and predictability (incl. work intensity)
- ✓ Improved OSH protections in private homes
- ✓ Access to training and professionalisation pathways
- ✓ Enhanced leave, social protection and dignity at work
- ✓ Stronger worker voice and collective representation

- Policymakers should focus on **strengthening the capacities of the social partners** in low-paid sectors with high share of female low-paid workforce
- Social partners can **tailor collective bargaining** to specific needs of female workers
- Social partners should be encouraged to **use the potential of collective bargaining** and address new risks and priorities for the labour market

More information

RESEARCH REPORT

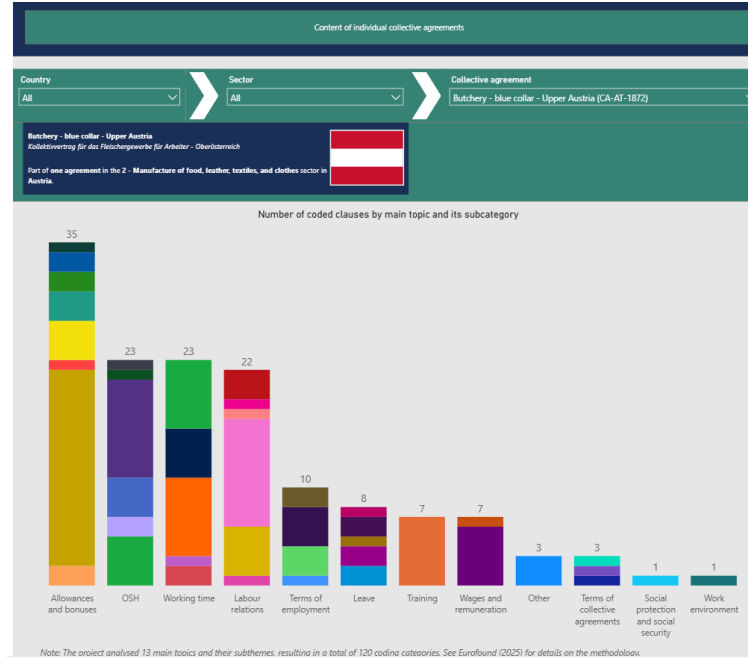


Industrial relations and social dialogue
Collective bargaining beyond pay:
 An analysis of collective agreements
 in selected low-paid sectors



+ Eurofound (2025), Collective bargaining beyond pay:
Methodological note, Eurofound working paper, Dublin

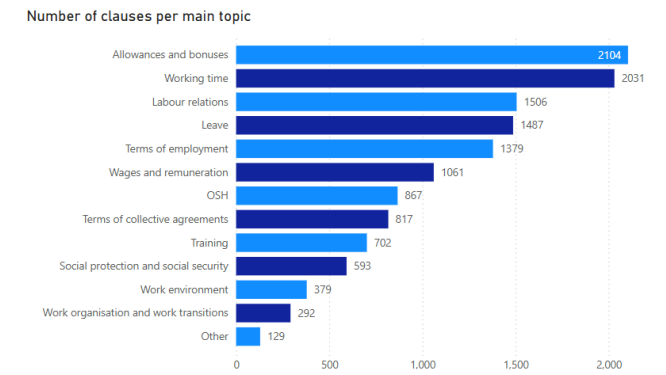
Database of coded collective agreements in selected low-paid sectors



Content of collective agreements in selected low-paid sectors

→ See detailed data

Summary data



Note: The project analysed 13 main topics and their subthemes, resulting in a total of 120 coding categories. See Eurofound (2025) for details on the methodology.



Thank you

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Annex

Low-paid sectors of interest and how they were selected

EU LFS 27
aggregate,
Employees
between
15 to 64
years,
NACE 2
digit

Low paid

- Share of low-paid workers
- First three wage income deciles at NACE 2-digit

Large enough

- Number of employees within each NACE 2

Ranking of both

- Average of two rankings provides list to select from
- CB coverage no selection criterion any more

2 additional sectors

- Added out of political interest

We selected 24 'low paid' NACE 2 digit sectors within 11 NACE 1 digit sectors.

- Decision by EC to go for a broader sector coverage at the expense of a larger number of agreements within each sector.
- In the 24 NACE 2 digit sectors, about 35 mio workers are low-paid (LFS, first three earnings deciles)