

The content of sectoral collective agreements in Belgium explained?

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Stimulating employment growth through sector-level collective agreements in Belgium: a study into the macro-responsiveness of collective bargaining in Belgium

This article reports the main findings of an empirical study into the relationship between the outcomes of sector-level collective bargaining in Belgium and the characteristics of the institutional, organisational and economic context in which this bargaining takes place. The content of the collective agreements negotiated in 37 Joint Committees (JC's) was analysed and the relevant institutional, organisational and socio-economic characteristics of these JC's were measured. Special attention was given to the extent to which bargaining parties agreed on employment promoting arrangements, as this was considered to be an indicator of the macro-responsiveness of collective agreements, i.e. the degree to which bargaining parties were willing to contribute to the solution of societal problems like unemployment. The study shows that the macro-responsiveness of sector-level collective agreements in Belgium is strongly linked to the dominant level of bargaining (centralised at sector-level) *and* the strength of bargaining parties, especially trade unions (high union density). It was also found that there exists an interaction effect between these two variables.