

# **48th IER Committee Meeting**

**Brussels, 19th June 2025**

## **ROUNDTABLE ON NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS**

### **Collective agreements in the MET industries: recent outcomes**

Context:

In Spain, there is a nationwide collective agreement that regulates general aspects of labor relations, such as types of employment contracts, probation periods, disciplinary procedures, and minimum standards in occupational risk prevention.

However, more specific issues—such as wages and working hours—are negotiated at the provincial level, which leads to significant differences in working conditions from one province to another.

The validity of the national agreement expired on December 31, 2023. Nevertheless, in accordance with applicable regulations, the agreement remains in force until it is replaced by a new one.

Currently, Confemetal is negotiating the new national agreement. However, its signing will depend both on the position of the trade unions and on reaching consensus among our regional member associations. This is due to the presence of some contentious clauses, such as the possible introduction of an occupational pension scheme for the metal sector. Some of our members have expressed their opposition to establishing such a plan at the national level, mainly due to the costs it could impose on companies. If implemented, they believe it should be done at the provincial level, in order to respect regional autonomy.

The negotiation of collective agreements in the Metal Sector took place within an economic context marked by a certain stagnation in activity compared to the previous year. The cumulative average of the metal sector's production index in 2024 showed a year-on-year decline of 0.2%, in contrast to the 3.1% growth recorded in 2023.

Regarding the most recent data on collective bargaining in the metal sector, 32 provincial collective agreements for the Metal Industry with economic effects in 2025 have been signed. Of these, 18 agreements were either signed in 2025 or are pending signature. The weighted average wage increase stands at 2.89%, and the weighted average annual working time is 1,744.20 hours.

In detail, the status of collective bargaining at the provincial level is as follows:

- 1) Collective agreements under review signed before 2025: 32
  - Total number of agreements with economic effects in 2025: 32
  - Weighted average wage increase: 2.89%
  - Weighted average working hours: 1,744.20 hours/year
- 2) Collective agreements signed or pending signature in 2025: 18
  - a) New agreements whose validity ended on 12/31/2024: 16
  - b) Agreements pending negotiation from previous years: 2
    - Total number of agreements with economic effects in 2025: 18
    - Weighted average wage increase: 3.81%
    - Weighted average working hours: 1,758.44 hours/year
- 3) Total collective agreements signed with economic effects in 2025
  - Total number of agreements with economic effects in 2025: 34
  - Weighted average wage increase: 2.90%
  - Weighted average working hours: 1,747.53 hours/year

### **Restructuring plans within the automotive sector**

The automotive sector in Spain is a fundamental pillar of the Spanish economy, accounting for 10% of the Gross Domestic Product and generating 18% of total employment. In 2024, the industry produced 2.38 million vehicles, representing a 3% decrease compared to the previous year. This decline is attributed to low demand for electrified vehicles and factory adjustments for the incorporation of new electric models. Despite these challenges, exports remain a key component, with 2.12 million units shipped abroad. However, employment in the sector was affected, losing 155,300 jobs, which represents a 6.55% decrease compared to the previous year.

The sector is undergoing a transformation driven by the transition to electric mobility, automation, and digitalization. As a result, several companies are implementing restructuring plans to adapt to new demand and reduce operating costs. These measures include plant closures, collective redundancies, and production relocation. Notable examples include the following:

#### **1. Stellantis**

At one of its plants in Zaragoza, the company has implemented a Temporary Labour Force Adjustment Plan affecting around 4,200 workers due to production and organizational reasons. In Vigo, a Redundancy Plan has been initiated for 80 employees.

In Madrid, a voluntary redundancy plan has been communicated for 55 workers. Available information indicates that Stellantis has guaranteed employment at this plant for the next decade, with plans to produce future small electric vehicles.

2. Ford

A Temporary Labour Force Adjustment Plan has been implemented at the Valencia plant, affecting approximately 1,000 workers, with a 45% reduction in production throughout 2024. In addition, more than 500 early retirements and voluntary severance packages have been agreed upon.

3. Ardient (seat supplier)

The company is restructuring its European operations by cutting jobs and transferring tasks to countries with lower labor costs, aiming to reduce expenses. At this time, no further specific data is available on the type of measures or the number of workers affected.

4. TI Automotive

The company has proposed a Redundancy Plan that would affect 60 workers. Trade unions have expressed their opposition and suggested alternatives such as negotiated reductions in working hours or transfers to other plants within the group.

5. Sunsundegui (specialized in vehicle bodywork)

The company entered the liquidation phase in May of this year, after filing for insolvency in November 2024, due to a significant drop in sales.

A **Temporary Labour Force Adjustment Plan** is a procedure through which a company can temporarily suspend employment contracts or reduce employees' working hours, without permanently terminating the employment relationship. It is used in temporary situations such as economic downturns, specific production issues, or a temporary drop in demand. Its aim is to adjust the workforce to the company's short-term needs without resorting to permanent layoffs. During an ERTE, employees are entitled to unemployment benefits, and once the suspension or reduction period ends, they have the right to return to their job under the same conditions they had prior to the ERTE.

In contrast, a **Redundancy Plan** is a procedure whereby a company carries out collective dismissals, permanently terminating the employment contracts of a significant number of workers. It is applied for structural and non-temporary reasons—such as economic, technical, organizational, or production-related causes—typically in cases of major

restructurings, plant closures, or business insolvency. The ERE results in permanent job loss for the affected employees, who are entitled to receive severance pay.

### **AI management in the workplace**

The management of artificial intelligence (AI) in the Spanish labor environment is currently in a phase of development and adaptation. Although there has not been specific national legislation regulating its use until now, in March 2025 the Government approved a draft bill on AI governance, aiming to align the Spanish legal framework with the new European Artificial Intelligence Regulation. While the national legislative process is still underway, companies have begun using European guidelines as a reference to adapt their AI-related practices in the workplace.

Companies are primarily managing AI as a tool to automate processes, improve efficiency, and optimize decision-making. It is common to use AI in production processes such as cutting, welding, or casting, as well as in automated quality control.

However, the management of AI differs between large, more advanced companies and smaller, less advanced ones. In more advanced companies, there is a shift in professional profiles, with growing demand for robotics technicians, data analysts, and similar roles, and AI usage is more widespread.

In contrast, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have more limited use and management of AI due to a lack of financial and human resources. There is often a lack of awareness or fear of change, especially in companies with aging workforces or traditional business models.

It is worth noting that over 90% of Spanish companies in the metal sector have fewer than 10 employees. Various studies indicate that fewer than 20% of industrial SMEs in Spain are using AI effectively, with most still in early stages of digitalization.

### **Remote work and the right to disconnect in collective bargaining**

Collective agreements in the metal sector are increasingly incorporating specific clauses on remote work and digital disconnection, in line with current legislation and the new obligations expected to come into force before the end of 2025.

These clauses aim to ensure a balance between labor flexibility and the protection of workers' rights, including respect for rest periods and personal and family privacy.

There is no automatic right to remote work, as it must be voluntary and formalized through a written agreement. Most collective agreements specify the conditions for

implementing remote work, covering aspects such as the provision of equipment, reimbursement of expenses, occupational risk prevention, and working time control.

According to current legislation and case law, expenses arising from teleworking must be reimbursed to the worker, even if not expressly provided for in the applicable collective agreement, and may be claimed individually.

Similarly, the right to digital disconnection is gaining increasing importance, not only due to regulatory developments but also due to growing awareness of the importance of mental health and work-life balance.

At the state level, negotiations are underway to include a clause requiring applicable collective agreements to establish an internal policy on the exercise of the right to digital disconnection. This would include awareness-raising measures to promote the responsible use of technological tools.

In this regard, on May 6, the Bill for the Reduction of the Maximum Working Time and the Guarantee of Time Recording and the Right to Disconnect was approved. This marks the beginning of the parliamentary process of a regulation that proposes to reduce the maximum working week from 40 to 37.5 hours (on an annual average). The measure includes a mandatory and reliable digital time-tracking system, reinforcing corporate responsibility and strengthening the right to disconnect.

### **The twin transition and the world of work: social partner's initiatives**

The main initiatives focus on training, generational renewal, and industrial sustainability.

In the metal sector, the “Generación del Metal” (Generation of Metal) project stands out as a particularly significant and recently launched initiative that has received notable support from both companies and young people. This project, promoted by the Metal Foundation for Training, Qualification and Employment (FMF) in collaboration with Confemetal and other entities, aims primarily to attract young talent to the sector.

The project seeks to highlight the new professional opportunities offered by the metal industry, emphasizing aspects such as job stability, the increasing use of technology in production processes, innovation potential, and contributions to a more sustainable economy. Through awareness campaigns, fairs, outreach activities, and specialized training, the initiative aims to break down stereotypes and bring the industry closer to new generations by fostering technical vocations from an early age.

Moreover, the initiative is part of a broader strategy for the transformation of the sector, in which social partners play a key role in ensuring a just and inclusive transition adapted to the employment needs of the future.

Also noteworthy are the Just Transition Plans, both at the national and sectoral levels, and training programs adapted to new digital and sustainable skills.

## Others

Among other noteworthy developments, it is worth mentioning that in February the **minimum interprofessional wage** for 2025 was approved, setting it at €1,184 gross per month over 14 payments, which amounts to €16,576 gross per year. This represents an increase of 4.41% compared to 2024 and 61% more than in 2018, thus consolidating a sustained trend of improving purchasing power.

On the other hand, on June 12, the first major project on **absenteeism from work in the metal sector** will be presented—an especially relevant initiative in light of the growing impact of this phenomenon on business productivity and organization. Among the most notable data, the following stand out:

- The number of temporary disability leaves due to common contingencies in the metal sector (based on processes initiated within mutual insurance systems) has increased by 6.88% compared to 2023 and by 95.31% compared to 2021.
- The cost of temporary disability processes due to common contingencies in the metal sector has risen by 23.46% compared to 2023 and by 90.64% compared to 2021.
- In 2024, temporary disability leaves in the sector have grown especially significantly among the younger population. In the 16 to 35 age group, the increase was 13.19% compared to 2023 and 153.99% compared to 2021.

## **QUALITY JOBS ROADMAP**

In relation to this point, it is worth highlighting the main legislative and collective bargaining measures aimed at improving job quality in Spain. These include the reduction of the working week to 37.5 hours on an annual average, the increase of the minimum wage to €16,576 gross per year, and the inclusion in collective agreements of clauses that guarantee a minimum percentage of open-ended contracts as part of employment stability commitments.

Furthermore, Spanish legislation provides various incentives to promote permanent hiring, particularly for groups with greater difficulties in accessing the labour market, such as workers over the age of 45, people with disabilities, and long-term unemployed individuals, among others.