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# The Legacy of Thatcherism in European Labour Relations:

The Impact of the Politics  
of Neo-Liberalism and  
Austerity on Collective  
Bargaining in a  
Fragmenting Europe

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# The Legacy of Thatcherism in European Labour Relations:

The Impact of the Politics of Neo-Liberalism and Austerity on Collective Bargaining in a Fragmenting Europe

As the UK prepares to leave the European Union, this analysis – the 11th in our *Comparative Notes* series – shines a light on the deleterious effect of the nation's deregulatory influence on the bloc. The authors outline their findings from a wide-ranging study of the seven member states most effected by interventions from supranational bodies during the financial crisis - Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, and Spain. Under pressure to make reforms to labour law, these member states have seen their industrial relations structures eroded by neoliberalist ideologies emanating from the UK.

Drawing from interviews with government officials, trade unions and employer associations, the authors investigate how a shift within EU political structures towards a neoliberalist paradigm has led to the decentralisation of collective bargaining, and how this in turn has instigated a decline in wage levels, working time, and equality within the countries studied. They also point to evidence that this focus on individualisation and fragmentation is deskilling and demotivating the workforce with major economic effects.

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