



## European Platform Undeclared Work

### **Thematic Review Workshop (TRW) on Information Tools and Approaches to reach out to Workers and Companies Stockholm, Sweden, 22-23 March 2018 Summary**

Tackling the complex problem of undeclared work (UDW) requires a holistic approach which uses the full range of direct and indirect policy approaches. Preventative approaches include changing values, norms and beliefs regarding undeclared work by raising awareness about the benefits of declared work and/or the deleterious consequences of undeclared work.

The aim of the workshop was to share knowledge and experiences amongst the Platform members to change the values, beliefs and norms of two target groups, workers and employers, towards undeclared work. The workshop is part of the mutual learning process of the European Platform tackling Undeclared Work and will lead to further opportunities for exchange and collaboration, notably through the development of a toolkit. The workshop brought together Platform members and observers from 15 EU Member States (MS) and Norway (EEA) – including representatives of national ministries, labour inspectorates, social security authorities, and tax and customs authorities and was hosted by the Platform member in Sweden, the Swedish Work Environment Authority.

The programme of the 1.5-day event was divided into three parts: 1) defining target groups, 2) the development and implementation of information tools and approaches, and 3) their evaluation and improvement.

#### **Defining the target group for information tools and approaches:**

The reasons for workers and employers not to declare work can be intentional or unintentional; intentional reasons are often economic, but may be also connected to a lack of trust in public authorities and/or administrative burden (especially for employers). Across Europe there are also cultural differences in terms of the public acceptability of paying taxes and UDW; while paying taxes and registering labour relations is seen as an accepted individual responsibility in some countries, public acceptance of undeclared work may be higher in other countries. In terms of unintentional reasons, workers and employers might not be aware of existing regulations and legislation. This can apply especially to certain groups, for example posted workers, foreign workers or employers who are new to regulations, for example nascent entrepreneurs starting-up new business ventures. Next to posted and foreign workers and 'new' employers, participants also identified younger workers, workers close to retirement, low-skilled workers (often in precarious employment), workers and employers in the 'gig economy', the Horeca, the household services, the construction, the cleaning, the agriculture and transportation sector as key target groups for information tools. Information needs vary depending on the particular group and if they are unaware of the obligations to pay tax and need primarily information or if they choose not to declare work. The following key factors for defining and approaching the target groups have been identified at the workshop:

- Introduce a preventative approach which is often more cost-effective than deterrence measures. In terms of target groups, this could mean approaching young workers and employers and students.
- Aim to create a wider societal acceptance of declaring work by positive messaging (emphasis on support provided by the public authority) and communicating that most people pay their taxes.
- Identify subgroups and their specific background, motivation, attitudes, influencers and information needs. Here, cooperation and data sharing arrangements between authorities can help to get data that helps to identify target groups.
- Changing the behaviour of certain groups may work with a mixture of deterrence and positive messaging. There is some experimentation and exchange of experiences needed to define what works for which group. For example, identified risky employers can be nudged by an

implication of enforcement if they do not get in touch with the respective public authority. Moreover, addressing the employers' reputation by 'naming and shaming' may also lead to behavioural change.

- The input from focus groups or from social partners may help to define the messages and tools.

### **Developing information tools and approaches:**

Platform members already use a mixture of information tools that are disseminated via digital, print and face-to-face channels. The most common forms are publications, videos, websites, phone hotlines, direct letters/e-mails/sms and an increased use of social media. Moreover, many Platform members run self-assessment tools (e.g. checklists) for employers and employees. New ways to communicate messages include an online game and virtual reality films. Information tools are often combined with follow-up activities. For example, websites with self-assessment tools are likely to be combined with possibilities to receive further information. The following key factors were identified when developing information tools and approaches:

- Get a good understanding which messages and tools, as well as which dissemination channels, work for which target group. For example, public authorities may use tools based on digital communication for younger targeted groups or people working in the 'gig' economy, but offer face-to-face communication for older people. In general, Platform members stressed the importance of digital communication to reach out to wider target groups and that it is less resource-intensive. Moreover, communication in different languages is key for addressing posted and foreign workers.
- The development and implementation of information tools requires a long-term planning process to identify potential risk groups, and their involvement and feedback.
- Choosing the right tool, message and dissemination activity for the identified target group requires organisational appetite for risk and often a step-by-step process of piloting and feedback rounds. Participants also stressed that the ability to do so depends on their organisational capacity and culture, as well as on staff capacities, for example the knowledge to use social media or the availability of/or the cooperation with colleagues working on communication activities.
- Simple messages, use of humour and 'story-telling' can be helpful to achieve behavioural change. Dissemination channels that identified target groups already use, like social media or websites for job ads, may be an effective and cost-efficient way to reach out.
- The cooperation with social partners and authorities is important in the whole process to implement information tools successfully. Here, early personal contact and good working relations to get buy-in by social partners and at the political level are pre-requisites for success.

### **Improving and evaluating information tools and approaches:**

Evaluation can help to understand the impact and whether the intended message was delivered effectively and, most importantly, understood. In terms of cooperation on national level and across Europe in the Platform, evaluation results are useful to exchange good practice. Participants stressed that often a lack of time and resources, as well as evaluation knowledge, may be barriers to evaluate a communication activity. The following key factors were identified for improving and evaluating information tools and approaches:

- Have a clear definition of aim, outcome, outputs and indicators at the start of the development of the information tool, and plan to allow the time needed to gather information to evaluate the results of the information tool.
- A pre-assessment of attitudes is necessary to provide data for comparison in the evaluation phase.
- Social media, simple web surveys and web analysis are a good and inexpensive way to gather user feedback and to measure the results of information tools.
- In addition, inspections can also be used to see if the information measure did have impact on a certain employer. In general, participants stressed a need to link up deterrence measures more with preventative measures. For example, inspections can also be used to identify target groups for information tools or to inform employers and workers about preventive measures.
- It was emphasised that this workshop and the follow-up is a good opportunity of exchange on existing information tools and the potential transferability to other countries.

**Further information:** The information from the TRW will be fed into a Learning Resource Paper and a Practitioner's Toolkit that will assist practitioners with the practical design, implementation and evaluation of information tools and approaches. The workshop is part of a learning process which will be continued by a Follow-up Visit to one of the participating countries (tbc). The input documents and presentations of the workshop have been uploaded to the collaborative workspace of the Platform.