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Joining-up forces: Towards a holistic approach

A holistic approach is key to tackling undeclared work. As part of the Platform's March plenary meeting, members discussed how to operationalise a holistic approach.

You will find below news from the Platform's discussions on this topic, a summary of other key topics of a recent Platform seminar on personal and household services (PHS), as well as a meeting dedicated to the prevention of undeclared work among refugees/displaced persons to discuss the consequences of the tragic events in Ukraine.

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Towards a holistic approach

Tackling undeclared work is often less effective because there is a fragmented and uncoordinated approach across the multifarious government bodies responsible for tackling undeclared work and a limited involvement of social partners, as well as an incomplete range of policy measures used. To resolve this, a [holistic integrated strategic approach](#) has been proposed. This is where governments:

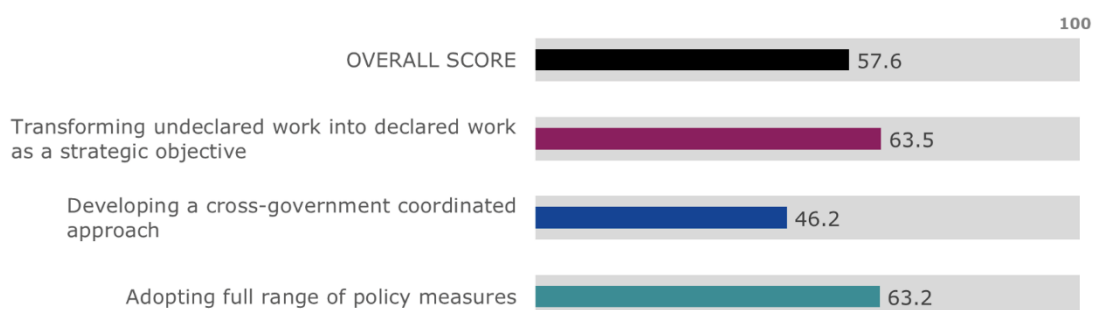
- Shift the objective from “reducing undeclared work” to “transforming undeclared work into declared work”;
- Develop a whole government coordinated approach and fully involve social partners, and
- Implement the full range of direct and indirect policy tools.

An upcoming Platform study assessed the progress of enforcement authorities in European countries towards adopting a holistic approach which was further discussed during the Platform plenary discussion on 23 March 2022.

Room for improvement

The upcoming Platform study showed that the overall score for all 23 respondents to the survey regarding their progress towards a holistic approach is 57.6 out of 100. This clearly indicates that there is overall considerable room for improvement in terms of making progress towards the adoption of a holistic approach.

Analysing the components on which authorities are more advanced in their progress towards a holistic approach, the finding is that they are overall more advanced on the component of transforming undeclared work to declared work (scoring 63.5%) and using full range of policy measures (scoring 63.2%) but have made less progress on developing a cross-government coordinated approach (scoring 46.2%). This clearly indicates that the Platform work programme in future could focus on activities to help develop a cross-government coordinated approach.



Examples to operationalise the holistic approach

At the plenary meeting, the Platform discussed how the holistic approach can be further put into practice. This covered cooperation at national and cross-border level, data collection, sharing and analysis, social partner involvement and preventative measures.

Examples shared during the sessions demonstrate that a holistic approach needs to be strategically embedded in the managerial and operational actions of all relevant enforcement authorities. For instance, the [Finnish strategy and action plan for tackling the grey economy and economic crime for 2020-2023](#) foresees over 50 actions and more effective access to information and cooperation between authorities.

National cooperation between authorities can have different forms, such as steering groups or joint operation groups/centres, like the Lithuanian Risk Analysis Centre and Joint Operational Centres which involve various public bodies. The holistic approach is also enhanced by sharing data between authorities and good cooperation with social partners.

In general, a strategic objective, clear roles and responsibilities of each partner, sufficient resources, trust and a continuous cooperation were highlighted as key to operationalise the holistic approach to tackling undeclared work.

News from the Platform

Platform seminar: Tackling undeclared work in the care and personal and household services (PHS) sector, 10 March 2022

The seminar explored existing practices, tools and approaches towards undeclared work in the care and PHS sectors in EU/EEA countries.

Participants reflected on developments on undeclared work in the care and PHS sectors and the policy options and practical tools, including both deterrence and preventative approaches at national and cross-border level.

Recommendations to address undeclared work in the care and PHS sectors at national and EU level include:

- Adopt a common definition of households as workplaces to better monitor the working conditions and to help recognise the status of individuals operating in households' services (i.e. as employers and employees).
- A holistic approach and political will help improve cooperation with social partners, labour inspectorates and other stakeholders to implement both deterrence and prevention measures to shift undeclared to declared work.
- Develop training and education activities for labour inspectorates focused on specific aspects of the care and PHS sectors (i.e. working with households).
- Support mutual learning at the European level on successful practices to detect and tackle undeclared work in the care and PHS sectors.
- Launch an EU-wide communication campaign to raise awareness and promote the benefits of declared work in the care and PHS sectors.

Platform webinar: Successful cooperation approaches between labour inspectorates and social partners, 2 February 2022

This online webinar brought together 156 participants from 27 countries, representing labour inspectorates, other enforcement authorities, social partners and other organisations, ELA, and the European Commission. The aim of this event was to showcase examples of types of cooperation and key aspects to build successful cooperation among labour inspectorates and social partners.

During the webinar, participants reviewed several cooperation approaches and further discussed learning points from the [Learning Resource Paper](#) and [Toolkit](#) based on experiences collected and analysed at the 2021 thematic review workshop on 'Successful approaches to cooperation approaches between labour inspectorates and social partners in several EU/EEA Member States'.

Labour inspectorates and social partners representatives from Belgium, Germany, Greece and Norway shared examples of successful cooperation and discussed how recommendations from the toolkit can be implemented:

- In Belgium, bipartite and tripartite agreements are well-established to prevent undeclared work and unfair competition.
- In Germany, the 'Action Alliances' initiative facilitates dialogue, but also serves as a round table to discuss legal questions.
- In Greece, social partners share information with the labour inspectorate on fraud and violations, but do not directly intervene in the labour inspectorate's inspections.
- In Norway, tripartite agreements in the cleaning, road transport, restaurant and car services sector involve all relevant authorities and social partners to agree on common risks, actions and challenges.

The webinar concluded with the following key learning points:

- A precondition for successful cooperation is trust. Trust helps to establish a common understanding and commitment to tackle undeclared work. Political and operational will to cooperate are equally important.
- Cooperation should be based on the prerogative of an equal representation of authorities and social partners.
- A holistic approach is needed to create and implement deterrence and prevention measures by social partners and labour inspectorates. National legislation could enhance collaboration with social partners by incentives for cooperation or cooperation structures.
- Sustainability of cooperation requires to equip authorities and social partners with sufficient resources and capacities and best support them to develop standardised cooperation tools and calls for long-term commitment of all involved.

Subgroup on communication and Platform input in terms of road transport

On 9 February 2022, 17 members of the subgroup on communication and information met, comprising of Platform members and observers and stakeholders. The aim was to provide contributions to the ELA awareness-raising campaign on the road transport sector which is part of ELA's [Framework for Action on Road Transport](#).

The subgroup discussed challenges in terms of undeclared work in the road transport sector, as well as measures to raise awareness amongst workers about the benefits of operating declared and the risks associated with undeclared work, and to sensitise employers concerning their obligations to declare workers. The subgroup members gave recommendations and agreed on how the European Labour Authority should communicate to address undeclared work in the road transport sector, the envisioned target groups and ways to reach out to them, key messages, and the possible multipliers/stakeholders at national and European level.

Platform meeting dedicated to preventing undeclared work among refugees/displaced persons, 11 April 2021

Around 70 Platform members and observers, as well as representatives of other national authorities, ELA, the European Commission (DG EMPL and DG HOME) met to discuss preventing undeclared work among refugees/displaced persons on 11 April 2022.

Participants exchanged on the current situation and their activities to support Ukrainian refugees. DG EMPL updated on recent efforts, such as the activation of the [Temporary Protection Directive](#), upcoming guidelines regarding access to labour market, training, and accommodation for refugees/displaced persons and [increased flexibility in cohesion policy funding](#) DG HOME informed that by 11 April 1.7 million have applied for protection in the framework of the Temporary Protection Directive, out of some 4.5 million people who fled from Ukraine to the EU. Other Commission efforts include a 10-point plan for stronger European coordination, non-binding [operational guidelines](#) on granting temporary protection to people fleeing the war in Ukraine and a 'Solidarity Platform' to collect information, facilitate cooperation and examine the needs identified in the Member States. ELA informed that the EURES portal provides a link to further information for people fleeing war in Ukraine.

Platform members then described recent efforts to support Ukrainian refugees, such as providing information in Ukrainian, giving workers the possibility to file complaints in Ukrainian, measures to prevent labour exploitation and increased inspections to monitor the conditions of employment.

[Platform subgroup on tackling undeclared work among displaced persons/refugees from Ukraine, 19 May 2022](#)

The subgroup met to discuss several strategic issues related to the Ukrainian crisis, such as the demographic data available about the displaced persons/refugees, the key factors affecting their choice of a destination country, the networks they use for communicating and obtaining information, with a special attention on protecting vulnerable Ukrainian workers from the risks of undeclared work and exploitation.

Over 70 participants joined the discussion in Warsaw and online including Platform members and observers, the European Commission, the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), social partners, as well as representatives of the Ukrainian Police.

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Call for staff learning visits and joint actions launched

Staff learning visits and joint actions' aim to foster exchange between individual Platform representatives to build deeper knowledge on a topic, practice or process or to prepare joint activities. They can take various forms, such as joint training, actions or information sessions.

All 30 countries (EU and EEA) and the social partner organisations of the Platform can apply to the Secretariat undeclared-work@ela.europa.eu for staff learning exchange/joint actions until 12 November 2022. Staff visits can be supported virtually if requested, as well as face to face, and there is a possibility to include interpretation. The support for staff visits/joint actions will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Staff learning visits/joint actions complementing the activities under the ELA Framework for Action on Road Transport are particularly encouraged.

Call for Mutual Assistance projects launched

Mutual Assistance Projects (MAPs) are demand-driven exchanges giving Platform representatives the opportunity to be counselled by peers in strategic areas. The support is flexible, and topics can be tailored to the needs of the host authority. The MAP concept has been further improved to provide extra flexibility in terms of:

- Information on the supported enforcement authority and its needs will be extracted from the questionnaire already filled in by the Platform members at the beginning of 2022 when contributing to the Platform study on the operationalisation of the holistic approach.
- The hosting Member State can select and receive support to specific recommendations.
- Involvement of the host Member State when selecting the experts for the MAP.
- Further support on specific issues/recommendations can be provided during the MAP follow-up.

Member States interested are invited to submit a MAP request to the Secretariat undeclared-work@ela.europa.eu no later than October 2022. Incoming requests will be handled on a first-come, first-served basis. Please do not hesitate to contact the Secretariat or your National Liaison Officer for more information.

Latest and upcoming publications

Published

- Toolkit on successful approaches of cooperation between labour inspectorates and social partners [Click here to view](#) (PDF, 1.63 MB)
- Output paper: Subgroup on tackling undeclared work among third-country nationals: regularisation initiatives [Click here to view](#) (236.44 KB - PDF)
- Study report on personal and household services sector [Click here to view](#) (1.54 MB - PDF)
- Study report on different forms of cross-border UDW [Click here to view](#) (1.24 MB - PDF)
- Report of the peer learning dialogue: Improving cross-government data and information exchange on national level and identifying good practices [Click here to view](#) (361 KB - PDF)

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Inspiring practices

- Germany - Work and Life - Counselling Service [Click here to view](#) (198.88 KB - PDF)
- Finland: Operational models to combat undeclared work through joint action and cooperation [Click here to view](#) (197.78 KB - PDF)
- Belgium: Quick Response Team to Undeclared Work [Click here to view](#) (149.47 KB - PDF)

- Belgium: White cash register and other incentive measures in the HORECA sector [Click here to view](#) (235.21 KB - PDF)
- Iceland: Joint inspections of undeclared work [Click here to view](#) (152.36 KB - PDF)
- Italy: National Action Plan to tackle labour exploitation, unlawful recruitment and forced labour in agriculture [Click here to view](#) (233.85 KB - PDF)
- Greece: Road map to implement a holistic integrated strategic approach towards tackling undeclared work [Click here to view](#) (152.8 KB - PDF)
- Ireland: Alternative forms of inspections during the COVID-19 pandemic [Click here to view](#) (155.84 KB - PDF)
- Norway: Branch Sectoral Programmes [Click here to view](#) (161.79 KB - PDF)
- Denmark: Joint inspections in the HORECA sector [Click here to view](#) (155.54 KB - PDF)

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Dates for the diary

- **7-8 June 2022:** Thematic Review Workshop on Effective penalty measures for tackling undeclared work, including through cost effective administrative actions
- **20 September 2022:** Platform seminar on Tackling undeclared work in supply chains
- **12 October 2022:** Subgroup on Alert mechanisms to identify undeclared work at an early stage
- **26-27 October 2022:** Thematic Review Workshop on Preventing under-declared employment through innovative approaches
- **8-9 November 2022:** Platform plenary meeting

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