



June 2020

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Immediate responses to the pandemic by Platform members and observers



"In these difficult days, the Platform has a responsibility more than ever to steer a debate on how to turn undeclared work into declared work", Jordi Curell, Chair of the Platform

The Platform operates now in very different context and tries to find answers to many burning questions. How to prevent declared work shifting into undeclared when unemployment rates are suddenly increasing and social protection is not reaching everyone in need? And how to adapt inspection methods to protect health and safety? To share ideas on how to respond to these challenges the Platform held internal discussions on the impact of COVID-19. Two webinars, on 5 May and 2 June, provided an important opportunity to exchange ideas and discuss practical responses to the pandemic and new forms of cooperation.

Undoubtedly the impact of the pandemic on businesses and workers, as well as economies, has been profound. By April 2020, the closure of businesses to restrict movement and the spread of the virus had affected over 80% of the global workforce. Governments have responded by offering unprecedented short-term financial support to companies and workers affected. The COVID-19 crisis has affected millions of

workers, with undeclared workers being particularly vulnerable. The main 'at risk' sectors include agriculture, construction, transport, domestic work, HORECA, and tourism more broadly. In a recent [article](#), Eurofound covers how Italy is considering the support that the state should provide to undeclared workers operating in the informal economy during the crisis.

The webinars also provided a forum to share ideas on ways to ensure the health and safety of inspectors and also new ways of working during the pandemic. Workplace inspections continue to take place, but in many cases they have been adapted. For example, inspectors are relying more on telephone contact, video conference or postal inspections. Many enforcement authorities adapted their information provision to workers/companies about COVID-19 protection measures and focused on education and awareness raising activities via online materials. There has also been an increase in the use of digital solutions, such as data mining. Many Platform members have developed new forms of cooperation with other governmental bodies and social partners to provide, for example, (coordinated) advice and a common approach on COVID. As a result of these new challenges, some of the Platform's planned activities will be postponed and others will be refocused. An updated work programme outlining these changes will be published.

Read also the new #EU4FairWork campaign article on [COVID-19: the impact on undeclared work and key challenges](#)

What's New

#EU4FairWork campaign Week of Action coming up

The campaign's Week of Action initially planned in March has been postponed to 21-25 September to increase its success and allow Platform members and observers to carry out planned or new activities. The week will provide a new opportunity to implement and communicate activities promoting declared work across Europe – messages which are now more relevant than ever. Now is the time for Platform members to start planning for the Week of Action, combining face-to-face and virtual activities. A new call for staff exchanges will be launched in early July.

Besides the Week of Action itself, the social media campaign has been extended in phases through to October, focusing on general awareness raising, effective approaches and cooperation between countries. Promoting the benefits of declared work is more relevant now than ever: the campaign toolkit is been also adapted to focus more upon COVID-19 impact, including testimonials from Platform members and observers.

The new campaign resources include the first [campaign video](#), a [quiz](#) about undeclared work and the social media competition, launched for [workers](#) and [employers](#) in June. We count on you to disseminate and share the resources and social media updates on your digital channels and follow the hashtag [#EU4FairWork](#)

Find out more by visiting the campaign website [here](#)

The Platform four years on: greater cooperation but more to be done



The European Commission adopted on 2 April a report on Member States' cooperation in tackling undeclared work. It confirms that the Platform continues to act as a catalyst for cross-border cooperation to tackle undeclared work by bringing together Member States' enforcement authorities (labour inspectorates, tax and social security authorities) and social partners to learn from each other and act together. However, challenges remain. The report highlights the need for continuous focus on preventative measures and the importance of enhanced commitment from all members.

You can access the full report [here](#), as well as the related [news item](#).

Undeclared workers in tourism sector will be among the hardest hit

Prior to the pandemic, the tourism sector accounted for around 9.5% employment of the EU workforce with undeclared work prevalent across sub-sectors of the industry. An upcoming Platform report will examine the characteristics of undeclared work in the tourism industry, suggesting policy approaches which directly tackle the challenges and support workers to receive the benefits to which they are entitled. (See upcoming publications.)

Spotlight on skills needed within labour inspectorates

The pandemic has led to extra-ordinary working conditions and labour inspectorates have had to be quick to adjust and respond. The newly [published toolkit](#) on the competence profiles of labour inspectorates and inspectors sheds light on the skills needed within labour inspectorates to tackle undeclared work. "Now, more than ever before, it is clear that digital skills and competences are vital for remote working", says Almudena Núñez-García Bada from the Inspectorate of Work and Social Security of Spain. The toolkit also examines key competences needed by inspectors conducting risk assessments and implementing inspections. It discusses the challenges of structuring labour inspectorates to ensure an effective division of roles, whilst at the same time supporting cooperation among authorities. Some practical examples from the toolkit (elaborated further in practice examples) include:

Improving IT skills of inspectors in Greece

Greece has made a concerted effort to improve inspectors' skills to be able to use new IT tools. Since the ERGANI system was introduced in 2013, the Hellenic Labour Inspectorate has developed printed manuals, guidelines and remote video training

modules. The ERGANI system allows targeted inspections and close monitoring of high-risk companies in specific sectors and in seasonal activities. Existing inspectors receive three-hours of training on how to use the ERGANI IT system before using it for the first time. Additional information can be found [here](#).

Highlights from the training school for inspectors in Spain

Spain has developed its own training system and training school. Courses are offered to experienced inspectors in five areas of professional knowledge (administration and procedure; social security and employment; occupational risks and labour relationships; languages, international relationships and new technologies; and skills and psychological abilities). The school offers both face-to-face and online courses and develops new courses on request from regional offices or specialised units of the inspectorate. The training school regularly designs training courses in response to emerging trends regarding labour inspectors' tasks. Additional information can be found [here](#).

Eurobarometer survey suggests a minor decrease in undeclared work

The latest special Eurobarometer on undeclared work published in February indicates that one in ten Europeans have purchased goods or services that might include undeclared work. The survey reveals that over a third of them buy from friends, colleagues or acquaintances. The data suggests that undeclared work and under-declared work reduced slightly from 2007 to 2019. The findings also show a high proportion of the self-employed engaged in bogus self-employment and points to potential challenges related to the collaborative economy, with more than 10% of those engaged in undeclared work reporting using collaborative platforms to do so. Read the summary report [here](#) and the full report [here](#) (PDF, 5 464 KB).

An upcoming report will further analyse and compare evidence from the 2007, 2013 and 2019 Eurobarometer surveys.

Latest and upcoming publications

Toolkits

[Toolkit on competence profiles of labour inspectorates and inspectors in tackling undeclared work](#) (PDF, 2,075 KB)

Event materials

[Executive summary of the thematic review workshop on cross border sanctions](#) (PDF, 97 KB)

[Executive summary of the seminar on tackling undeclared work in the air transport sector, with a special focus on bogus self-employment of aircrews](#) (PDF, 97 KB)

Upcoming

Learning resource paper of the seminar on tackling undeclared work in the air transport sector, with a special focus on bogus self-employment of aircrews

Report on tackling undeclared work in the tourism sector

Eurobarometer report: Trends in the undeclared economy and policy approaches: evidence from the 2007, 2013 and 2019 Eurobarometer surveys

Inspiring practices

Ireland: Awareness raising campaign about bogus self employment
[Click here to view](#) (PDF, 150 KB)

Greece: Training labour inspectors to use the new IT tools
[Click here to view](#) (PDF, 195 KB)

More practices can be found on the Platform's virtual library [here](#)

Dates for the diary

Early July 2020

Staff exchanges call launch

21-25 September 2020

#EU4FairWork campaign Week of Action

5-6 October 2020 (new date)

Plenary meeting of the Platform

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