



**Follow-up visit**  
**Future role and competence profile of labour**  
**inspectorates**  
**1 October 2019, Madrid, Spain**  
**Executive summary**

The follow-up visit aimed to continue discussions about the future role and competence profile of labour inspectorates between members of the European Platform tackling undeclared work, focusing on the practical experience of the Spanish Platform member.

The event followed the thematic review workshop held in Vilnius on 26 and 27 June 2019 and a learning resource paper on the same topic. The visit was part of a mutual learning process among Platform members and will lead to the development of a toolkit.

The event was hosted in the Training School of the Spanish Labour and Social Security Inspectorate (Escuela de la ITSS) and brought together Platform members and observers from Belgium, Ireland, Lithuania, Norway, Slovakia and Sweden. A representative from the European Commission also attended.

Tackling undeclared work poses a triple challenge to the competencies of enforcement authorities. First, there is an emerging consensus that effective enforcement should be combined with preventative actions, based on a more holistic approach, which calls for specific training to be designed and delivered on the roles and tasks of inspectors, labour inspectorates and other enforcement authorities. Second, as the responsibility for tackling undeclared work often lies with multiple ministries, agencies or departments, there is a need for close collaboration and a coordinated strategic approach. Third, enforcement authorities need to adapt to the emerging trend of digitalisation and new forms of work. These challenges have significant implications for the skills and competencies required by inspectors, managers, analysts and other specialists involved in the fight against undeclared work.

This follow-up visit and the workshop that preceded discussed how labour inspectorates and other enforcement authorities understand and effectively respond to these challenges. It also explored the effectiveness of tailored training offers to meet the skills needs of inspectorates and inspectors.

**Training offer by labour inspectorates**

Some enforcement authorities have developed their own training systems, but others often lack the capacity and financial resources to do so, instead relying on centralised civil service training which is often not tailored.

Spain has developed its own training system and training school. In 2009, a training school was set up within the ITSS. The training school organises and delivers initial training for inspectors, continuous training for career development as well as research on future training needs. Courses are offered to experienced inspectors in three areas: administration, social security and employment, and prevention of occupational risks. Continuous training for general skills is also offered, for example to develop language, IT, and soft skills such as negotiation skills. The school offers both face-to-face and online training and develops new courses on request from regional offices, specialised units of the inspectorate or to respond to new trends in the tasks of labour inspectors. For example, they have recently introduced courses on irregular work in digital platforms and e-commerce, as well as on the use of an anti-fraud tool.

In other countries, training activities are carried out by the inspectorate itself. In Slovakia, training can be part of the duties of an inspector. Inspectors have their competences



assessed every 5 years, by sitting validation examinations. An advisory body (the Education Council) identifies training needs and introduces solutions (who should train, who should be trained and in what).

### **New role division to respond to new functions**

Some countries are restructuring their organisations in order to respond to the challenges of working across departments to tackle undeclared work. This needs close consideration of the human resource implications. For some, restructuring involves centralising tasks either within the organisation, or across government, in order to achieve efficiencies and economies of scale:

- Norway is currently restructuring its labour inspectorate with the aim of future-proofing it, by dismantling the regional divisions and establishing centralised cross-functional departments. For instance, the regional communication units are being merged into a central communications unit with five sub-units responsible for the communications tasks of the inspectorate.
- In Lithuania, the labour inspectorate was restructured in May 2019. A wider restructuring of government services had already taken place in 2018, through which all public bodies, including the labour inspectorate, separated institutional functions into 'specific' and 'general'. The labour inspectorate maintains its mission to monitor the labour market, while functions such as recruitment are centralised.

These changes and restructurings need adequate time and effective change management to be implemented. Norway expects that it will take two years from January 2020 to fully implement the restructuring, and a further two years to develop the necessary competences: to set up the cross-functional systems, to establish new working procedures and to support staff during the transition phase.

Other countries are focusing on bringing specialised functions under one umbrella which are likely to be increasingly needed to tackle new forms of undeclared work. In Belgium, a recent restructuring of enforcement authorities merged the inspectorates dealing with social contributions while a new institute, the Social Intelligence and Investigation Service (SIOD), was also set up with a more strategic role. This responds to a shift in Belgium towards enforcement authorities using more risk analysis for inspections which are conducted in the field. There is also a shift towards thinking about different labour market phenomena, about new emerging fraud schemes and about how to address them in a multidisciplinary way. In this context, Belgium is developing cooperation with external actors, for tasks that require a high degree of specialisation. To respond to the need for a more scientific approach, SIOD will create a scientific subdivision to conduct more data driven, evidence-based inspections in the field.

Other countries are also exploring solutions to role division through their interactions with employers and workers. For example, Sweden is currently reviewing all labour market regulations to streamline them from 17 regulations to 11. This is expected to affect how employers and workers access information. Labour inspectors have traditionally had deterrence roles (with advice and information being provided by social partner organisations) but inspectors are increasingly expected to take on some of this role which will have implications for their communication, IT and soft skills.

While there is a trend of some countries moving towards having primarily 'general' roles of inspectors, there is also a need for some specialised functions:

- The trend noted in Sweden is that over the past four years, the inspectors have gone from being specialised towards being more generalist. Sweden no longer has sector-specific inspectors, all inspectors must now be able to inspect employers in different types of sectors.
- Belgium finds that both specialists and generalists are needed: Belgium created specialised teams for undeclared work but also need generalists. This is a new trend. Before, all inspectors were generalists.



- In 2010, Lithuania established a division staffed only by specialist advisors which offers information through a multitude of channels, including phone, face to face, videocalls and Facebook.

### **New skills requirements and implications for human resource strategies**

As the reallocation of roles takes place within labour inspectorates, it is important to consider them in the broader human resource (HR) strategy.

Sweden is currently rolling out such an HR strategy to respond to new forms of undeclared work in the labour market as well as more traditional forms. Their HR strategy is built around the need for generalist (not sector-specific) inspectors; new risk assessment methods; and a new communication strategy and new ways of reaching out. All of these require training to be developed for inspectors. The strategy for developing and maintaining competences has implications for attracting and recruiting employees, supporting their professional development and retaining them, and even when terminating the employment. The process of implementing the HR strategy is as follows:

- Develop an overall strategic plan;
- Develop an annual plan;
- Identify competence needs;
- Identify competence gaps;
- Prioritise competences to be developed or acquired (for example, recent priorities include developing leadership skills and understanding of each employee's position in the organisation in the context of change management); and
- Follow up.

With this process, all managers are responsible for analysing their activities and carrying out a competence analysis and plan to help their staff members develop the necessary competences.

In Ireland, the new skills needed by inspectors include both technical and soft skills, such as conflict resolution. It is expected that the appointment of a new HR liaison will assist in the development and delivery of a HR strategy that addresses these competencies on an ongoing basis. The recruitment function, and delivery of a substantial suite of training courses is organised centrally by the Ministry.

In summary, participants agreed that labour inspectorates operate in different country and institutional contexts with different approaches to initial and continuous training for their staff. Nevertheless, it is important for all labour inspectorates to respond to and embrace change, especially considering the future forms of work within the labour market. While inspectors are often considered the backbone of labour inspectorates, they cannot be expected to do everything. As risk analysis or communications activities become more sophisticated, specialists in these roles can complement the existing work and skills of labour inspectors.

**Further information:** The information from the follow-up visit will inform a toolkit which is currently being drafted on competence profiles of labour inspectorates and inspectors in tackling undeclared work as well as good practice fiches. The input documents and presentations from the workshop will be available on the Platform's collaborative workspace.