



# European Platform Undeclared Work

## Follow-up Visit on Information Tools and Approaches to reach out to Workers and Companies in the Fight against Undeclared Work

### Summary Report

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## Contents

1.1	Introduction .....	2
1.2	Use of social media, apps and videos.....	2
1.3	Working together with social partners .....	3
1.4	Evaluating the impact of information tools .....	4
1.5	Success factors.....	5
1.6	Conclusions and recommendations .....	7

## 1.1 Introduction

Tackling the complex problem of undeclared work (UDW) requires a holistic approach which uses the full range of direct and indirect policy approaches. Indirect, preventative approaches include raising awareness about the benefit of paying tax and providing direct incentives to make it easier or more beneficial to engage in declared work. ‘Information tools and approaches’ are defined as an organised communication activity that aims to educate and/or create awareness about the costs of undeclared and/or benefits of declared work. Possible examples are:

- Information tools to raise awareness such as publications, leaflets, videos, websites, apps, handbooks; and
- Tools to inform and educate workers and businesses, such as calculators for the living wage, websites on employee entitlements and self-assessment tools for employers.

The Follow-up Visit was a part of a mutual learning process, aimed at collecting and sharing information and best practices on information tools and communicative approaches. It is a follow-up to the Thematic Review Workshop held in Stockholm, Sweden, on 22-23 March 2018 and a Learning Resource Paper on the same topic. A Practitioners’ Toolkit being developed helps with the design, implementation and evaluation of information tools.

The Follow-up Visit was hosted by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and the State Labour Inspectorate (SLI) of the Republic of Lithuania in Vilnius, Lithuania, and attended by Platform members from Belgium, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Poland and Sweden as well as by a social partner representing the Latvian employers in agriculture. Participants discussed information tools with regards to three main topics: the use of social media, the collaboration with social partners and the evaluation of information tools.

## 1.2 Use of social media, apps and videos

The Follow-up Visit participants shared numerous examples of interactive **online content**, aimed to reach wider audiences, especially young people. These included, for example, the Belgian app “Students at Work” (informing on how many hours students can work legally), Facebook and YouTube advertisements/clips, humorous sketches (played by actors), instructional videos, vlogging (video blogging) about fraud by influential people, and the use of a “chat box” to answer initial questions, powered by artificial intelligence (the robot is placed at the reception of Belgium’s National Office for Social Security).

In an environment of limited budget and resources for awareness activities, the creation of social media content and videos is often performed by the employees of the labour inspectorates (e.g. Lithuania). For larger campaigns with multiple partners and supporters, external services are used (e.g. a marketing company produced the interactive content for the Finish “Shadow economy – black future” webpage, Netherlands’ government has a contract with a specialised agency to produce awareness videos, and Lithuania has applied paid advertisement in Facebook).

In Lithuania, Facebook has proved to be a useful and efficient tool for advice to firms, lawyers or young people on issues such as labour law and safety at work. The answers are provided mainly by Facebook Messenger (5 663 consultations via

Facebook in 2017 with a 46 % increase since 2016), while more complex questions are answered by email, phone, or during face-to-face meetings. For the task, the State Labour Inspectorate (SLI) engages several employees, who rotate each day from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (1-2 persons available at a time). The frequently asked questions are published on the SLI website.

### 1.3 Working together with social partners

The use of the knowledge and experience of social partners, and the competences of other public institutions was strongly recommended by participants, as they can provide the necessary technological and methodological expertise, human resources, and dissemination channels. NGOs can hand out leaflets, hold seminars, meet with local companies and workers together with the labour authority officials. Trade unions can help the inspectorates to better understand the environment and the target groups.

#### Examples

In the **Netherlands**, mostly due to the historical, cultural and political pre-conditions, no campaign starts without consulting with relevant partners. The process includes joint discussions on the preparation of the design of the activity. For example, a small campaign on decent work was carried out in 2017 and planned again for 2018, with vast interest from social partners, offering to contribute to the activities. Another joint activity of the employment authorities, the tax office and social partners are the performed checks on cleaning agencies if workers are being exploited and working long hours.

In **Belgium**, the labour authorities started an ‘office of communication’ which is a separate body funded by the Labour Inspectorate. They collaborate with a digital platform “SmartSchool” to reach out to students below 18 years of age through educational programmes, advertisements published online (1.5 million people reached), and an app.

The **Finnish** “Shadow economy – black future” webpage (<http://www.mustatulevaisuus.fi/>) is yet another example of cooperation among more than 20 public institutions and social partners. The initiative was launched by the Government in 2012, and soon became a well-known campaign. All partners designed the key messages jointly at the planning stage. The videos with personal stories of UDW in the construction industry were shown in cinemas (before the main movie), messages were disseminated through radio stations, advertisements at bus stops, and games. A central part played the possibility to order a lecture (1-1.5 hours) from a labour, tax or police officer, who then visits a school and talks about the negative effects of UDW. Similarly, in **Sweden** schools are offered teaching materials for free use (related to labour law, UDW, safe working conditions).

In **Lithuania** an initiative for setting up health and safety consultation marquees on the street of Vilnius was led by a social partner, and implemented together with labour inspectors and lawyers.

In **Poland**, the universities were crucial partners in the implementation of the “Before you undertake work” campaign (2013-2015) of the Social Insurance Institution and the National Labour Inspectorate. After the launch of the campaign, numerous universities asked to participate by contributing venues for events, advertisement and

dissemination. A new 3-year campaign is ongoing since 2017, once again with the active participation of social partners. The cooperation between the National Labour Inspectorate and the Social Insurance Institution is based on a signed agreement.

The process of working with social partners should follow **several key steps**, the most important ones being frequent informal discussions and bilateral meetings. An informal setting encourages open and honest dialogue, so issues and solutions can emerge. These meetings are also used to explain current legislation to social partners, as well as the logic of the enforcement chain (prevention, detection, controls, sanctions), which tools are available (e.g. Limosa in Belgium) and which tools and databases are in development. The methods of enforcing control however are not shared with the social partners, as they remain within the competencies of the labour and tax authorities.

## 1.4 Evaluating the impact of information tools

Information tools are evaluated through various assessment methodologies and impact indicators can enable success to be measured. This can improve communication activities. During the visit, a few proposed sources for gathering feedback on communication activities were discussed:

- surveys and/or focus groups among the main audience of the tools,
- statistical data produced from the operation of the information tool, such as the number of visits, users, clicks, showings, meetings, consultations, received warnings by type (of worker, employer) or sector,
- data from inspections carried out among the target group, and
- expert opinions by a task force or working group members, based on their observations.

However, there is an EU-wide observed **lack of an evaluation culture and follow-up procedures** of communication activities. Campaigns and information tools are rarely evaluated, and the impact, cost-benefit and sustainability (improvements and follow-up activities) are also rarely discussed and built into information campaign planning procedures. Despite this, some limited examples of evaluation activities were mentioned by the group.

### Examples

**Lithuania** has used an online survey approach to evaluate the effects of the letters sent to companies with the risk of unhealthy work conditions. The survey results (about 10% response rate) pointed out to the existing demand for more tips on how companies can avoid violations, for example through the distribution of a newsletter. The key impact confirmed by the survey, however, was the majority of firms indeed consider that the letters helped them to prevent accidents at work.

**Ireland** has used a client survey to perform a qualitative assessment of the satisfaction levels from the work of the Information and Customer Services Centre, which is responsible for the provision of information relating to employment rights, equality and industrial relations matters. The centre is also responsible for the design and production of informational booklets, leaflets and other literature. The answers to one of the questions revealed that over 50% of the users have already taken

corrective action as a result of the centre's consultation at the time of the survey (although it was not specified what type of action). The gathered information is then presented to the management team of Workplace Relations in Ireland and used normally for risk assessment and, infrequently, for analysing the impact of the tools and decisions on their continuation, upscaling and improvement.

## 1.5 Success factors

The good practices presented during the visit demonstrated the need for the following when developing successful information tools and approaches for reaching out to employers and workers:

- The use of comprehensive procedures for both internal communication between departments and public officials and external communication with workers and employers;
- Strong political support;
- Increased powers and competences of the public authorities (and the labour inspectorates in particular),
- The use of tailored approaches for each target group (differentiated by age, sector, region), and
- The increased trust in the authority achieved through its advisory role.

As information tools are planned at central level, the link between the communication departments and the inspectors is of key importance. The employees of labour inspectorates and the inspectors on the ground hence help to create the **image of the public organisation** as one engaged with the problems of the citizens and the business. While (labour) inspectors have traditionally been seen as 'controllers' or 'enforcers' - with their being work primarily punitive – this attitude is showing signs of change in some countries. According to the participants this seems to be due to largely external factors such as a change in governmental approach or the consolidation of services due to economic pressures. Offering support and advice is highly appreciated by employers, who receive advice in consultations before being directly confronted by inspectors in countries such as Lithuania, or after inspections such as in Belgium, the Netherlands and Latvia.

It was suggested that inspectors can also be communicators – or better yet – play a dual role of advising and controlling. However, this requires an **investment in competences, and legal and practical knowledge** in order to provide this type of consulting service. This process also needs **resources and time**. For example, in Latvia employers are typically sceptical of the Labour Inspectorate and do not seek its advice. Similarly, the Swedish Work Environment Authority is not well-known, which leads to the need of first creating a consultation and advisory image of the public institution.

The participants noted the importance of using the knowledge and experience of **social partners**, and competence of other institutions to achieve a "multidisciplinary effect" (e.g. combining the regulatory knowledge and competences of the public institutions with the existing information distribution networks, event organisation or software development skills of the social partners). At a national level, partnerships and collaborations can be established between both public authorities and with social partners (trade unions, employers' associations, NGOs). For example, in the

Netherlands the Social Economic Council provides a platform for all stakeholders to discuss employment, mobility, pension age and other relevant topics. In Lithuania, the tax inspectorates and Social Security Fund experts jointly meet with risk companies to discuss what they can do to change their behaviour. Ideally, the employers should have one single point of contact (one-stop shop) on all issues related to labour and tax laws, instead of contacting the various public authorities when resolving a complex problem. Such an approach would require inter-departmental and inter-governmental cooperation.

The participants underlined that finding “**key influencers**” on the public opinion, and **supporters and volunteers** is important. These could include well-known bloggers, YouTubers, and NGOs who can disseminate the information tools and their key messages on the negative impact of UDW for free. For example, volunteers can hand out leaflets on the street or provide advice next to inspectors, or a police officer can visit a school and talk about how all students can help in the fight against UDW.

The Follow-up Visit participants described various **dissemination channels**, aiming to find the best methods to reach wider audiences and explain the negative effects of UDW: TV and radio announcements, social media (Facebook, YouTube), webinars, public discussions/round tables regarding tax and labour aspects, leaflets and posters (in supermarkets and public transport), press releases, live-stream video from the press conference, meetings with regional press and municipalities, face-to-face meetings and consultation tents on the street, roadshows, hotlines, etc. The Lithuanian campaign “Working illegally – I became just a living toy” was presented as an example. The campaign was publicised at the State Labour Inspectorate (SLI) website, national and regional press, and through radio and TV adverts. It used humour, personal (relatable stories), practical tips, and infographics.

The participants also recommended that labour inspectorates should **differentiate** between workers and firms with different cultural backgrounds, from different sectors, regions, as well as between those who want to oblige the law, but do not know how, and those that want to evade it. For example, older audiences can be reached through traditional media, while social media is more suitable for younger audiences. In order for the message to be effective, it should always have an incentive (benefit) element, and be best timed for the respective audience (e.g. for students it can be delivered shortly before the summer vacation, when they start searching for part-time jobs). Special focus should be paid on reaching the regions outside the capital city, especially since UDW levels are higher there. This can be done via meetings with regional press and municipalities, or competitions for awards to journalists who write articles promoting declared work, health and safety, e.g. the competition organized by the Journalist Union of Lithuania.

The message should also use **simple language** (e.g. “Use a tax card when you work”), be easily accessible (e.g. through the e-tools used in the Netherlands), and presented to all employees of the labour inspectorate, as they should also be able to communicate it to the workers and employers they meet in their everyday work.

After creating the design of the information tool, its contents, messages, and dissemination channel, it should be **piloted (tested)** among representatives of the target groups in order to check if it has the desired effect in changing behaviours. This “proof of concept” is important for presenting the possible impact of the tool to the senior management and ensuring its endorsement and future funding.



Information on lessons learnt and effects of information tools can be also used to enhance new possibilities to collaborate between Platform members. For example, several Estonian promotional materials, as well as the Norway's "Truck Driver's Mother" materials and videos were already translated and used in Lithuania.

Other useful guidance on how an awareness tool/campaign can be run is provided in the [Campaign Toolkit](#) of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.

## 1.6 Conclusions and recommendations

The participants of the Follow-up Visit agreed that communication activities of information tools ultimately impact on the public image of Platform member organisations. The job description of the labour inspector in the EU is changing from a control function towards an advisor role, responsible for prevention and awareness raising. In the case of Lithuania, this process was initiated due to the economic crisis, which forced the labour inspectorate to decrease the administrative burden on the companies and start to provide consultations on the correct procedures required by law. The labour inspectors however cannot become full-time communication experts. In that regard, the majority of the labour inspectorates have faced the necessity to set up separate communication departments, with their own staff, financing, and competences in performing information, awareness and consultancy services.

Another important condition for reaching out and changing the behaviour of the target groups is inter-agency coordination and cooperation with social partners. While such cooperation has proved to be efficient in a number of countries (e.g. Poland, Netherlands, Finland) during the development and implementation of awareness raising campaigns, additional efforts are needed to improve consultations, advice and information on the appropriate methods for firms and workers to apply the labour and tax legislations and procedures. A key challenge to the labour authorities remains the development of a comprehensive methodology for measuring the results of communication efforts and linking this with their overall performance management systems.

It was recommended by external experts that advice and methodologies are sought or developed in order to set up evaluation procedures (e.g. adopt key performance indicators (KPI) from the tax authorities or monitoring rules from the health and safety at work authorities, (such as EU-OSHA). In order to monitor and improve communication activities, Platform member could adopt the following indicators in their overall performance measuring systems:

- Number and types of corrective actions performed as a result from the implementation of an information tool (received nudge letter, provided consultation, visited website, used calculator, etc.), combined with the number of changed registrations, declarations, payed income taxes and social securities;

The share of UDW decrease with repeated offenders and any change in the behaviour of companies identified as using consistently UDW during past inspections, and comparison with their behaviour after the use of the information tool.