

A large, solid blue diagonal shape that starts from the top right corner and extends towards the bottom left, creating a dynamic background element.

Cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs in tackling undeclared work

**Output paper from the
plenary thematic
discussion**

28 November 2023



European Platform
tackling undeclared work



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1. Introduction

The fifteenth plenary meeting of the European Platform tackling undeclared work (henceforth “the Platform”) took place in a hybrid format on 28-29 November 2023. The first day of the plenary was dedicated to a thematic discussion on the cooperation between enforcement authorities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

In developed democracies, a strong non-governmental sector, or civil society is a characteristic feature. While cooperation between social partners and labour enforcement authorities (co-enforcement) is prevalent among EU Member States, numerous EU countries witness collaboration between labour inspectorates, social partners and NGOs. This collaboration extends beyond labour inspection, as public bodies often engage with NGOs across various policy domains.

Partnerships of enforcement authorities with NGOs serve to amplify and disseminate the results of policy and enforcement efforts, offering valuable access to specific groups of workers who may be vulnerable to undeclared work. NGOs, by supplementing the internal capabilities of enforcement authorities, may either complement or reinforce their functions, fostering formalised cooperation and advocating for declared work and promoting its advantages. NGOs may contribute indirectly to enforcement authorities' goals by implementing a range of actions which are complementary or feed into the work of labour authorities, such as providing information to workers, supporting workers to file complaints to labour complaints mechanisms and/or to transform undeclared work into declared work and advocating for relevant structural changes, even in the absence of explicit contractual ties.

Given their mission-oriented and not-for-profit nature, NGOs can bring more flexibility into the process of supporting specific goals of public bodies including enforcement authorities. Frequently championing broad goals such as poverty eradication, equal rights, and combatting discrimination, NGOs play a crucial role in various sectors. Therefore, understanding effective cooperation models between enforcement authorities and NGOs requires recognising various types of NGOs and the wide scope of their activities. Examples range from community-based organisations, NGOs active in the field of rights of undocumented migrants, environmental and women's rights organisations, associations of various professions, faith-based groups, co-operatives, professional associations and chambers, independent research institutes, to not-for-profit media.

The European Platform tackling undeclared work already addressed successful cooperation approaches between labour inspectorates and social partners, in a 2021 Thematic Review Workshop: Successful approaches of cooperation between labour inspectorates and social partners. This event resulted in the publication of an Executive Summary,¹ a Learning Resource Paper,² and a Toolkit on successful approaches of cooperation between labour inspectorates and social partners.³ All of these publications are available in the [documents](#) section of the European Labour Authority (ELA) website.

Recognising the crucial complementary role that NGOs play in shaping the strategies and objectives of enforcement authorities, the thematic day of the November 2023 Platform was dedicated to:

- Understanding the role of NGOs in supporting or/and working with enforcement authorities in tackling undeclared work;

¹ European Platform tackling undeclared work, 2021a., available at: https://www.ela.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-05/UDW_Executive%20Summary_TRW_0.pdf

² European Platform tackling undeclared work, 2021b., https://www.ela.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2021-12/Learning-resource-paper_TRW_Social_Partners.2021_EN.pdf

³ European Platform tackling undeclared work, 2021c., available at : https://www.ela.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-02/UDW_Toolkit_Successful-approaches-of-cooperation-labour-inspectorates-social-partners.2021_EN.pdf



- ▶ Acknowledging the significance of cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs, considering perspectives from various stakeholders at both policy level and implementation/operational levels;
- ▶ Presenting empirical evidence showcasing effective cooperation efforts between NGOs and enforcement authorities in various EU Member States with a focus on identifying opportunities for potential synergies.

The thematic day brought together various presentations and insights on the above-mentioned issues. With over 80 participants, including Platform members, observers, invited experts, and representatives from NGOs and ELA, the event constituted an opportunity to guide discussions on this topic. This report summarises key aspects from desk research that informed the thematic day, as well as the presentations, discussions, and findings from the event in relation to the above-specified aims. Prior to the thematic day, fresh desk research was conducted in 2023 for the purpose of this report. The research focused on mapping examples of cooperation between NGOs and enforcement authorities. Initially, the research conceptualised the scope and type of potential cooperation based on the accepted definition of NGOs. Subsequently, the research team conducted extensive desk research to identify cases where enforcement authorities cooperate with NGOs. These cooperation examples were then divided into categories, based on the theme of cooperation, the scope and regularity of cooperation, and evaluation of such cooperation as a good practice example.

The structure of the report loosely follows the findings from the desk research and the discussion structure of the thematic day:

- ▶ Introduction to the concept of NGOs;
- ▶ Benefits of cooperating with NGOs from the perspective of enforcement authorities;
- ▶ Stakeholders' perspectives on the cooperation with NGOs;
- ▶ Examples of successful cooperation identified via desk research, presented and discussed at the thematic day;
- ▶ Key conclusions and learning points from the thematic day's presentations and discussion.

2. Cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs: an overview

The civil society comprises a variety of stakeholders/organisations and to understand successful cooperation patterns between enforcement authorities and civil society actors, it is essential to distinguish between various types of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), **CSOs are understood as a broader category of organisations encompassing all non-market and non-governmental organisations.** CSOs are also recognized as valued actors in the EU structures, for example, in contributing to policy consultation processes and the strengthening participatory democracy in the EU. The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) organizes and represents civil society actors to help optimizing the quality of EU policy and legislation.⁴ Examples of CSOs include community-based organisations, environmental groups, women's rights groups, farmers' associations, faith-based organisations, trade unions and employers' organisations, co-operatives, professional associations, chambers of commerce, independent

⁴ EESC website, at <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en> and EESC's call for participatory democracy in the EU with involvement of civil society organisations at <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/strengthening-civil-dialogue-and-participatory-democracy-eu-path-forward>.



research institutes and the not-for-profit media.⁵ Within this diverse group of CSOs, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) comprise a distinct subgroup, which is separate from trade unions and employers organisations as social partners. NGOs are mission-driven advocacy or service organisations in the not-for-profit sector, often supporting specific goals of public authorities like national governments or international organisations.⁶ Often NGOs advocate for overall goals, for example the eradication of poverty or discrimination, and campaign for equal rights. They may focus on represent specific groups of the population, such as children, people with disabilities, Roma or migrants.

NGOs can play a crucial role in supporting the achievement of social objectives, which are shared between the NGO and enforcement authorities, particularly in areas where the authorities face limitations in their reach. To illustrate successful collaborations with NGOs, the following section of the report provides insights into various types of NGOs and their activities that can prove beneficial for enforcement authorities. The information is based on the input provided by two experts and their inputs at the thematic day, and a comprehensive mapping exercise conducted in 2023. This exercise systematically documented cooperation cases with NGOs across Europe, showcasing the valuable contributions made by NGOs in supporting enforcement initiatives.

2.1 Understanding the role of NGOs

Why are enforcement authorities expected to cooperate with NGOs and how can such cooperation benefit enforcement authorities? How does such cooperation complement or differ from cooperation with social partners? To answer such questions, it is essential to first highlight that NGOs are understood as a subgroup of a wide range of actors and organisations within civil society. NGOs active on the labour market should be distinguished from the other types of CSOs active in labour market issues, namely from social partners (trade unions and employers' associations) and from professional associations which are constituency-based organisations. So, while all types of organisations active in the field are part of the civil society, their membership base, legally defined competencies and rights, capacities, representativity and field of activity differ. We explain the main differences between NGOs, social partners and professional associations that are relevant from the point of view of enforcement authorities based on the classification developed by authors for an earlier project for the European Commission's [European Neighbourhood Policy](#) (ENP).⁷

Social partners work within legally granted rights and obligations. Operating on a membership-based model, social partners represent a wide spectrum of labour-related interests including tackling undeclared work. They are present at the workplace and meet defined criteria to represent the interests of their members when dealing with the enforcement authorities and other policy actors. They engage in collective bargaining and provision of legal

⁵ Tomlinson, 2013, p.123.

⁶ Harvard Law School, see <https://hls.harvard.edu/bernard-koteen-office-of-public-interest-advising/about-opia/what-is-public-interest-law/public-service-practice-settings/international-public-interest-law-practice-setting/nongovernmental-organizations-ngos/>

⁷ The authors of this report developed a classification of the unique role of different CSOs active in the labour market for an earlier project within the European Commission's European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) that governs the EU's relations with 16 of the EU's closest Eastern and Southern neighbours. For more information on the ENP, see https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/european-neighbourhood-policy_en. Within the ENP, the authors were commissioned to support the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Facility in mapping civil society actors, including trade unions, professional associations and NGOs active in the area of labour rights. The categorisation of distinct roles of various CSOs, developed within the ENP, is used here as a reference for understanding the opportunities and challenges of cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs. For more information on the Mapping studies of trade unions and professional associations as civil society actors working on issues of labour rights and social dialogue in six Eastern Partnership Countries, see Kahancová, 2020, and <https://eapcivilsociety.eu/news/research-news/mapping-studies-of-trade-unions-and-professional-associations-in-the-six-eastern-partnership-countries.html>



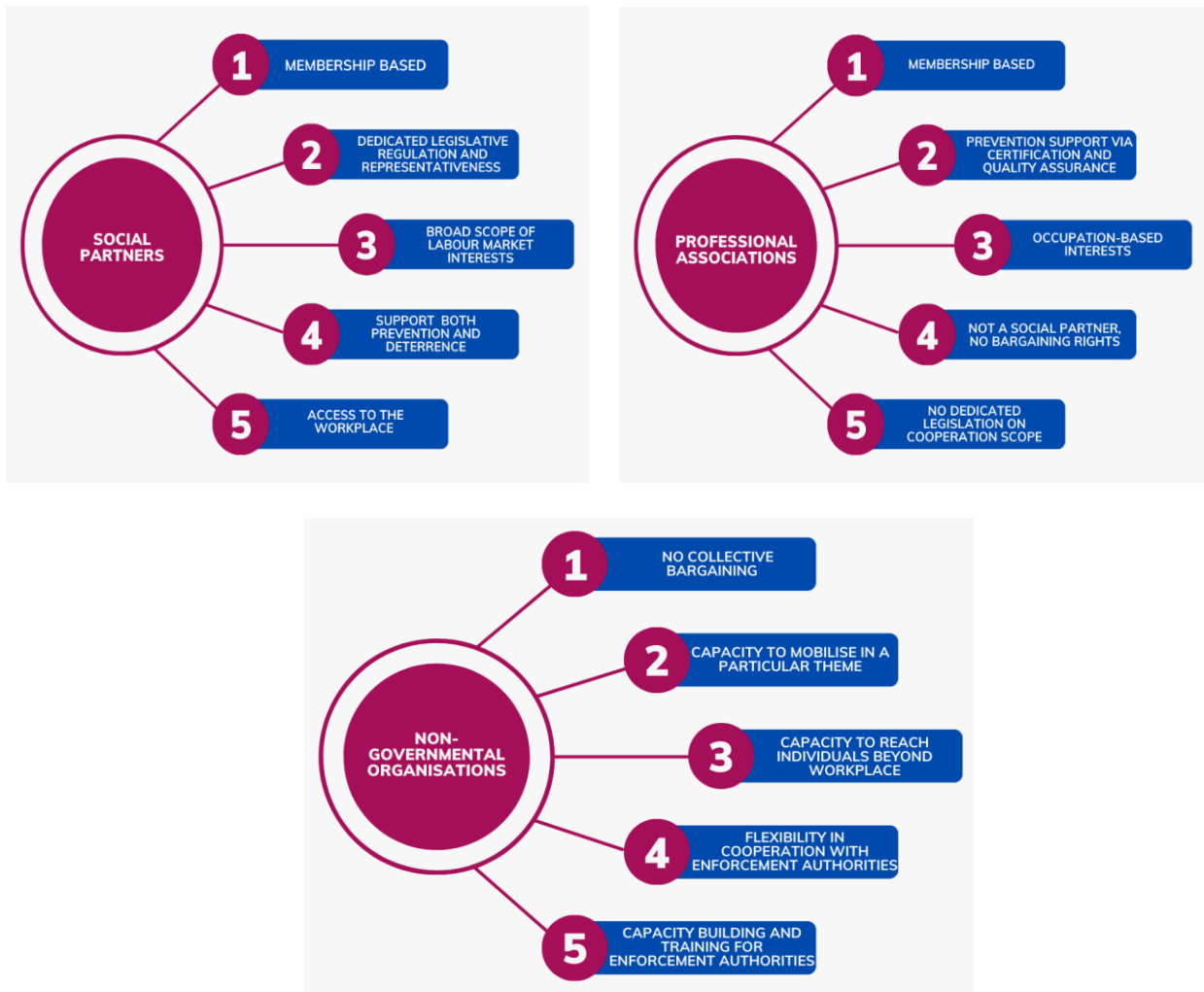
advice (e.g. by trade unions to their worker members, or by employers' associations to particular employers on meeting legal requirements in employment). Additionally, social partners engage in coordinated bargaining to jointly set working conditions and wages e.g. at the sectoral level, and actively participate in policymaking through social dialogues as part of policy making at national as well as European level. Support to enforcement authorities can occur both in prevention and deterrence measures. Stefanov and Mineva (2021) reported several successful cooperation examples across Platform countries.

Professional associations, although also membership-based, are confined to specific professions and their interests. These associations primarily advocate for certification, continuous learning, or training accessibility. Unlike trade unions, professional associations do not address issues related to working conditions and undeclared work. Professional associations are not recognised as social partners and therefore cannot engage in social dialogue structures or in collective bargaining. The efforts of professional associations can thus indirectly support the effort of enforcement authorities in tackling undeclared work, but such support is limited in scope.

NGOs, unlike social partners and professional associations, may or may not operate on a membership basis. They can mobilise and advocate for specific aspects of labour rights and protection, often relating to undeclared work. While being more limited in terms of available tools at their disposal, NGOs are adaptable in responding to emerging challenges, because they may have less strict organisational structures than social partners and usually work in the public interest, and for populations beyond their specific membership base. From the perspective of enforcement authorities, cooperation with NGOs can help in awareness raising on regulations regarding and rights at work, reaching out to specific groups of undeclared workers and providing them individual and tailored support. NGOs typically also possess specialised expertise in specific labour issues such as child labour, gender discrimination, or migrant workers' rights. Through cooperation with specialised NGOs, enforcement authorities can bring additional resources and expertise to address undeclared work collectively.

It is important to mention that while the focus and activities of NGOs, professional organisations, and social partners may often overlap, this report clarifies important operational differences as outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Opportunities and limits of cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs, social partners and professional associations



Source: The authors, based on their earlier original work within the European Commission's [European Neighbourhood Policy \(ENP\)](#) project.

In sum, the primary distinction between NGOs and social partners lies in the fact that NGOs usually provide services to specific groups of the population, not limited to their membership, even if they are a membership-based organisation. They work towards their mission, which usually aligns with public social interests and objectives. NGOs effectively rally and advocate for specific labour rights and protections, including declared work, even without a formal mandate to represent a large basis of members. NGOs are also not limited in their mandate and scope to labour-related issues; they thus play a crucial and complementary role providing support to undeclared workers in precarious situations in relation to other needs, such as health, housing, residence status, which can also be crucial for them to engage in legal or administrative proceedings. As a result, NGOs can demonstrate greater flexibility than social partners, adapting more readily to emerging challenges.

From an enforcement perspective, collaborating with NGOs can prove invaluable for raising awareness about employment rules and regulations, targeting specific groups of undeclared workers, and delivering tailored support to persons exposed to risk of undeclared work or persons lacking awareness on applicable regulations. Moreover, NGOs often hold specialised expertise in distinct labour issues like child labour or migrant workers' rights. Joining



forces with these NGOs can give enforcement authorities additional resources and expertise to address undeclared work.

In cooperation with enforcement authorities, NGOs can play a dual role:

- ▶ **Supportive role:** Assisting enforcement authorities by providing expertise and skills that they might lack or need enhancement in, possibly through dedicated training programs. NGOs engaged in capacity building enhance the functioning of enforcement bodies by providing training on new legislation or sharing insights gained from working closely with specific groups like undeclared migrant workers.
- ▶ **Complementary role:** NGOs can support negotiation and mediation processes that help make workers aware of their rights and duties in accessible ways. This role is crucial when dealing with specific economic migrant groups (such as third country nationals), as NGOs tend to be more approachable and trustworthy compared to public bodies. Through such activities, NGOs cultivate invaluable expertise that enforcement authorities can incorporate into their prevention and deterrence strategies.

Acknowledging the supportive/complementary roles of NGOs for enforcement authorities, the expert presentation by the Central European Labour Studies Institute (CELSI) highlighted that **cooperation with NGOs can be organised based on three categories: formalisation and extent of cooperation; thematic focus of cooperation; and the content of cooperation.**

Figure 2. Intensity and formalisation of cooperation

Intensity and formalisation of cooperation

Type of cooperation	Examples
Framework cooperation and regular structured involvement of NGOs	Sectoral bodies, councils dedicated to NGOs cooperation, management board with NGO involvement, written cooperation agreement, joint working groups, task forces
Joint activities on ad hoc basis	Complaint mechanisms and compliance lists, risk assessment using NGO knowledge, deterrence measures, awareness raising campaigns, education and training
Other marginal forms of cooperation	Ad hoc consultations, informal interactions, indirect support of NGO activities to the benefit of enforcement authorities

Source: Presentation by the Central European Labour Studies Institute.



Figure 2 shows that cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs based on formalisation, covers three main types of such cooperation:

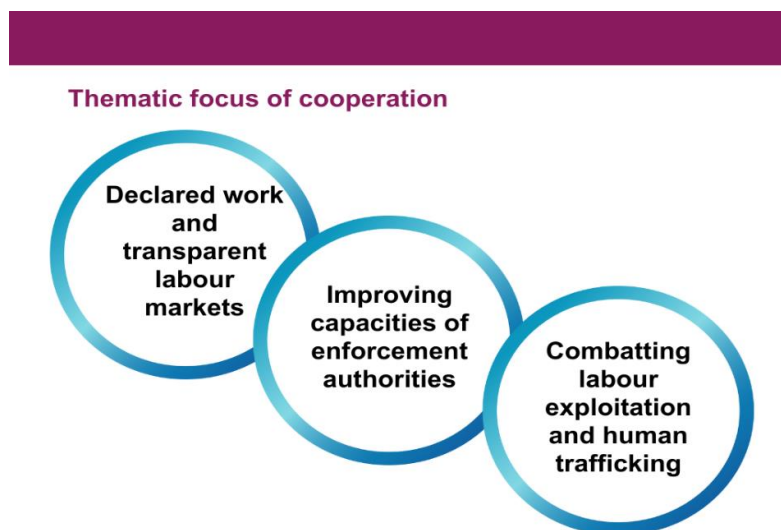
- ▶ **Framework cooperation and regular involvement** of NGOs into the activities of enforcement authorities
 - ▷ Most intensive form;
 - ▷ Long-term relationships with NGOs established through framework agreements;
 - ▷ Involvement in sectoral bodies, councils dedicated to NGOs, or joint working groups of authorities also engaging NGOs representatives.

- ▶ **Ad-hoc joint activities**
 - ▷ Less intensive form of cooperation than framework cooperation and/or regular involvement;
 - ▷ Covers short-term, project-based, or similar ad-hoc initiatives and interactions;
 - ▷ Involves specific projects, often in deterrence measures, awareness campaigns, or education and training.

- ▶ **Other limited forms of cooperation** and/or mutual support without formalised cooperation
 - ▷ Least intensive cooperation form;
 - ▷ Informal interactions, ad hoc consultations;
 - ▷ Independent NGO activities that indirectly support enforcement authorities without a formal relationship with the inspectors.

Figure 3 categorises **cooperation with NGOs according to its thematic focus**. First, campaigning for legal work and promoting transparent labour markets involves awareness-raising measures, taking various forms such as outreach to employers and employees or recognising good practices through awards. Second, cooperation aimed at enhancing the capacities of enforcement authorities is evident in the provision of analysis, policy recommendations, trainings, study visits or similar. Finally, cooperation focused on combating human trafficking represents the largest evidence group for successful cooperation. This encompasses diverse forms, including raising awareness among workers, especially those with a migrant background, conducting targeted controls, organising training activities, and utilising social media for communication. This category also includes instances of cooperation in reporting suspected worker maltreatment to labour inspectors.

Figure 3. Thematic focus of cooperation



Source: Presentation by the Central European Labour Studies Institute.



Finally, cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs may evolve around specific content related to deterrence measures, prevention, or other support focusing on raising awareness among workers and employers on labour-related rights and obligations as stipulated by national and international legislation and specific employment conditions (see Figure 4).

This distinction of cooperation types by its intensity, formalisation and thematic focus is important for contextualising and understanding cooperation examples including good practices presented in the remainder of this report.

Figure 4. Content of cooperation

Content of cooperation

Content	Examples
Deterrence	Better detection of undeclared work
Prevention	Improved penalties (sanctions, naming and shaming), information and awareness raising among workers to prevent labour exploitation
Other	Awareness raising campaigns on the labour market, contracts, creation of websites, guidelines, leaflets

Source: Presentation by the Central European Labour Studies Institute.

2.2 Challenges and synergies in co-enforcement with NGOs

Next to understanding the role of NGOs and possible types of cooperation, the presentation by the expert, Nathan Lillie of the University of Jyväskylä, discussed what factors motivate cooperation of enforcement authorities and NGOs and why such cooperation is likely to emerge. The presentation stipulated that precarious workers, particularly migrants, face additional vulnerabilities and dependencies; and gathering information about their work proves challenging for enforcement authorities. Addressing their issues may demand specialised expertise and capacities, while these types of workers exposed to undeclared work might lack trust in state authorities. Cooperation with NGOs can help solve this challenge.



Cooperation with NGOs can be costly (resources are needed) and to be based on trust to work most efficiently. However, by establishing common methods, procedures, and expectations, the expenses and risks can be mitigated through institutional alignment. The challenges in cooperation are magnified when there are notable differences between partners, leading to potential tensions. Problems often arise due to "opportunistic behaviour," where one side takes without reciprocating. Deepening the relationship serves to alleviate this problem. As a result, enforcement authorities might benefit from synergies that emerge in their cooperation with NGOs. Synergies can derive from different organisational capacities, including:

- ▶ Legitimacy;
- ▶ Better access to specific groups of workers;
- ▶ Authority among targeted groups that the state authorities lack;
- ▶ Specialised expertise that is complementary to each other.

In other words, the presentation stipulated that **each partner does what they do best and shares the benefits with the other partner**. Such synergies help a co-enforcement by NGOs by extending the internal capacities of enforcement authorities, granting authorities access to additional resources of the NGOs such that they benefit from in-depth knowledge of the specific issues by NGOs, and a potentially wider geographic scope of actions related to both prevention and deterrence of undeclared work. Suggestions to enforcement authorities, as stipulated by the expert presentation, can be summarised in several points as listed in Box 1.

Box 1. What does the science say about cooperation with NGOs?

Evaluate the cooperative relation: not all relationships will be worth the cost to maintain and develop; but because of synergies, many will be;

Remember that NGOs are different than your organisation. Respect their goals and methods while making sure they understand yours;

NGOs will not have the same restrictions, or capacities – this is the basis of the synergies which motivate cooperation, but can cause problems and misunderstandings, if not handled well;

In time you will get to know better how to best use the relationship, and also what the NGO can do for you – so get to know them, as an organisation, and personally.

Source: Presentation by the University of Jyväskylä.

The expert contributions, as summarised above, informed a systematic mapping of cooperation examples across European countries. This mapping exercise has been undertaken over several months in 2023, by a research team supporting the Platform. Researchers from CSD, CELSI, ICF and the WageIndicator Foundation were involved. This effort resulted in an overview of approximately 60 successful cooperation examples between enforcement authorities and NGOs. Selected examples were presented and discussed at the thematic day and are summarised in Section 4 below.

Successful cooperation however does not refer to any targeted evaluation to determine whether such cooperation efforts delivered the expected outcomes in terms of decreasing undeclared work. For this report, successful cooperation refers to cases where cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs has been established, the thematic area in which cooperation has been established, and the scope of cooperation (e.g. on an ad-hoc or a more long-term basis).



3. Stakeholders' perspectives

The plenary thematic day also offered an insight into the cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs from the perspective of diverse stakeholders. This session explored how stakeholders such as policy makers, social partners and labour inspectorates as enforcement authorities across various countries themselves perceive cooperation with NGOs and where they see opportunities in NGOs that can support enforcement authorities in tackling undeclared work.

From the perspective of an enforcement authority, the first presentation addressed the **Polish State Labour Inspection's cooperation with the third sector to eliminate illegal employment and forced labour**. This presentation listed some difficulties in cooperation between the State Labour Inspection and NGOs, including the absence of a direct obligation for collaboration and information exchange stipulated in the Act on the State Labour Inspection. Additionally, there is a lack of a permanent structure for cooperation and information exchange between the Labour Inspectorate and NGOs as a tool for risk assessment. Current areas of cooperation include inspections, prevention, and information sharing. The target groups for collaboration encompass NGO staff, labour inspectors, legal advisors, and experts from the national-level labour inspectorate, both at central level (Chief Labour Inspectorate) and local level (district labour inspectorates). The ultimate beneficiaries of NGOs' activities, such as EU citizens and third-country nationals, are also part of the target groups. Key topics of cooperation include:

- ▶ legality of employment of foreigners in Poland;
- ▶ working conditions of workers hired by Polish companies;
- ▶ employment agencies' activities and temporary work;
- ▶ trafficking in human beings and forced labour;
- ▶ posting of workers to and from Poland.

The Polish presentation outlined **three examples of cooperation** that match the goals mentioned earlier. The first involves the **cooperation with the La Strada Foundation** in the framework of a National Action Plan coordinated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Poland. At the local level, inspectors cooperate with La Strada in forming expert groups to eliminate forced labour and trafficking in human beings. These groups include the police, border guards, labour inspectors, NGO representatives and employees of the regional government offices. As part of this cooperation, annual training sessions for labour inspectors are conducted to enhance the recognition of potential forced labour and trafficking victims and learn how to support them.

Other examples by the Polish State Labour Inspectorate include **cooperation with the Foundation Arbeit und Leben (AuL)**, based in Germany. This cooperation emerged through the "*Eurodétachement*" project, supported by European funding and coordinated by INTEFP France. The project was aimed to assist legal advisors in helping Polish citizens working in Germany, including both cross-border workers and posted workers. The support is crucial for Polish workers in countries like Germany, where a labour inspection system similar to Poland is lacking. AuL steps in to help when complaints from Polish migrants in Germany arise. The collaboration also includes study visits, staff exchanges and online training for AuL experts to enhance their knowledge in supporting Polish workers in Germany.

Additionally, cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs can also involve social partners, which often take up roles similar to NGOs. The presented example of such cooperation involved a trade union: in 2022, as part of the collaboration between the State Labour Inspection (SLI) and the Central Organisation of Trade Unions in Poland (Ogólnopolskie Forum Związków Zawodowych), a meeting took place with a delegation of advisors from Faire Mobilität (Fair Mobility), an organisation affiliated with the German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB), at the Chief Labour Inspectorate. Faire Mobilität specialises in counselling and supporting



employees from Central and Eastern Europe on their rights in the German labour market, providing advice in their native languages. This cooperation focuses on sharing information about the state labour inspection's activities, cooperation with the German liaison office and the procedure for submitting complaints to the Polish labour inspection, with emphasis on complaints from employees posted to Germany.

Subsequently, the **Belgian presentation discussed a collaborative effort to combat trafficking**, involving the Labour Inspectorate, the Federal Migration Centre and Myria serving as the independent national rapporteur. Myria oversees cooperation among three Belgian victim centres, aiming to establish a multidisciplinary approach to tackling both trafficking and smuggling. In addition to legal actions, Myria prioritises victim support, involving social inspectors in monitoring specific cases, participating in court proceedings, and initiating civil action on behalf of victims who provide a mandate. The organisation also actively monitors case law related to trafficking.

Belgium's governmental strategic plan outlines seven key objectives, with a dedicated focus on combating human trafficking and economic exploitation. Initiatives involve referring potential victims to specialised centres, conducting investigations through enforcement bodies, and mobilising non-specialised inspectors to pay attention to instances of labour exploitation. Notably, special consideration is given to challenges in major cities, addressing the interconnectedness between legal, informal and illegal economies where economic exploitation is sometimes linked to drug crime and trafficking in arms and prohibited substances. Social inspectors undergo specialised training in human trafficking, and collaboration extends to working groups such as the newly established *Working Group Sanctions* implementing the Employers Sanction's Directive (2009/52/CE). Myria and the Social Inspectorate for Social Security (SIIS) play distinct roles, with Myria actively participating in legal proceedings, while SIIS reports to the European Commission based on the information provided by authorised inspectorates authorised combatting illegal employment.

In response to a question raised during the discussion, the Belgian presentation confirmed the absence of a **concrete and comprehensive definition of economic exploitation, both internally and at the EU level**. In Belgium, there is no explicit legal definition for economic exploitation or social dumping. Instead, the approach involves the compilation of criteria on a case-by-case basis, using a checklist to identify situations involving economic violations. Collaboration between the Labour Inspectorate (LI) and the National Social Security Office (NSSO) is crucial in addressing economic exploitation, with the active participation of various entities including the police, tax inspectors, economic inspectors, NGOs and social partners.

From the **employers' perspective** (Leviathan association and BusinessEurope), NGOs play an acknowledged role in addressing specific social issues. However, effective cooperation methods need to be determined. Employers' organisations operate at multiple levels — company, regional, sectoral, national, and EU — where consultation with other social partners and with NGOs becomes essential in specific cases. In Poland, employers collaborate with NGOs in targeted areas, leveraging their expertise in addressing diverse societal needs, such as reaching out to refugees facing language barriers and explanation of labour market regulations during recruitment. While there is synergy between social partners and NGOs in certain areas of the labour market, social partners have the primary responsibility for socio-economic conditions and bargaining on behalf of their members.

Concluding the discussion, a joint presentation by **ETUC and PICUM highlighted the significance of NGO cooperation with trade unions**. PICUM serves as an umbrella organisation for NGOs, trade unions and community groups, also including some trade union organisations affiliated to ETUC. Together they form a network across 31 countries of organisations supporting migrants, most of whom are undocumented migrant workers. They engage in evidence-based advocacy and research to implement policies that address the needs and rights of migrant workers.

In terms of collaboration between trade unions and NGOs such as PICUM, emphasis is placed both on practical support for migrant workers and joint advocacy efforts to implement policies effectively. The strength of this cooperation lies in the complementarity and diversity of roles, relationships, and expertise brought by both networks.



On a practical level PICUM and ETUC recognise the lack of unionisation among migrant communities and actively work to support migrant worker organising both within and outside of the trade union movement. NGOs and trade unions both provide information, counselling and support to mobile and migrant workers to resolve employment disputes, often working together, given their complementary roles and relationships with worker communities and authorities respectively. For example, trade unions may have the resources to provide legal representation and wield stronger negotiating power with employers, while NGOs usually have closer contacts with migrant workers and community groups, and can support with a range of needs, as well as develop different types of cooperation with enforcement authorities. For both trade unions and NGOs, a key consideration for cooperation with authorities is that the interests of their members or target group – including undocumented migrant workers – are served through the cooperation. PICUM and ETUC emphasised their interest in cooperation with authorities to find innovative ways to work together for common interests, in all legal and policy contexts.

Examples of fruitful cooperation include trade union led initiatives for networks of counselling services targeting mobile and migrant workers, such as the Fair Mobility initiative by the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB)⁸. Here, trade unions and trade union advisors have a key role in providing multilingual individual advice to workers, ensuring decent working conditions and denouncing abuse. Linked to this, experience shows that NGOs can also offer important complementary support when it comes to information and advice on living conditions, such as, inter alia, access to housing, residence and work permits, health care and social services.

On a policy and advocacy level, while NGOs may face challenges in accessing formalised legal cooperation, such as social dialogue, social partners find it relatively more accessible. Examples of joint advocacy around policy and communication activities occur at both national and EU levels. Both entities are dedicated to advancing the rights of migrant workers within relevant policy frameworks. Notable instances include the active involvement of a union from Ireland in the campaign leading to the regularisation program in 2022. In November 2023, 18 trade union organisations and NGOs at the EU level issued a joint statement on the revision of the Single Permit Directive, underscoring a shared interest in improving the rights of migrant workers' rights in policy. Other examples of joint advocacy include actions focusing on particular sectors, for example, domestic and care work e.g. or agriculture (e.g. campaign for social conditionality in EU's common agricultural policy).

4. Examples of successful cooperation with NGOs

Cooperation examples collected via desk research and summarised in a database can be filtered according to the following criteria:

- ▶ Country;
- ▶ Name of the cooperating NGO;
- ▶ Type of cooperation (framework/ad-hoc/other marginal), with provision of additional information describing this cooperation more closely if data were available;
- ▶ Content of cooperation (prevention/deterrence/other);
- ▶ Target group of the cooperation effort;
- ▶ Type of cooperating NGO – national or international.

⁸ See <https://www.faire-mobilitaet.de/en/ueber-uns/++co++1553ebf6-697b-11e2-8499-00188b4dc422>



In total, 18 cooperation examples were annotated as framework-based cooperation and 16 cooperation examples classify as ad-hoc cooperation examples. The remaining cooperation examples refer to cases where the kind of cooperation could not be verified (framework or ad-hoc) and other marginal forms of cooperation (see Figure 1 above). Using the perspective of the target group, cooperation covers mainly victims of human trafficking, posted workers and migrant workers from third countries, as well as workers displaced from war-prone regions.

Activities that enforcement authorities developed with NGOs across Europe most often included prevention measures against human trafficking and labour exploitation or a provision of a hotline and training events for (seasonal) workers that might be exposed to labour exploitation. From among the reported deterrence measures, enforcement sought to achieve, for example, a regulatory improvement in Bulgaria and the implementation of IT systems in Sweden.

Section 4.1 provides an overview of cooperation examples, while Section 4.2 zooms on those examples that were presented and discussed during the thematic day.

4.1 Cooperation examples from the database






The evidence presented here draws on a mapping exercise of cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs, which was compiled to support the preparations of the plenary meeting. The mapping contains several examples, however it does not represent an exhaustive list of cooperation practices between enforcement authorities and NGOs. In some cases, cooperation also involves other stakeholders, including ministries or social partners, but is still considered relevant because of the benefits that NGO expertise yields for enforcement authorities. Examples are clustered in three thematic types of cooperation, following Figure 3 above.

4.1.1. Campaigns for declared work and labour rights and transparent labour markets

The mapping of cooperation examples, compiled for the purpose of this study, shows that in at least 13 European countries cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs emerged with the aim of raising awareness and providing counselling or information on workers' rights for domestic or foreign workers. All examples falling into this category of cooperation involved ad hoc cooperation, most usually in the form of project-based cooperation between an NGO and an enforcement authority, in some cases supported and financed directly by the respective Ministry of labour. Selected examples of cooperation in campaigning for declared work and transparent labour markets are shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5. Examples of cooperation – campaigns for declared work and transparent labour markets

Country	Characteristics of cooperation	Type of cooperation
 LITHUANIA	Cooperation of the State Labour Inspectorate of Lithuania and the Ukrainian Labour Rights Protection Center, assistance to persons affected by violations of labour law in Lithuania	Formalised framework cooperation, preventative measures, targets posted workers and migrants
 ROMANIA	National Consumer Protection Association (InfoCons) awareness raising campaign "Work legally! Know your rights" with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and the Romanian Labour Inspectorate	Formalised framework cooperation, consultations, awareness raising campaign
 FINLAND	RIKU (Victim Support Finland), a cooperation between several NGOs, operates a hotline for seasonal workers, especially those suspected of being exploited.	Framework cooperation, funded by the government, delivering awareness raising and information about rights
 GREECE	The Hellenic Labour Inspectorate cooperates with the NGO A21 in promoting joint activities in social media and implementing targeted inspections and training	Framework cooperation, joint activities, both in prevention and deterrence
 BULGARIA	The Bulgarian Industrial Capital Association (BICA) organises the "Economy into the Light" competition and provides awards to organisations and persons that contributed to the fight of undeclared work	Long-term project, regular involvement, prevention and deterrence, improves detection, enforcement of sanctions, awareness raising campaigns, level playing field

Source: Authors mapping of cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs, ELA 2023.

Awareness raising campaigns were targeted at citizens or at foreigners. In **Latvia**, young workers aged between 16-24 years were the main target group of the campaign "#FraudOff!", which aimed to promote public awareness of negative consequences of the shadow economy and fraud for individuals and the country as a whole. The campaign promoted whistleblowing by raising awareness of how and why it is important to report suspicions of fraud to relevant law enforcement institutions. The State Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Latvia (one of the organisers) as well as over 60 public administration institutions, companies, and non-governmental partners were involved in the campaign.⁹ The following organisations are included in the partnership according to the #FraudOff website (<http://atkrapijes.lv>) (NGOs highlighted): the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Welfare, the State Revenue Service, the State Police, the Corruption Prevention and Combatting Bureau, the Competition Council, the State Border Guard, the Food and Veterinary Service, the Procurement Monitoring Bureau, the Security State Agency, the Patent Office, the Prosecution Office of the Republic of Latvia, the Consumer Rights Protection Centre, the Rural Support Service, the Central Finance and Contracting Agency, the Bank of Latvia, and others as well as the Transparency International Latvia.

In **Lithuania**, an awareness raising campaign called "*There is no room for shadow in this country*" involved a cooperation between the State Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Lithuania, a business initiative Clear Wave (*Baltoji banga*) and the Investors' Forum (voluntary, independent, and self-managed organisation), and was aimed

⁹ See <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=20449&langId=en>, <https://atkrapijes.lv/kustiba/>



at drawing, public attention to the scale of the shadow economy. It also promotes understanding of how everyone can contribute to reducing the shadow economy.

In **Estonia**, the Open Estonia Foundation and Praxis Centre for Policy Studies developed an online calculator “Where does my money go?”, with the aim of supporting drivers in the transport sector and informing them about their rights and entitlements when providing cross-border transport services.¹⁰

Similarly, in **Malta**, employers have access to the Department for Industrial and Employment Relations (DIER) to consult on their rights and obligations, employment law, and working conditions. This is possible because of collaboration between the Malta Enterprise and the Malta Chamber of Small and Medium Enterprises, an NGO that operates the project Business 1st since June 2021.¹¹

In **Romania**, the NGO National Consumer Protection Association (*InfoCons*) is involved in an awareness raising campaign “Work legally! Know your rights” (*muncește legal! cunoaște-ți drepturile*) along with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the National Agency for Fiscal Administration, National Agency for Employment, National Trade Union Confederation, National Council for Tripartite Cooperation, and the Romanian Labour Inspectorate.¹² The campaign aims to raise awareness among Romanian workers about their rights and responsibilities under labour law. It also provides information to workers on how to report cases of illegal work and how to get help if they are being exploited by their employers.

. In **Sweden**, a non-profit company ID06, founded in 2006 by the Swedish Construction Federation, offers IT solutions to combat illegal work practices in various sectors that help companies streamline their daily operations. For example, their IT solutions are used for attendance registration in the workplace personnel register, digitisation of workers' training certificates, and access and lock functions in local systems.¹³

Seasonal workers were the target group for a RIKU (Victim Support Finland) initiative in **Finland**, which involved cooperation between several NGO's, including the Finnish Red Cross and the Finnish Association for Mental Health.¹⁴ A website and phone line are open for seasonal workers and operates in several languages to support them in terms of legal working conditions such as working hours and salaries, housing and hygiene conditions, as well as available legal remedies.

As a reaction to the inflow of Ukrainian war refugees, cooperation between NGOs such as the Ključ association (*Društvo Ključ*) and labour authorities emerged to provide them with counselling activities in **Slovenia**.¹⁵ In a similar case in **Lithuania**, authorities cooperate with the Ukrainian Labour Rights Protection Centre (*Ukrainiečių darbo teisių gynimo centras*).¹⁶

Finally, the construction sector in **Sweden** is a pioneer in promoting declared work via campaigns (see the Fair Play Bygg Initiative with a more detailed summary in Section 4.2.5). All parts of the construction industry – construction companies, trade unions, developers, industry organisations and other stakeholders – appointed and financed a commission with the task of mapping and assessing fraud and crime in the Swedish construction market. The commission proposes measures that promote fair conditions for employees and companies that pay

¹⁰ European Platform tackling undeclared work, 2018, p. 11.

¹¹ See <https://www.smechamber.mt/business-1st-launches-a-new-ticketing-system-and-new-dier-desk/>

¹² See press release (in Romanian) at <https://www.inspectiamuncii.ro/documents/704560/35041309/20210729-Comunicat+de+presa-Actiune+de+informare+publica+MUNCESTE+LEGAL%21+CUNOASTE-TI+DREPTURILE.pdf/9bf8dc05-84a7-4173-9a6b-cacaa23f92c4?version=1.0>

¹³ For information on the ID06 system, see <https://id06.se>

¹⁴ Jokinen, et al 2003. Also, for more information on the seasonal workers advice service, see <https://www.riku.fi/seasonalwork/>

¹⁵ See <https://www.gov.si/en/registries/projects/combating-trafficking-in-human-beings/prevention-of-trafficking-in-human-beings/>

¹⁶ See https://www.vdi.lt/Forms/Tekstas1.aspx?Tekstai_ID=3551



taxes and fees and ensures equal conditions of competition between the companies. Former ministers who had had responsibility for sectors relevant for this commission also participated in the board.

4.1.2. Capacity building for enforcement authorities

A specific form of cooperation between NGOs and enforcement authorities involves mutual knowledge sharing and learning. This collaboration is often utilised to enhance the capacity of enforcement authorities, enabling them to better detect undeclared work and exploitation, or acquire new skills through training provided by NGOs. The activities and modes of cooperation in this area vary widely.

In **Czechia**, two NGOs, the Association for Integration and Migration (SIMI) and the Multicultural Centre Prague, were partners in a project called "*Cities and Inclusive Strategies*." This project evaluated programmes and tools supporting the integration of foreigners in Czechia. It mapped groups of foreigners whose needs were neglected and proposed innovative solutions to enhance the efficiency of the integration process at the local level. The project, funded by the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, was implemented between 2018 and 2020.¹⁷

In **Poland**, inspectors undergo a two-day training course on the identification of human trafficking, conducted in collaboration with an NGO (e.g., La Strada Poland). The training covers the existing legal framework and the roles of various authorities such as the Police, the Border Guard, and the National Labour Inspectorate in combatting and preventing this crime. Additionally, it educates participants about the roles of various NGOs, like La Strada Poland, in providing guidance and assistance to the victims.¹⁸

In **Bulgaria**, the employers' association BICA managed the "*Economy into the Light*" index from 2010, which incorporates a subindex measuring the proportion of declared and undeclared work.¹⁹ This index, derived from surveys conducted among the population and companies as well as desktop research, offers recommendations for policy enhancements and supports capacities of enforcement authorities. Furthermore, BICA developed a methodology for preventing undeclared work, suggesting a risk assessment approach to facilitate the identification of companies prioritised for inspection by the General Labour Inspectorate (GLI). In 2020, the Executive Director of the General Labour Inspectorate publicly endorsed BICA's recommendations for preventing undeclared work.²⁰ The above initiatives of BICA are funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and its Operational Programme "Development of Human Resources" (OPDHR) in Bulgaria, supervised by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

Another NGO in **Bulgaria**, the Centre for the Study of Democracy (CSD) (which is part of the Platform Support Team), organised study visits for the Bulgarian General Labour Inspectorate, e.g., a trip to Belgium. Such visits aimed to facilitate knowledge sharing on how host countries handle the prosecution and police investigation of human trafficking and labour exploitation. Additionally, CSD contributed to the creation of the report titled "*Uncovering Labour Trafficking: Investigation Tool for Law Enforcement and Checklist for Labour Inspectors*."²¹ Since 2002 CSD has been conducting surveys and publishing the Hidden Economy Indexes, including studies on undeclared work, along with policy reports. These reports have been applied not only in Bulgaria but also in the Western Balkans.²²

¹⁷ For more information on the project, see <https://www.migrace.com/en/mission/projects>

¹⁸ European Platform tackling undeclared work, 2021d, p.49.

¹⁹ See <https://bica-bg.org/bg/15/ikonomika-na-svetlo.htm>

²⁰ See <https://bica-bg.org/bg/56/ogranichavane-na-nedeklariranata-zaetost.htm>

²¹ Ylinen et al, 2020.

²² Centre for the Study of Democracy (CSD), 2016. Hidden Economy Indexes in Bulgaria 2002-2015: Results and Methodological Notes (2016).



The enhancement of enforcement authorities' capabilities is often employed in activities related to the inflow of third-country national workers encompassing their registration, provision of legal and material assistance, and the identification of cases involving illegal work practices. In **Spain**, the Council of Ministers, following the proposal of the Minister of Employment and Social Security, approved a subsidy for the Spanish Red Cross, the Spanish Refugee Aid Commission (CEAR), and the Spanish Catholic Migration Commission Association (ACCEM) – three NGOs specialising in the reception of international protection applicants and beneficiaries. This grant, totalling EUR 13 million (EUR 6.5 million in 2015 and EUR 6.5 million in 2016), aimed to increase the number of reception facilities for international protection applicants and beneficiaries funded by the Ministry of Employment and Social Security.²³

Similarly, concerning displaced Ukrainians in **Lithuania**, the State Labour Inspectorate organises seminars for NGOs on labour legislation applicable to Ukrainian citizens. Additionally, the labour inspectorate conducts control activities based on information provided by NGOs, among other sources.²⁴

In **Austria**, cooperation between the Federal Ministry of Labour, NGOs like LEFÖ-IBF, MEN VIA, and other partners is focused on strengthening measures against labour exploitation. The Austrian legislation distinguishes between three forms of labour exploitation, including slavery/servitude/forced labour, human trafficking, and exploitation in employment.²⁵ This collaboration involves preparing indicators with NGOs for identifying victims of such trafficking and implementing awareness-raising initiatives against labour exploitation. These efforts encompass monitoring working conditions and inspecting workplaces.²⁶

In **Hungary**, NGOs often receive funding from the government to provide shelters for refugees, assisting them with accommodation, transportation, reintegration support, family care, financial management advice, and medical care. This facilitates collaboration between NGOs and enforcement authorities, allowing for the exchange of expertise to prevent and address undeclared work in this community.

In **Latvia**, as part of the Inspectoral Dialogue Platform "*Labour Migration in Latvia: Risks of Forced Labour and Exploitation*," representatives from a Latvian NGO Shelter "*Safe House*," the State Labour Inspectorate, and the Ministry of the Interior convened for online meetings. During these sessions, they discussed their institutions' experiences in dealing with cases of forced labour and labour exploitation. Additionally, they explored informative and practical publications beneficial for policymakers and necessary amendments to criminal law, as well as potential future cooperation opportunities.²⁷ Through this initiative, the enforcement authorities gained knowledge from the field in which NGOs operate and could tailor its deterrence measures accordingly.

4.1.3. Combatting human trafficking

More than half of all identified cases involving collaborations between NGOs and enforcement authorities pertained to human trafficking (see Figure 6 for selected examples). This cooperation primarily focused on providing counselling and assistance to victims of human trafficking for labour exploitation purposes or conducting awareness-raising campaigns specifically targeted at these victims.

²³ See <https://prensa.mites.gob.es/WebPrensa/noticias/inmigracionemigracion/detalle/264>

²⁴ European Platform tackling undeclared work, 2022a, p.26.






²⁵ EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2015, p.3.

²⁶ Task Force Human Trafficking Austria, 2021, p.23 and p.27.

²⁷ See <https://www.patverums-dm.lv/lv/23-aprili-sekmigi-noritejusi-starpsektoriala-dialoga-platformas-tiessaistes-tiksanas-par-temu-darbaspeka-migracija-latvija-piespedu-darba-un-ekspluatacijas-riski/1020?search=valsts%20darba%20inspekcija>



Figure 6. Examples of cooperation – combatting human trafficking

Country	Characteristics of cooperation	Type of cooperation
 AUSTRIA	Cooperation between the Federal Ministry of Labour and NGOs LEFÖ-IBF, MEN VIA and other partners with the aim of strengthening measures against human trafficking for labour exploitation	Ad hoc cooperation, joint activities, inspectorates benefitting from NGO expertise
 GERMANY	The German Financial Control of Undeclared Work Unit (FKS), and the NGO Berlin Counselling Centre for Migration and Decent Work (BEMA), investigated suspected labour exploitation in construction	Ad hoc cooperation, joint activities, deterrence measures, benefitting from NGO expertise
 SLOVENIA	Victim Care Project – organised by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and carried out by selected NGOs; awareness raising among migrant workers with risk of human trafficking	Ad hoc cooperation, joint activities, prevention, workshop organisation for awareness raising purposes
 CYPRUS	The Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, Dept. of Labour Relations, receives referrals from various NGOs (e.g. KISA) on suspected cases of human trafficking.	Non institutionalised ad hoc cooperation, informal relations of some NGOs with the police, supports prevention and deterrence
 IRELAND	The Workplace Relations Commission initiated and delivered campaigns including prevention and awareness raising on WRC's role in cooperation with the Migrants Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI)	Limited form of ad hoc cooperation, to the benefit of migrant workers at risk of trafficking and exploitation

Source: Authors from the mapping exercise on cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs, ELA 2023.

In **Czechia**, the Centre of Nationwide Programmes and Services of the Diakonie organisation (*Diakonie českobratrské církvi evangelické, Středisko celostátních programů a služeb*) implemented a project entitled "Helping victims on the labour market," supported by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, among others. This project resulted in an **interactive online course** for people at risk of trafficking and exploitation.²⁸

In **Lithuania**, a cooperation agreement was established between the State Labour Inspectorate of the Republic of Lithuania and the National Association against Trafficking in Human Beings (*Nacionalinė asociacija prieš prekybą žmonėmis - NAPPŽ*). This agreement involved the provision of assistance to individuals who had been victims of human trafficking for forced labour both within Lithuania and abroad, along with the exchange of data and information. NAPPŽ serves as an umbrella NGO that unites regional NGOs dedicated to the care and support of victims of human trafficking.²⁹

In **Slovenia**, the NGO Caritas Slovenia implemented the "Providing Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings – Crisis Accommodation" programme between 2020 and 2023. This programme was funded by the Ministry

²⁸ For more information on the E-learning course, see <https://scps.diakonie.cz/o-nas2/realizovane-projekty-strediska/vykoristovanim-na-trhu-prace-pomaha-e-learning/>

²⁹ See https://www.vdi.lt/Forms/Tekstas1.aspx?Tekstai_ID=3551



of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MDDSZ) and Caritas co-financed and implemented it. This two-year programme provides comprehensive assistance for victims of human trafficking.³⁰

In **Bulgaria**, several NGOs such as Dignita, Caritas, Animus, Demetra, Puls Foundation and Foundation A21 assist human trafficking victims by providing them with legal aid related to labour law, and when needed, represent them at the General Labour Inspectorate. They also collect referrals and cases of human trafficking and labour exploitation, which are then forwarded to the General Labour Inspectorate for further action.

In **Greece**, there is an ongoing cooperation between the Hellenic Labour inspectorate and the NGO A21. A21 (*Abolishing Slavery in the 21st Century*) is an international non-profit and NGO founded in 2008 in Thessaloniki and currently active in 19 locations in 14 countries around the world. The Hellenic Labour Inspectorate has been cooperating with A21 Greece since January 2023. Joint activities implemented so far include, training, production and use/distribution of informative leaflets, and use of social media and the Inspectorate's website to promote cooperation.

In **Cyprus**, the Department of Labour Relations learns about human trafficking cases in different ways, for example, through people calling the organisation, or through referrals from other bodies (NGOs), or from other government authorities. Relevant NGOs in Cyprus dealing with migrant workers and victims of trafficking include Kisa, Caritas, Stigma, Cyprus Stop Trafficking, and MIGS. These NGOs do not have established formal cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, but informally cooperate with the police. Since 2012 the government co-funded specialised anti-trafficking training for members of the Attorney General's Office, for public prosecutors, social workers, and judges regarding best practices in prosecution of human trafficking cases, use of expert witness testimony, and a focus on understanding of and sensitivity to the psychological state of victims. Also, in 2012 the government co-organised with the NGO, STOP, anti-trafficking training to Cypriot consulate staff on identifying trafficking indicators during the visa application process.³¹

In the **Netherlands**, a specific institution assists Dutch authorities in supporting victims of human trafficking (see a detailed summary of the CoMensha foundation's cooperation with enforcement authorities in Section 4.2.3). The NGO FairWork specialises in providing support and defending the rights of various household personnel, including au pairs and undocumented third-country nationals.³² One of the most innovative aspects of this NGO is its cooperation agreement with the labour inspectorate, enabling the enforcement authorities to handle specific cases successfully. FairWork is a foundation established under Dutch law and represents the continuation of a previous collaboration between Oxfam Novib and Humanitas. FairWork's mission is to combat and prevent modern slavery. According to their website, FairWork collaborates with various entities, including the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, especially in:

- ▶ Identifying and recognising victims of human trafficking;
- ▶ Providing joint education to victims;
- ▶ Conducting training sessions for staff members;
- ▶ Sharing experiences;
- ▶ Identifying challenges in the implementation of policies;

³⁰ For more information on the National Working Group for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, see <https://www.gov.si/en/registries/working-bodies/the-national-working-group-for-combating-trafficking-in-human-being/>

³¹ See <https://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/mlsi.nsf/home-en/home-en?OpenForm#>

³² European Platform tackling undeclared work, 2022b, p.44.



► Discussing specific cases.

According to the 2020 report from the European Platform tackling undeclared work, the Belgian labour inspectorate has also engaged in an agreement with FAIRWORK Belgium, allowing this organisation to handle complaints of non-payment to third country nationals.³³

In **Belgium**, an informative brochure was produced for non-specialist inspectors of social inspection services, in collaboration with the Immigration Office and specialised teams of the NSSO/Labour Inspectorate. Its purpose was to raise awareness among these inspectors about the indicators of economic exploitation in their field of work. They were also encouraged to establish contact with specialised NGOs responsible for the reception of potential victims of economic exploitation and/or human trafficking in such cases.³⁴

In **Germany**, the German Financial Control of Undeclared Work Unit (*Finanzkontrolle Schwarzarbeit – FKS*), together with the NGO Berlin Counselling Centre for Migration and Decent Work (BEMA), part of the nationwide counselling services ‘Life and Work’, investigated suspected trafficking in human beings and labour exploitation of around 120 workers from Serbia, Kosovo, and Albania in a major construction company. This initiative was implemented in June 2019.³⁵ A detailed presentation at the meeting explained how this cooperation went badly from the perspective of BEMA and the workers involved, but has laid the groundwork for the development of a more formal cooperation agreement, which clearly sets out terms of cooperation. BEMA has also been providing training for FKS victims’ coordinators for a number of years.

In **Germany**, long-term cooperation exists between the German NGO network against Trafficking in Human Beings (KOK) and the German customs administration’s unit for the financial control of undeclared work (*Finanzkontrolle Schwarzarbeit – FKS*). This cooperation involved several meetings, information sharing and trainings, including:³⁶

- 2022: Training course run by the Service Centre against Labour Exploitation, Forced Labour and Human Trafficking for victim protection officers working for the Financial Control of Undeclared Work Department (FKS), input on trafficking in human beings from KOK;³⁷
- 2021: Meeting between KOK and Finanzkontrolle Schwarzarbeit;³⁸
- 2019: Second KOK general meeting in Berlin focusing among other things on the entitlement of EU citizens to benefits, and cooperation with FKS.³⁹

In **Denmark**, the Danish Centre against Human Trafficking, established in 2007, is part of The Danish Authority of Social Services and Housing. The Centre is one of the main actors in nationwide social efforts to combat human trafficking. The Centre’s multidisciplinary team coordinates and ensures development of these efforts. The Centre identifies persons exploited as a result of human trafficking and offers assistance, support, and counselling, as outlined in the national Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, 2022-2025. The Ministry of Gender Equality has overall responsibility for the implementation of the action plan.

Also in **Denmark**, the Danish HopeNow’s strategy involves social outreach, harm reduction, and provision of accurate information about legal pathways. This ensures that victims are aware of their rights, of the available resources, and of the legal options to heal and rebuild their lives. They work in close collaboration with the Centre

³³ European Platform tackling undeclared work, 2021d, p.46, also <https://www.fairworkbelgium.be/>.

³⁴ European Platform tackling undeclared work, 2022a, p.11.

³⁵ European Platform tackling undeclared work, 2021d, p.27.

³⁶ See KOK, German NGO Network against Trafficking in Human Beings, Annual Review 2019.

³⁷ KOK, German NGO Network against Trafficking in Human Beings, Annual Review 2022, p. 10.

³⁸ KOK, German NGO Network against Trafficking in Human Beings, Annual Review 2021, p. 4.

³⁹ See KOK, German NGO Network against Trafficking in Human Beings, Annual Review 2019.



against Human Trafficking (CMM), the Danish Working Environment Authority, and other institutions to identify and support human trafficking victims. Other organisations in Denmark with similar goals include *AmiAmi* – a centre specialised in support for sex workers;⁴⁰ and *Rede International*.⁴¹

Informal but intensive cooperation was identified in **France** under the auspices of Collectif "*Ensemble contre la traite des êtres humains*" (Together against human trafficking), a network of NGOs created to fight more effectively against all forms of this denial of human rights. Created by Secours Catholique in 2007, it brings together 28 French associations working directly or indirectly with the victims of exploitation and human trafficking in all its forms in France or in the countries of transit and origin of trafficking. They collaborate informally but closely with the General Labour Directorate, and the Ministry of Labour and Employment.⁴²

Cooperation remains limited and informal in the battle against human trafficking in **Norway**. The Ministry of Justice and the National Police set up the Coordinating Unit for Victims of Trafficking (KOM), a project for nationwide coordination of assistance and protection of victims of human trafficking whose main tasks are to identify frameworks and procedures for cross-disciplinary cooperation on the identification, assistance, and protection of trafficked victims and to implement measures to improve coordination between different levels. However, in practice, collaboration between State agencies and NGOs remains quite limited and informal. The mission of ECPAT Norge/Norway (*End Child Prostitution and Trafficking Norway/Norge*) is to work against all forms of sexual exploitation of children in Norway and internationally in accordance with ECPAT International's goals and visions. They are actively trying to involve the government and KOM in all their activities.⁴³

4.2 Cooperation examples presented during the thematic day

Selected cooperation examples were presented and discussed in greater detail during the thematic day. The plenary thematic day also included two parallel workshops, where enforcement authorities and NGOs explored in-depth specific cooperation examples. The participants discussed operational details of the cooperation, as well as challenges and lessons learnt.

General questions that the workshops addressed included the following:

- ▶ How to detect undeclared work trends in partnership with NGOs, such as via regular meetings, protocols, referrals, etc.? Are partners (enforcement authorities or NGOs) from other countries involved?
- ▶ What types of data, analysis or complaints are best shared between enforcement authorities and NGOs?
- ▶ How do you use the outcomes of information exchange to plan cooperation measures (e.g., inspections, sanctions, improved procedures)?

Presentations focused mostly on cooperation efforts in tackling labour exploitation and human trafficking; as well as tackling undeclared work and workplace crime. The subsections of this chapter provide a summary of relevant presentations within the workshops.

⁴⁰ See <https://www.amiami.dk/>

⁴¹ See <https://kfuksa.dk/>

⁴² See <http://www.contrelatraite.org/index.php/les-membres-du-collectif>

⁴³ Norwegian Ministry of Justice and the Police, 2011.



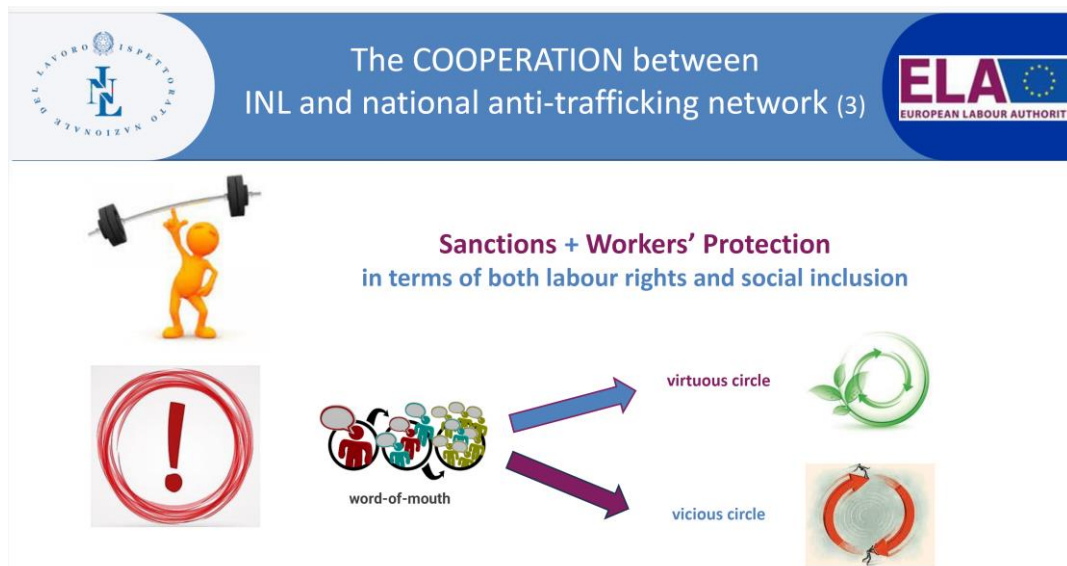
4.2.1 The anti-exploitation network: Italian practice to reduce the negative effects of undeclared work

A representative of the Italian National Labour Inspectorate presented the successful collaboration between the labour inspectorate and the national anti-exploitation network which was enhanced and revitalized throughout the country, also thanks to the involvement of the International Organization for Migration, which in recent years supports the INL and facilitates the post-inspection phase of referrals to anti-trafficking bodies. The network actively reports potential cases of exploitation to the labour inspectors at various levels. The outcomes have been significantly encouraging, evident in the issuance of permits to previously exploited workers rising from 3 to 111, a remarkable 3500% increase. This success underscores the importance of sustained investment in fostering and strengthening such cooperation for continued positive impact.

Further insights on the Italian anti-trafficking system established in the late 90s were shared, with a primary focus on individual rights. The initiatives include **21 anti-trafficking projects involving with multidisciplinary teams**, a 24-hour national hotline, and a comprehensive database of cases covering various forms of exploitation, such as labour and sexual exploitation and forced begging. These projects target persons that have been victims of labour exploitation. Records state that in the last five years around 2,100 individuals, predominantly men (82%), have been victims of serious labour exploitation, spanning various sectors like agriculture (60%), domestic services, manufacturing, tourism, trade, and construction. Notably, instances of exploitation are widespread across various regions in Italy, ranging from the North to the South, and the referral systems designated to address such cases are considerably diverse.

The collaborative approach adopted focuses both on sanctions and workers' protection (see Figure 7). Indeed, experience has shown that if the needs of the victims - not only those relating to work - are understood and met, the inspection activity is capable of guaranteeing complete and lasting protection of the worker, as well as ensuring the proper combating of illegal behaviour through sanctions. The effective protection of victims is crucial because word of mouth can encourage a virtuous circle (when the results are positive) or, on the contrary, a vicious circle (when the worker does not receive adequate protection).

Figure 7. A procedural perspective on the Italian LI cooperation with the anti-trafficking network



Source: Presentation by the Italian National Labour Inspectorate.



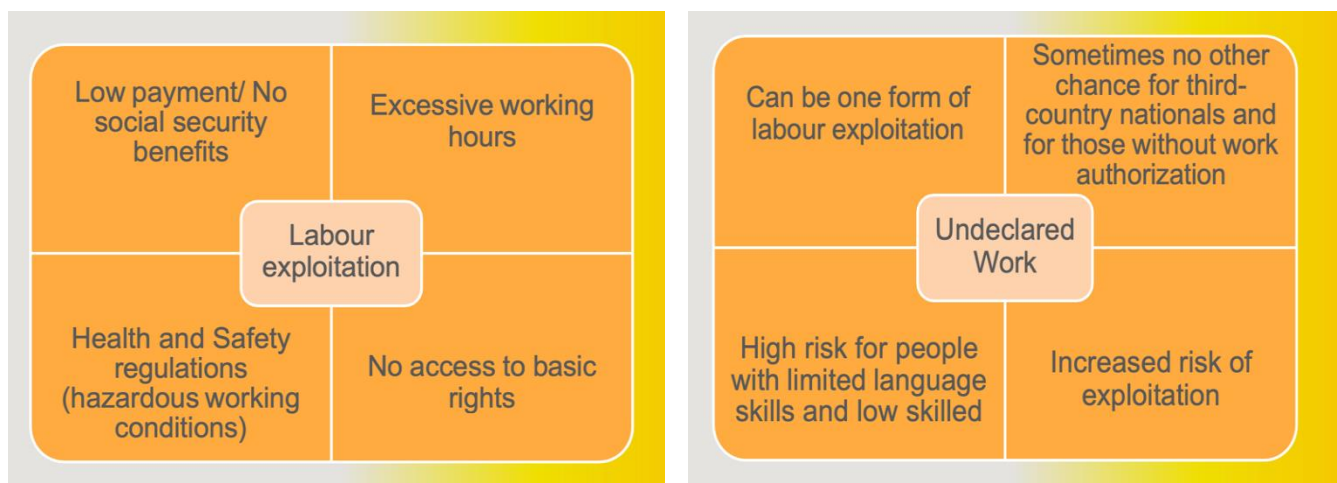
4.2.2. Labour trafficking and targeted inspections in Greece in cooperation with NGO A21

This illustration was presented jointly by the NGO and a representative from the labour inspectorate, offering the participants a complex picture on their cooperation and benefits and practical matters. A21's⁴⁴ main objective is to combat trafficking and eradicate slavery in the 21st century by tracing the cycle of human trafficking. In this context, the implementation of the trafficking concept in relation to undeclared work has been elucidated (see Figure 8).

The primary common denominator among trafficking survivors is vulnerability, which can stem from factors such as poverty, lack of education, and limited future prospects. A21 has developed expertise around three core pillars: **vulnerability, exploitation, and restoration**. The first pillar, vulnerability, is addressed through prevention efforts. The second pillar, exploitation, includes both sex trafficking and, to a lesser extent, labour trafficking. A21's strategy involves rescuing victims and equipping labour inspectors and police for effective identification and rescue, facilitated by a national hotline and a 24/7 call centre.

The third pillar, restoration, is dedicated to preventing re-victimisation by providing appropriate aftercare services. A21 places a strong emphasis on labour exploitation, targeting critical elements such as low payment, lack of social security, excessive working hours, and denial of basic rights. Control mechanisms by employers may involve withholding passports or providing housing. A21 views labour exploitation as a continuum ranging from decent work to slavery. To combat this issue, collaborative efforts, including a memorandum of understanding with labour inspectors, entail joint training sessions to address the educational gap as a key factor in tackling this type of exploitation. A21 has conducted five training sessions with labour inspectors, emphasising the broader scope of the issue and inviting participation from various fields, including the police. Additionally, specific preventive materials, such as passport simulation have been developed and disseminated. A promotional video featuring collaboration between labour inspectors, police and A21 is being considered, intended to be broadcasted on various platforms.

Figure 8. Understanding undeclared work in the context of labour exploitation



Source: Presentation by A21 and the Hellenic Labour Inspectorate.

The Hellenic Labour Inspectorate also shared their perspective on the cooperation with A21, expressing that it is deemed successful by the labour inspectors. Their increased awareness of human trafficking, gained through joint training sessions with the NGO A21, was cited as a key factor in this success. The **cooperation has empowered**

⁴⁴ <https://www.a21.org/>, <https://www.a21.org/content/greece/gr4wco>



the labour inspectors to recognise signs of trafficking more proficiently and fostered a sense of responsibility in their fieldwork. The success is credited to the inspiration drawn from shared aspirations toward a common goal, highlighting the positive impact of the collaboration with A21.

In addition, the need for formal cooperation was underscored, particularly in the public sector, where continuity of institutional collaboration needs to be ensured even amid staff changes. **It was stressed that cooperation should not solely hinge on the enthusiasm of individuals, but rather rely on robust institutional foundations.** The significance of formalities is particularly relevant in the private sector, fostering the expectation that formal cooperation will persist at the institutional level beyond individual participants. **The collaboration is viewed not merely as a personal endeavour but as an ongoing commitment that surpasses individual involvement, ensuring a sustained effort against human trafficking.**

The discussion with the workshop participants centred on effectively involving labour inspectors effectively in the fight against human trafficking. The focus extends beyond merely recognising potential victims to seeing them actively, deciding on ways to provide support, legal assistance, and connecting them with the appropriate authorities. Campaigns and joint inspections, aimed at raising awareness, are pivotal in instilling a sense of responsibility among inspectors. Building trust over time is paramount, with the collaboration yielding benefits within a year, resulting in increased reporting of cases by inspectors. Challenges include navigating through complex legislation and overcoming the reluctance of victims to report due to fears of job loss or deportation, highlighting the need for careful investigation and anonymous hotlines like A21's. **Establishing trust between public authorities, non-state actors, and victims is deemed crucial,** with discussions delving into convincing inspectors to work proactively, ensuring the safety of reporting migrant workers, and the importance of collaborative networks involving NGOs, authorities, and focal points to detect, report, and effective action against human trafficking. The emphasis is on mutual learning heightened awareness, and addressing the human consequences of these issues.

4.2.3. Tackling labour exploitation at the workplace in the Netherlands in cooperation with NGO CoMensha

CoMensha⁴⁵ is a foundation established under Dutch law with the purpose of combatting labour exploitation by coordinating the reception and support for potential victims of labour exploitation. To fulfil this mission, CoMensha established three emergency care locations where victims of labour exploitation could be placed by the Dutch Inspectorate of Social Matters and Employment. Furthermore, CoMensha initiated the Inspectorate of Social Affairs and Employment - Aid Workers consultation, aiming to enhance collaboration between the Inspectorate and aid workers in the realm of labour exploitation. This consultation occurs semi-annually. CoMensha also conducted a research project commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, focusing on influencing group dynamics among victims of labour exploitation to increase their willingness to report such exploitation to the authorities.⁴⁶ CoMensha works together with several Dutch Ministries, including the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, on creating a healthy labour market in the programme, "*Together against Human Trafficking*".

During the thematic day, CoMensha shared their initiatives in addressing labour exploitation and abuse, which is closely related to undeclared work. Their activities include gathering evidence on victims of labour exploitation, ensuring suitable shelter and support, closely collaborating with the labour inspectorate, and enhancing cooperation among relevant stakeholders, including the police, municipalities, and care organisations, to detect

⁴⁵ <https://www.comensha.nl/english/> <https://www.comensha.nl/english/>

⁴⁶ De Volder and de Brouwer, 2018.



and protect victims effectively. The presentation underscored the **ongoing commitment to build trust, emphasising the importance of exchange meetings** for this purpose. **Joint actions, such as controls and labour inspectorate enforcement actions**, were highlighted, with an emphasis on respecting each other's mandates and providing feedback in evaluation meetings rather than on the spot. The presentation acknowledged the absence of a formal cooperation agreement or protocol, suggesting that adopting such practices as already seen in Romania could be beneficial in the Netherlands as well.

The lessons drawn from CoMensha's experience **underscore the paramount importance of fostering cooperation between NGOs and the labour inspectorate to address issues like abuse, undeclared work, and exploitation. Trust emerges as a cornerstone for successful cooperation between NGOs and enforcement authorities, requiring continuous communication and a focus on shared goals.** Given the delicate nature of trust in the face of differing mandates, an extra effort and a commitment to a joint goal is deemed necessary to maintain engagement. The recognition of occasional disagreements is also emphasised as an integral part of the collaborative journey.

The importance of trust was a central theme also in the subsequent discussion. An inquiry from an ELA representative probed into the reasons behind the perceived **lack of trust vis-à-vis labour inspectorates**. A concern emerged on the potential language barrier and the challenge individuals face in expressing themselves to a formal institution like the labour inspectorate, raising questions about trust building. To address this, another Dutch NGO FairWork employs a network of interpreters and proactively disseminates information online. The Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) brought attention to the EU's legislation criminalising exploitation, particularly for irregular migrant workers under the Employers Sanctions Directive. The CoMensha representative expressed reservations about the effectiveness of incentives in the Netherlands, even with shelter and pocket money. They suggested that **building rights through new legislation might not be sufficient to encourage reporting exploitation**, a sentiment echoed by participants from Italy where a similar shelter system was activated through a dedicated project. A French trade union representative observed that trust is built through concrete experiences. They expressed the need to reflect on the concern for job security and called for fostering cooperation between trade unions and labour inspectorates.

4.2.4. Tackling undeclared work in Romania via cooperation of the Romanian Labour Inspectorate with the National Union of Labour Law Experts

The next example of cooperation presented was the cooperation of the Romanian Labour Inspectorate with the National Union of Labour Law Experts (UNELM).⁴⁷ Unlike the examples mentioned earlier, this cooperation does not specifically focus on third-country migrants. The primary goals include raising awareness among employers and employees about undeclared work, while advocating the benefits of transitioning to declared employment. UNELM, headquartered in Bucharest, operates through 11 regional departments covering entire Romania. With 450 accredited members and overseeing more than 1,000 companies, their main objective is to identify risks and alert employers to potential challenges.

This cooperation example covers a broad spectrum of issues related to labour legislation, involving also **mutual information exchange and the organisation of informational and guidance campaigns for employers**. The awareness-raising function of the partnership aims to bring pertinent information closer to both employers and employees. Additionally, the cooperation between the Labour Inspectorate and UNELM extended to the development of a full online registry for easy electronic verification of data from various relevant databases on

⁴⁷ <https://www.unelm.ro/>

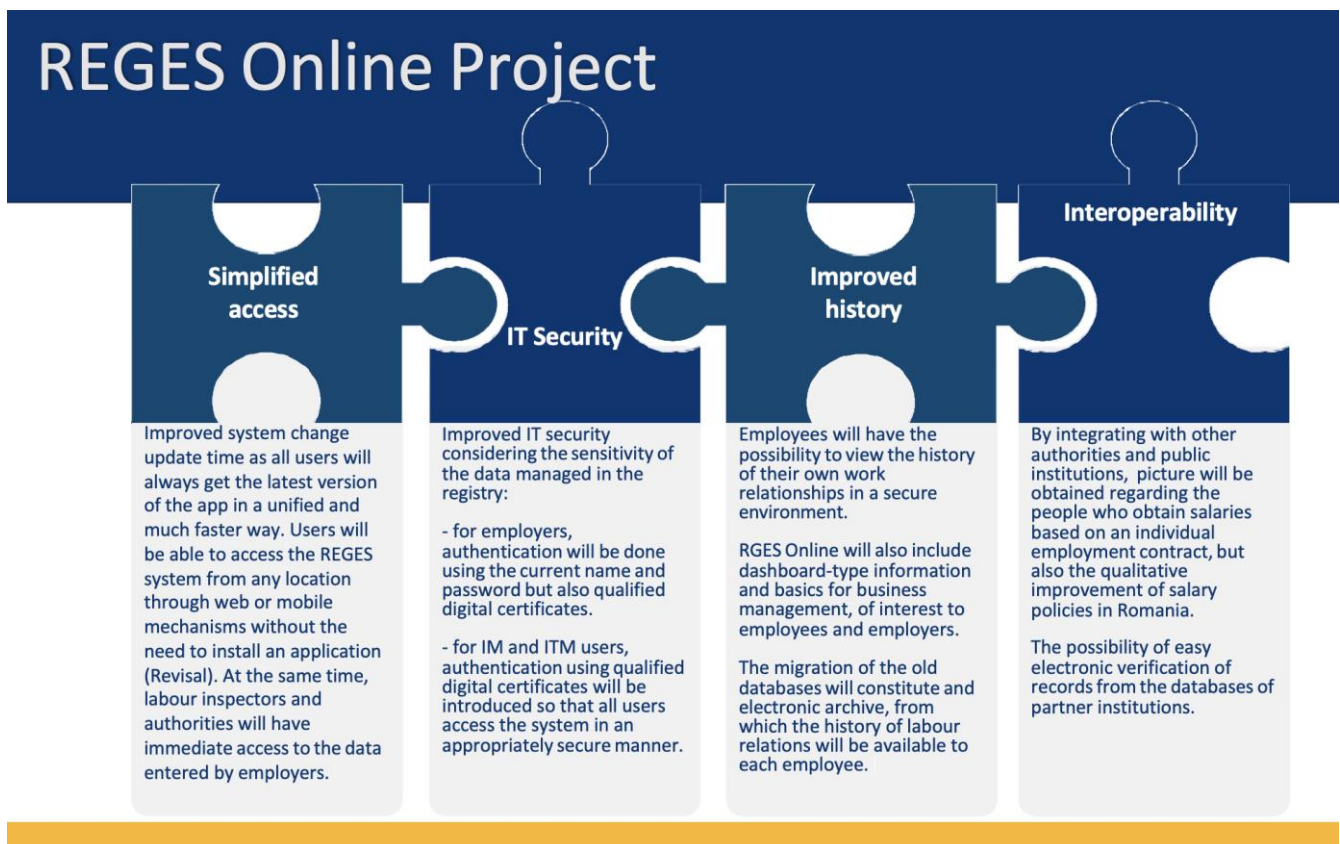


employment data (the REGES online project, see also Figure 9). The REGES Online Project involves the implementation, according to the legislation in force, of a new IT system, updated to the level of technological evolution, with increased IT security and which brings several improvements, the most important being the following:

- ▶ Full online register;
- ▶ Reduced bureaucracy;
- ▶ Digitalisation;
- ▶ Simplified and unrestricted access;
- ▶ Efficient use of resources

Using UNELM's expertise, REGES takes a pedagogical approach to achieving employer compliance with labour law, ultimately enhancing the employer's capacity to comply with regulations.

Figure 9. The REGES Online project in Romania



Source: Presentation by the Romanian Labour Inspectorate.



4.2.5. Combating workplace crime in construction: the Fair Play Bygg Initiative in Sweden

Established in 2016 and funded by two organisations, the **Fair Play Bygg (FPB)**⁴⁸ initiative emerged in response to the escalating criminal activities affecting the construction industry and, consequently, society at large. The driving force behind FPB was the frustration among its members with the distorted competition resulting from fraud and criminal activities in construction. The impetus to take **action** was **fuelled** by the limited capacity of authorities to respond to reported criminal activities, resulting in a delayed intervention.

The cooperation involving FPB is a case with trade union involvement, similar to some other cases outlined above, with a mission to promote fair conditions and equal terms in the construction industry. What sets this initiative apart from typical trade union activity is its proactive approach in not only representing members' interests, but also exposing and combating fraud and criminal activities through demonstrations, displays, and reporting mechanisms. It stands as an example of co-enforcement and information sharing between public authorities and civil society, including both NGOs and trade unions. FPB collaborates with regional centres against work-related crimes, facilitating coordinated efforts and shared methodologies. The project emphasises anonymous reporting of incidents related to bribery, fraud, money laundering, welfare crimes, undeclared work, environmental violence, and more.

FPB's initiatives have yielded approximately 1900 reported incidents on the website, with a focus on foreign labour experiencing higher vulnerability to crime due to language and rule unfamiliarity. The initiative has transmitted about 1000 reports to relevant government agencies, resulting in increased tax payments from 163 companies **totalling** above 10 million EUR.

FPB highlights the societal and economic impacts of work-related crime, emphasising the reduction in tax revenues for the state. The initiative concludes by urging collective responsibility from various stakeholders, including the establishment of legal frameworks by politicians, government agencies collaborating more efficiently, and changes in private legislation to facilitate identity verification of workers. FPB seeks meaningful actions against work-related crime through its ongoing initiatives.

During the discussion, the challenge of sharing information between labour inspectorates and NGOs was acknowledged, with data protection concerns arising due to GDPR regulations in the EU. FPB emphasised the importance of communication among stakeholders. The **Nordic tradition of open platforms and trust between public services, NGOs, trade unions, and employers' organisations** was highlighted as a typical practice in this region.

The **responsibility of all actors, including employers and employees**, was emphasised, especially in the construction sector where subcontractors operate within a chain. FPB expressed the importance of maintaining liability for companies. Participants from Finland and Norway reported very similar initiatives as the Swedish Fair Play Bygg.

4.2.6. National and transnational cooperation agreements: a way towards an effective enforcement of labour and victims' rights in Germany?

There are many forms of cooperation between enforcement authorities and Arbeit und Leben in Germany, involving national and transnational agreements. Arbeit und Leben was created by, firstly, the German Trade Union

⁴⁸ <https://fairplaybygg.se/>



Confederation (DBG); and secondly, the Association for Adult Education (DVV)⁴⁹ to serve individuals from across the Berlin-Brandenburg region. Their services are publicly funded by the federal government, are free, confidential, and available in 12 languages. In 2019, Arbeit und Leben was asked to assist in a raid on a Berlin-based construction company, which exposed deficiencies in the handling of potential trafficking victims. Despite challenges, this experience led to a re-evaluation of roles and procedures for future success.

In Germany, centralisation of labour inspections under a public body is not established. Yet there are **four cooperation agreements between Arbeit und Leben and governmental organisations in different countries**. Arbeit und Leben is part of a network of NGOs and participate in the Fair Mobility network, which offers counselling services. Collaborations with the German Customs Authority (FKS) and Berlin State Criminal Police focus on financial control of undeclared work and specific efforts against labour trafficking and forced labour. **At the transnational level, there is cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Security in Moldova and an upcoming collaboration with the Bulgarian labour inspectorate.**

In the discussion, the participants admitted that **formalising cooperation between NGOs and governmental organisations is crucial due to conflicting mandates, and the negotiation process helps better understand each partner's mandates and working methods**. This formalisation explicitly outlines roles, functions, and identifies the limits of cooperation. Cooperation with the FKS involve a framework agreement, addressing the conflicting mandates when FKS are required to report migrant workers for immigration enforcement purposes, while Arbeit und Leben is focused on protecting workers' individual rights. The goal is to increase order and fairness in the German labour market. Benefits include **gaining trust from migrant workers for supporting criminal investigations, complying with the legal duty to inform workers of their rights, and effective action against criminal employers through substantial complaints**.

In addition to benefits, **certain challenges emerge from NGO activity and cooperation with enforcement authorities**. The collaboration between counselling services and FKS during inspections is essential but faces challenges related to mandates, project-based funding, and resource limitations. Challenges, in particular, include the exchange of personal data, conflicting mandates, differing engagement procedures across regions, and the need for complementary regional agreements on human trafficking and forced labour.

A remark from a Bulgarian participant emphasised the importance of transnational cooperation and formalisation to address challenges. It shed light on the difficulty in finding the right partner due to different systems. In the Bulgarian context, having an NGO partner is crucial to understanding global systems and dealing with specific cases, particularly in translating collective bargaining agreements and grasping the minimum requirements for posted workers, which can differ significantly between countries.

5 Conclusions and key learning points

The plenary meeting thematic day examined the potential benefits that enforcement authorities can gain from cooperation with NGOs in tackling undeclared work, as a complement to social partner cooperation. This report shows the distinct characteristics of cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs, categorises their cooperation and provides evidence from across various European countries. The conceptual discussion on the role of NGOs and benefits of cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs leads to conclusions on general benefits of cooperation:

⁴⁹ <https://www.arbeitundleben.de/>



General benefits of cooperation

- ▶ By partnering with NGOs, enforcement authorities can **reach a broader audience, especially vulnerable and marginalised workers** who might not be aware of their rights and are subject to exploitation in the labour market including undeclared work.
- ▶ NGOs can **supplement the resources of enforcement authorities despite operating with limited resources themselves**. Despite these limitations, NGOs are able to gather technical expertise or even research capabilities, enabling labour inspectorates to expand their scope of activities and conduct more in-depth investigations. This shared resource pool leads to more robust and effective enforcement measures.
- ▶ NGOs support workers to engage with enforcement authorities' complaints mechanisms, if they can do so safely. This helps enforcement authorities receive stronger cases and evidence, target their resources, and see more positive outcomes of their work.
- ▶ Collaborating with NGOs in labour inspection activities can **enhance community engagement and build trust among workers**. Trust allows workers to feel safe and more likely to report violations. This process ensures a more proactive and affective approach of enforcement authorities in deterring undeclared work. However, it is crucial to build trust and find ways to protect workers for NGOs to support trust among workers and communities.
- ▶ NGOs are flexible and **often innovative in their approach to protecting workers' rights**. Cooperation with NGOs can help enforcement authorities to benefit from such innovative approaches and if successful integrate them into their standard procedures.
- ▶ NGOs often have insights into global developments and this expertise can **support enforcement authorities in ensuring that their prevention and deterrence measures align to international norms and conventions**. This can save additional resources on training and capacity building on the side of national enforcement authorities.
- ▶ NGOs often possess **specialised expertise to the benefit of enforcement authorities**. NGOs can provide valuable case-by-case evidence, systematic data, legal support, and capacity building to enforcement authorities to serve the purpose of tackling undeclared work.

The presentations and discussions during the thematic day provided a deeper insight into the conclusions, confirming their validity with diverse examples. The central focus included the recognition of benefits from partnerships between NGOs and enforcement authorities, the identification of challenges in building such partnership and shared ideas to overcome these challenges, and the evaluation of the pros and cons of different forms of cooperation, including statutory cooperation, advisory roles, or informal collaboration. In general, active cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs is welcomed in certain countries, emphasising the need for adherence to specific rules. Efforts are directed at enhancing collaboration in inspections, prevention, and information sharing among various stakeholders.

The rich evidence on cooperation between NGOs and enforcement authorities across European countries shows that most cooperation exists in the field of preventing, uncovering, and combatting labour exploitation such as human trafficking. Cooperation in specifically targeting undeclared work is less developed, but several successful cooperation examples in Lithuania, Bulgaria, Poland, Sweden, and Greece, show that such joint endeavours have great potential to be further developed in other countries, too. Finally, cooperation that would allow strengthening the capacities of enforcement authorities and extensively use the expertise of NGOs for training labour inspectors shows a large unused potential, which can be further expanded.



Based on the desk research, presentations and discussions, the key learning points on fostering cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs can be summarised as follows:

Key learning points

- ▶ Enforcement authorities endorse that cooperation with NGOs needs to be subject to **transparent and specific rules**. For example, establishing a formal process for joint work through possible disagreements between the authorities and NGOs was emphasised to improve mutual trust. This process enhances the possibility that undeclared workers will then actually report violations, as e.g. in the Greek cooperation example with the NGO A21, NGOs, often having a more direct contact to specific vulnerable groups than enforcement authorities, can communicate that there is a joint effort by the authority and the NGO to protect the workers' rights and ensure fair labour conditions within the parameters that it is the case.
- ▶ A similar point refers to the stability and formalisation of cooperation with NGOs. Currently, many useful cooperation cases occur on an informal basis. However, if cooperation is expected to last, it makes sense **to conclude a formal agreement specifying the roles and competencies of enforcement authorities and the NGOs** involved. Perspectives from Business Europe as well as from Swedish participants underscored the need to formalise cooperation between NGOs and enforcement authorities, with an emphasis on their mutual trust. Importantly, however, cooperation with NGOs must not replace cooperation with social partners.
- ▶ Although a formalisation of the cooperation relationship is desired, regardless of the formalisation of cooperation it is essential to ensure a **clear delineation of roles, functions, and cooperation limits** both at the authority and the NGO. This helps avoiding misunderstandings and ambiguities, in particular in joint inspections or in the NGO-led process of reporting undeclared work to enforcement authorities. The role of NGOs must also not be confused with the rights and prerogatives of social partners.
- ▶ **Legislative capacities of enforcement authorities** can be further supported, for example, if NGOs take on the role of providing **legal support in court cases** to undeclared workers identified by enforcement authorities against their employers. In court cases, NGOs can effectively bridge the communication between authorities and ordinary people.
- ▶ **Professional capacities of enforcement authorities** can be expanded through hiring new staff with previous experience working for an NGO. Platform members shared experiences during the workshops that inspectors with work experience at an NGO are a valuable addition to their teams.
- ▶ NGOs can support enforcement authorities also in preventing undeclared work by **supporting employers** facing complex employment situations prone to the risk of underdeclared or undeclared work (e.g. when employing migrant workers, especially third country nationals).
- ▶ A representative from the Greek Labour Inspectorate highlighted the challenges in providing legal support to workers in courts and emphasised the importance of talking on a level playing field with authorities.
- ▶ Cooperation between enforcement authorities and NGOs materialises also in **efforts to (re)integrate migrant workers into the labour market**, for example, through securing temporary residence permits for workers facing labour law violations.
- ▶ A number of **ad hoc cooperation initiatives** was observed in particular in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. This observation suggests that **limited capacities of enforcement authorities can to some extent be flexibly complemented by cooperation with NGOs**, under transparent cooperation rules.



- ▶ Most cooperation efforts thematically target the combatting of labour exploitation, wage theft and human trafficking. Enforcement authorities can not only cooperate with NGOs to identify such cases, but also in the **initiation of improvements in legislation (e.g., shared responsibility or particular authorization to NGOs)** to mitigate these kinds of actions leading to criminal appeal.
- ▶ The Greek cooperation example shows that it is important to develop a **collective memory of cooperation** to overcome that cooperation is linked to specific persons, both on the side of the authority and the NGO. Instead, institutional cooperation should be established that reaches beyond the actions of particular individuals involved.



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