



Effective information provision in seasonal work

Key takeaways
ELA mutual learning workshops 2022

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1. Introduction

Seasonal work is an essential feature of the EU economy and labour market. While already recognised before, the role of free movement of workers for well-functional seasonal work became very obvious during the COVID-19 pandemic when mobility restrictions hindered seasonal workers to get to or return from their place of work in another country.

Recognising a lack of data to establish the scale of seasonal work in Europe, the most recent estimate refers to 650,000-850,000 intra-EU seasonal workers in the EU27. The estimate identifies Germany, Italy and France as the Member States with the highest numbers of intra-EU seasonal workers and Romania, Poland and Bulgaria as the most prolific countries of origin of mobile seasonal workers in the EU¹.



Key takeaway

Amongst the **key challenges** identified for intra-EU seasonal work are difficulties in the access to information concerning employment rights and obligations. Two main reasons for this lack of information are flagged: **information is not available and information is not used.**

Member States and social partners are aware of this challenge and have implemented tools to better inform seasonal workers and employers. However, so far, there has been limited opportunity to exchange on the identified challenges and experiences with information practices across borders.

Against the above background, in 2022 the European Labour Authority (ELA)² launched a series of mutual learning and exchange workshops with participants from 10 Member States (Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain) representing governments/national administration and their implementing bodies, employer organisations, trade unions and the EURES³ network to discuss the information needs of seasonal workers and employers, and to share solutions implemented at national, regional or local level to tackle respective challenges.

Three meetings built upon each other. The first meeting served the purpose of 'stock-taking': What are the participants' experiences as regards information tools and information content addressing intra-EU mobile seasonal workers and their employers? What works, what does not, and why?

The second meeting 'zoomed-in' on young mobile seasonal workers. This group was selected as anecdotal evidence hints that young mobile seasonal workers are particularly vulnerable and lacking information. Furthermore, dealing with young workers in the 2022 European Year of Youth was topical.

The third workshop was devoted to 'wrapping-up' by consolidating the discussions and lessons learnt in the first two workshops.

This document summarises the main 'outcomes of the discussions of the participants as regards lessons learnt, good practices and further improvement potentials in information provision to mobile seasonal workers and their employers. It does not aim to provide comprehensive minutes of the workshops, but rather to act as inspiration for practitioners engaged in filling information gaps across Europe.

*The workshops focused on **intra-EU seasonal work**, that is '**EU citizens who go to work on fixed-term assignments (limited to less than one year) in a Member State other than that of their citizenship in [...] agriculture, forestry and fishing or accommodation and food services.**'⁴*

1 European Commission (2021), Intra-EU mobility of seasonal workers: Trends and Challenges, Final report March 2021, Publications Office of the European Union, p. 44; European Commission (2023), Report on mobile seasonal workers and intra-EU mobility, Publications Office of the European Union

2 <https://www.ela.europa.eu/>

3 https://ec.europa.eu/eures/public/index_en

4 European Commission (2021), Intra-EU mobility of seasonal workers: Trends and Challenges, Final report March 2021, Publications Office of the European Union, p. 10 and p. 15

Overview: ELA's mutual learning and exchange workshops on effective information provision related to intra-EU mobile seasonal work, 2022



Source: ELA



Practical example

Further examples of information provision in seasonal work can be found on ELA's website⁵, following a call for 'Good Practices' in 2022. They mainly refer to information campaigns, online seminars and information websites and were recognised due to their favourable combination of achievements, cost effectiveness, transferability, sustainability, innovativeness and digitalisation.

2. Effective information tools and channels

Information tools and channels refer to the means through which the information is transmitted to mobile seasonal workers and employers. They can be offline (e.g. leaflets, personal advice) or online (e.g. websites, e-mails).



Key takeaway

For effective information provision to mobile seasonal workers and their employers, **a combination of different information channels and tool is essential**. Both online information, e.g. webpages, social media, apps, and offline information, e.g. personal advice, leaflets and brochures, are required.



Practical example

In Germany, the initiative 'Faire Mobilität'⁶ (Fair Mobility), realised by a cooperation of a large variety of stakeholders under the coordination of the Deutsche Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB, German Trade Union Confederation) provides counselling services, a free telephone hotline in five languages, coordinated field visits among different stakeholders (in 2021, 44 visits with about 2 500 direct contacts were realised), Facebook pages in various languages, Facebook live events and information provision through media. Part of the project also is the establishment of a network of Mobility Advisory Centres in Austria, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovenia.

5 <https://www.ela.europa.eu/en/call-good-practices-2022#bcl-inpage-item-886>

6 <https://www.faire-mobilitaet.de/>

Direct contacts between the information seeker and the information provider remain important. Workshop participants assessed the direct approach in information provision through e.g. onsite advice, telephone hotlines, peers/personal networks of the information seeker, as very effective. They highlighted the role of local advisers in, for example, public employment services or social partner organisations. However, due to the partly experienced lack of trust in institutions and the unfamiliarity of notably workers with the institutional settings in the country of destination, peer networks, worker/employer communities and testimonials by other mobile seasonal workers and employers, hence word-of-the mouth, might have an even stronger role. Workshop participants also acknowledged the role of the employer as information provider for seasonal workers.



Key takeaway

Some seasonal workers and employers are not only the 'end users' of information, but also **an intermediary in information provision**. This emphasises the importance to identify them and to convey comprehensive and relevant information to them.

To help information seekers navigate through the wealth of available information, a 'one-stop-shop' acting as an entry point to access information and channelling workers and employers to the relevant sources is considered useful. For this purpose, an online solution might be a good approach, particularly if it allows for mobile access through smartphones and offers relevant information in several languages and an easy-to-digest format (e.g. videos, text-image combinations). 'Digital outreach' is also perceived beneficial in those seasonal activities characterised by a high degree of spatial dispersion of employers (and hence workers) and working hours that are not well compatible with common office times available to visit (local) advisers, such as in agriculture or tourism.⁷



Key takeaway

Given the variety of topics on which seasonal workers and employers look for information, workshop participants again highlighted the need for a '**single information window**' that acts as 'go-to point' for the target group to find all required information.



Practical example

The European Federation of Trade Unions in the Food, Agriculture and Tourism sectors (EFFAT) launched the information website Season@Work⁸ which is also available as app for mobile phones. It provides seasonal workers with information on work contracts, social protection, wages, working time, safety and health at work and provides contact information for further help and advice. Short informative videos are available in 11 languages (English, German, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Bulgarian, Romanian, Polish, Ukrainian and Arabic) and adapted to eight destination countries (Germany, Austria, Belgium, Netherlands, Denmark, Spain, France and Italy).

The effectiveness of specific information channels and tools depends on the characteristics of the target group. Workers and employers refer to and rely on different sources and information providers. A 'one-size-fits-all' approach is ineffective when addressing mobile seasonal workers and employers due to their different characteristics, preferences and experiences with mobile seasonal work.

⁷ Ivanov, I./ Wichern, J. (2023), Information and Advice for Migrant and Seasonal Workers in European Agriculture, Handbook, Brussels, The European Federation for Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT)

⁸ www.seasonalworkers.eu

Furthermore, different information tools and channels might be needed in the country of origin and the country of destination of the mobile seasonal workers. Workshop participants agreed on the importance of providing mobile workers with information in their country of origin before they leave, in order for them to be better prepared on what to face in the country of destination. They also recommended to provide the information to the target group in the locations where they naturally stay (such as festivals or youth clubs when aiming to address young mobile seasonal workers).



Key takeaway

For information provision to be effective, a **targeted approach** is required. Not every worker and every employer has the same information needs and refers to the same channels and providers.



Practical example

To inform future young mobile seasonal workers, a Romanian trade union project reached out to high school students in their final year in underdeveloped areas across the country. In a 'career caravan' advisers informed the young people about employment options, required content of work contracts and other essential information. The initiative was promoted on the trade union's website, supported by short videos. Identified success factors were that the information was provided in a way that was accessible to the target group, was concise and did not contain too much detail to avoid overburdening the young people.

3. Style of information provision

Workshop participants agreed that information addressed to mobile seasonal workers and their employers should be:

- Up-to-date
- Simple, clear and concise, for example in a 'Frequently Asked Questions' style
- Practical and concrete, including examples and checklists



Practical example

The Netherlands Labour Authority realises a variety of interventions to assist employers to comply with regulations. Amongst others, their website⁹ hosts different checklists (decent work, health and safety at work, accident investigations, hazardous substances and psychosocial aspects). Employers do a self-assessment through these checklists and receive recommendations on potential improvement areas. The checklists are promoted through sponsored campaigns on social media, sectoral media and cooperation with employer organisations.

- Formulated in a style and tone that is easily understandable and appealing to the target group (e.g. avoiding legal texts)
- Positive and characterised by empathy
- Available in a variety of languages



Practical example

The ELA Translation Facility¹⁰ supports Member States in translating relevant and user-friendly information concerning rights and obligations falling in the scope of the Authority. Between 2021 and 2022, ELA received translation requests related to seasonal work from eight Member States. Eight documents (that is, brochures, websites) have been translated into 36 language versions (EU and non-EU languages).

The Irish Workplace Relations Commission, for example, had their brochure 'Employment rights of seasonal workers in Ireland' translated into 11 languages, two of them non-EU languages.¹¹

4. Information topics to be covered

As regards **work and employment**, the following information should be made available to mobile seasonal workers and employers:

- Where to find jobs and available workers, including information about reliable recruitment services
- Applicable legislation and collective agreements, information on social security, taxation and health and safety regulation
- Various elements of employment and working conditions, notably related to work contracts, working hours and remuneration
- Administrative procedures that have to be followed
- Public and social partner-based support available to seasonal workers and employers, for example as regards matching and recruitment, training, contribution to housing costs etc.
- Competent authorities and contact points

However, in the context of seasonal work, **information related to work and employment is not sufficient**. Workers and employers also need information on, for example:

- Particularities of other countries, such as set-up of public institutions and social partners;
- Recommendations for workers on how to integrate in the country of destination;
- Housing and accommodation;
- Transport (travelling between and within countries);
- Health care system;
- Education system and available education and training (for the workers and their families).



Practical example

The Finnish Industrial Union developed an app¹² available for free download on smartphones, providing information for seasonal workers and their employers in agriculture and forestry. The app is available in Finnish, Swedish, Ukrainian and Russian and provides information on working time and working conditions, temporary residence and healthcare. Launched in 2022, by March 2023, the app was downloaded more than 2,500 times.

10 https://www.ela.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-02/Decision_No_11-2022_ELA_Translation_Facility.pdf

11 https://www.workplacerelations.ie/en/publications_forms/other_language_publications/

12 <https://hermesapp.fi/en/>

5. Further improvement potential in information provision in seasonal work

While a wide variety of information provision initiatives targeting mobile seasonal workers and employers has already been realised by Member State authorities and social partners, there is further need for:

- Activation of mobile seasonal workers and their employers in terms of **making them care about information** and emphasising the ‘power of information’ to contribute to fair working conditions and business competitiveness; this seems to be particularly important for young mobile workers who are not very familiar with their rights and obligations due to limited tenure on the labour market and might not place much emphasis on decent working conditions and their long-term impact as they consider their seasonal employment as a temporary experience;
- A more effective **combination of different types of information channels and tools**, including an ‘information toolbox’ consisting of online and offline approaches; this also requires more systematic monitoring and assessment of the effectiveness of different information channels/tools for different target groups to gain a better understanding of ‘what works, what does not’ in which circumstances;
- Improvement of **cooperation** in information provision **across different types of institutions and across borders**, to create a holistic information system for workers and employers from the country of origin to destination and to offer a diversified network of ‘go-to’ points for the diverse target group, considering the various preferences and cultural differences.



Practical example

In 2020-2021, the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority organised the information campaign ‘Know Your Rights’¹³ in cooperation with institutions from Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania and Romania. The campaign targeted mobile seasonal workers in the agriculture and fishing sectors from these countries of origin in their native languages, as well as national employers.

The discussions in the workshops highlighted the role of trust in institutional information providers and information channels (also see above). Mobile seasonal workers and their employers will only rely on information that is provided to them if they respect the information source and the way the information is conveyed. For the target group to actively reach out to information providers, their reputation must be even higher.

In spite of the long-standing and deep expertise of Member State authorities and social partners in the field of information provision to mobile seasonal workers and their employers, workshop participants agreed that due to the substantial heterogeneity among the target group of mobile seasonal workers and their employers, **specific information needs should be further explored** as regards:

- Which information is sought for in the country of origin and which in the country of destination of mobile seasonal workers;
- Whether information needs differ by sector of seasonal activity (e.g. agriculture, tourism, construction);
- Commonalities and differences of information needs of different target groups, that is not only workers and employers, but also subgroups among them (e.g. by age or skill/education level and motivation for conducting seasonal work as regards workers; company size class and business maturity as regards employers).