

## Medbyggerne: a “grassroot” coalition against undeclared work and labour market crime

Norway

GENERAL INFORMATION	
<b>Name of the organisation</b>	The Norwegian Tax Administration
<b>Type of organisation</b>	Other
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<b>Web page</b>	<a href="https://medbyggerne.no/">https://medbyggerne.no/</a>
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<b>Topic of the good practice</b>	Undeclared work
<b>Geographical focus</b>	Nation-wide
<b>Duration</b>	1/1/2015 - ongoing
<b>Summary of the good practice</b>	<p>Medbyggerne (Co-builders) is a grassroots collaborative initiative in the counties of Vestfold and Telemark in Norway that is aimed at combating undeclared work and labour-market crime in the construction and building industry. The purpose is to encourage more people to become co-builders and engage in lawful transactions, in order to ensure a stable and safe labour market, improve the quality of craftsmanship, and prevent harmful working conditions.</p> <p>This partnership involves building a broad coalition that consists of local businesses within the construction sector, local employer and employee unions, local municipalities and counties, the Norwegian Tax Authority, the Norwegian police as well as the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority.</p> <p>Medbyggerne supports businesses that meet strict criteria for documentation, labour conditions, and wages and focuses on raising awareness about the importance of</p>

	<p>declared work and provides resources to help consumers and businesses avoid fraudulent contractors. Local businesses can participate in the initiative by meeting the required standards where they become ambassadors for serious work in their own industry.</p> <p>Medbyggerne has regular communication campaigns against undeclared work and hosts conferences and events to discuss best practices and share updates on the initiative. For example, the Medbyggerne conference in April 2025 focused on strategies to further promote legitimate work in the construction industry. The Youth conference in October 2025 has focus on creating awareness amongst local youth that are seeking employment in high-risk sectors.</p> <p>Medbyggerne is organized under the following four initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- partnerships with local municipalities and counties with focus on public procurement strategies with the goal of awarding contracts to compliant contractors</li> <li>- awareness activities aimed at consumers as well as high-school students and apprentices in the construction industry</li> <li>- information sharing between government agencies and the business community to identify and weed out fraudulent actors</li> <li>- certification of construction supply stores and local businesses that supply materials and workers to the construction industry</li> </ul>
<b>OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES</b>	
<b>Background/context</b>  What challenge, need or gap were you trying to solve or respond to?  Why was this issue relevant or urgent in your context (sector, region, country)?	<p>The practice is a response to the following challenges:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The shadow economy results in lost revenue for municipalities and the state, which therefore does not benefit the community.</li> <li>2. Businesses do not have a level playing field as they lose contracts to unscrupulous and criminal actors. The consequences may include law-abiding companies being outcompeted or reduced</li> </ol>

	<p>opportunities for skills development and recruitment in the legitimate part of the business sector.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Employees are subjected to illegal treatment regarding safety, working hours, and wages, including loss of rights and reduced social security.</li> <li>4. Young people with vocational education may face fewer apprenticeship opportunities and poorer prospects for skills development and lifelong learning.</li> <li>5. Consumers experience lower quality of work performed and could be left without opportunities for complaints or insurance claims in the event of errors and deficiencies.</li> </ol> <p>Local businesses in the county of Vestfold were concerned about increasing unfair competition from unscrupulous actors and requested assistance from relevant state authorities to strengthen collaboration to reduce criminal activity. Local businesses themselves took the initiative to improve cooperation between the relevant authorities to combat labour crime within their own sector.</p>
<p><b>Objectives</b></p> <p>What were the main goals of this practice (e.g. better compliance, faster processing, improved worker protection)? (Please limit to three)</p> <p>Who or what were these goals intended to help or change? (Please limit to three)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ The main goal with the practice is to implement measures to combat labour market crime in the construction industry in cooperation with the public sector and the business community.</li> <li>▶ The practice leads the way to legal work by encouraging more people to become <i>Medbyggere</i> (Co-Builders) and engage in legal business practices to ensure a stable and safe labour market, protect the tax base, and prevent harmful working conditions.</li> <li>▶ To make Vestfold and Telemark leading counties in the government's initiative against labour market crime in the construction and civil engineering industry.</li> </ul> <p>These goals were intended to:</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support a level playing field for workers and businesses in the high-risk construction sector in the counties of Vestfold and Telemark.</li> <li>2. Create a positive and safe environment built on mutual trust for youth that wish to seek employment in the construction sector.</li> <li>3. Make it easier for ordinary citizens/consumers to employ businesses that comply with labour rules and standards.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Main activities</b></p> <p>What were the main steps or actions you carried out to put the practice into effect?</p> <p>Were any tools, materials, partnerships, or processes created?</p>	<p>The main steps to put this practice into effect were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create a shared understanding amongst all relevant stakeholders of the challenges facing the labour market in the counties.</li> <li>2. Build an organisation from the bottom-up with representatives from all stakeholders to support and sustain the practice.</li> <li>3. Develop informational and educational materials, such as brochures, newsletters, knowledge quizzes, and short video clips for campaigns, lectures etc.</li> <li>4. Develop and implement regular campaigns tailored to focus areas and target audiences.</li> <li>5. Promote and strengthen <i>Medbyggerne</i> as a positive brand by highlighting good ambassadors in the community, activities and results.</li> </ol> <p>The practice led to the establishment of a formalised partnership between businesses, worker unions and government agencies to reduce labour-market crime.</p> <p>We have developed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared website for the initiative, <a href="http://www.medbyggerne.no">www.medbyggerne.no</a>. The website provides an overview of the status of the focus areas and prioritized activities, including information about challenges and achieved results.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital tool for municipalities to monitor and report on procurement control routines.</li> <li>• Informational and educational materials to support the practice.</li> <li>• Several awareness-raising campaigns.</li> <li>• Information sharing channels between relevant stakeholders to respond quickly to labour-related malpractices.</li> </ul>
<b>Funding/organisational resources</b>	<p>The practice is jointly funded by contributions from stakeholders that support the practice in the form of funds and/or organisational resources.</p>
<b>PARTICIPATION</b>	
<b>Stakeholders involved</b> <p>Organisations or entities actively contributing to the design, implementation, monitoring, or support of the good practice (e.g. labour inspectorates, social security institutions, trade unions, employers' associations, or other).</p>	<p>► Medbyggerne is a <i>bottom-up</i> initiative where craftsmen, construction supply stores, construction firms, and other relevant parts of the local business community actively participate together with representatives from government agencies and municipal/county authorities in working groups across the four focus areas. The Norwegian Tax Administration, the Labour Inspection Authority, and the police support the initiative and contribute expertise and resources to the organization's work.</p>
<b>Target groups</b> <p>Main groups or categories that the practice is directly aimed at, who should receive its services or who engage with it (e.g. employers, mobile or posted workers, labour inspectors and social security officers, or other).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerable workers and compliant businesses in the high-risk construction sector</li> <li>• Youth seeking employment in the construction sector</li> <li>• Citizens/consumers who hire local construction firms</li> </ul>
<b>Final beneficiaries</b> <p>Individuals or groups that ultimately benefit from the outcomes of the practice, even if they are not the direct target or user (e.g. mobile or posted workers, vulnerable workers at risk of exploitation, employers benefiting from clearer rules or reduced admin burdens, or other).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerable workers in the construction sector</li> <li>• Local businesses that get a level playing field and can compete on even terms</li> </ul>

## GOOD PRACTICE CRITERIA

<p><b>Achievements and outcomes</b></p> <p>What specific results did the practice achieve? (e.g. How many workers or employers were reached, number of publications created? What processes became faster?)</p> <p>What kind of broader benefits did it bring? (e.g. Did it improve understanding of rights and obligations, enhance cooperation between authorities, or reduce legal uncertainty and inconsistent application of rules?)</p>	<p>Medbyggerne:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>contributes to a more stable and safer labour market.</li> <li>improves the quality of craftsmanship and execution of projects in the building sector.</li> <li>reduces harmful working conditions for workers.</li> <li>secures apprenticeship placements, trade certificates, and professional titles.</li> <li>provides stable working conditions for workers because member businesses must follow mandatory requirements for social security schemes, collective wage agreements, holiday pay, and insurance.</li> <li>facilitates the establishment of legitimate new businesses for young entrepreneurs.</li> <li>protects fair competition on equal terms for local businesses.</li> <li>supports the tax base.</li> </ul> <p>► The practice has resulted in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved cooperation and coordination between stakeholders to reduce labour-market crime.</li> <li>Safer and more stable work environment for youth that seek employment in the construction sector.</li> <li>Improved understanding of rights and obligations amongst workers and employers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cost effectiveness</b></p> <p>How did you keep costs low while still achieving results? (e.g. Did you reuse existing tools, automate processes, or share resources across teams?)</p> <p>Can you show that the outcomes were worth the investment? (e.g. Did small</p>	<p>► We reuse existing tools as well as tools developed under the practice. Stakeholders contribute with organisational resources so that we can work across teams. Several businesses and other market actors contribute pro-bono towards the public good by participating in different work groups to keeps costs low.</p>

<p>changes lead to big improvements, or were expensive tools avoided?)</p>	<p>► Medbyggerne uses few resources to achieve the following main outcomes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Widespread Engagement: hundreds of companies in the construction sector have joined the initiative, including 270 certified craft and contractor businesses and 34 certified building supply stores.</li> <li>2. Improved Public Awareness; Medbyggerne campaigns have reached both the general public and professionals through seminars and conferences, print ads, social media, local press and magazines and educational tools like quizzes and short videos.</li> <li>3. Support for Government Strategy: Medbyggerne aligns with the Norwegian government's strategy against labor market crime, showing how local and regional cooperation can address complex societal challenges.</li> <li>4. Cultural and Economic Impact: Medbyggerne promotes a culture of pride, responsibility, and transparency in the construction industry and helps ensure fair competition in the market.</li> <li>5. Reduces bureaucracy by creating shared arenas for dialogue and problem-solving.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Transferability</b></p> <p>What are the key features that make this practice work well? (e.g. a digital platform, clear guidelines, a joint inspection process, or strong coordination)</p> <p>What would another country or organisation need to make this work for them? (e.g. certain laws, IT systems, or staff training)</p>	<p>► The key feature of Medbyggerne is the bottom-up strategy that fosters broad entrepreneurial engagement among the involved parties. Effective collaboration enables therefore development of new initiatives to meet local challenges. All partners share ownership of the challenges but are also part of the solution. Through the creation of collaborative arenas and the transfer of knowledge between the public sector and the business community, creativity flourishes in a diversity of expertise. The sense of ownership and community built up through Medbyggerne between the public and private sectors lays the foundation for long-term cooperation and sustainability.</p>

	<p>► To make this practice work for them, another organisation would need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify key local stakeholders and build a bottom-up coalition that takes ownership of local challenges in the labour market.</li> <li>• Build willingness among public authorities (e.g., tax agencies, labour inspection, police) to collaborate with private actors.</li> <li>• Create engagement from industry associations (like business unions and worker unions) to mobilize businesses and workers.</li> <li>• Mobilise local government support to facilitate coordination and provide legitimacy.</li> <li>• Create awareness campaigns and ambassador programs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sustainability</b></p> <p><b>How is the practice sustainable from a social, financial or environmental perspective?</b></p> <p><b>What makes this practice able to continue over time? (e.g. It is now part of regular work or has been built into law or procedures?) and how are you making sure it lasts beyond the pilot or project phase?</b></p>	<p>► Social Sustainability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empowers local communities by involving workers, suppliers, and public agencies in co-creating solutions.</li> <li>• Promotes fair working conditions, protecting workers' rights, safety, and dignity.</li> <li>• Strengthens trust between citizens, businesses, and authorities through transparency and shared responsibility.</li> <li>• Supports youth and vocational education by securing apprenticeships and professional development.</li> </ul> <p>► Financial Sustainability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduces tax evasion and labor market crime, helping secure public revenues that fund welfare services.</li> </ul>

- Encourages fair competition, allowing legitimate businesses to thrive and reinvest in local economies.

- Minimizes costs related to workplace accidents, insurance fraud, and legal disputes.

- Leverages voluntary contributions (e.g., pro bono work, local partnerships), reducing reliance on public funding.

► Environmental Sustainability

While not the primary focus, initiatives like Medbyggerne can:

- Promote responsible construction practices by favoring certified, quality-conscious contractors.

- Reduce waste and rework through better craftsmanship and compliance with standards.

- Encourage long-term thinking in urban development by integrating ethical and sustainable business practices.

► The practice is beyond the project phase and has an organisation with a steering group with representatives from all stakeholders as well as four working groups at the operations level.

► The practice is anchored in local ownership and is a grassroot initiative, meaning it is driven by local actors—craftsmen, suppliers, municipalities—who have a stake in its success. This creates strong motivation to sustain the work.

► Institutional Partnerships: Ongoing collaboration with the Norwegian Tax Administration, the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority, the Norwegian police, and local counties/municipalities ensures that the initiative is embedded in existing institutional structures.

► Brand and Identity: The development of Medbyggerne as a recognizable brand helps maintain visibility, attract

	<p>new members, and reinforce a shared identity over time.</p> <p>► Capacity Building: through training, knowledge sharing, and ambassador programs, the initiative builds local competence that is sustainable over time.</p>
<p><b>Innovativeness</b></p> <p>What makes this practice new or different in your field or country? (e.g. Is it the first of its kind, or does it combine actors who don't usually work together, or activities not performed before?)</p> <p>How does it improve older or less effective approaches? (e.g. By reaching more people, using data better, or simplifying complex procedures)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bottom-up approach in a traditionally top-down field: unlike many government-led initiatives, Medbyggerne is driven by local actors—craftsmen, suppliers, and businesses—who take ownership of the problem and the solution. This grassroots model is rare in the fight against labor market crime.</li> <li>2. Unusual cross-sector collaboration: The initiative brings together actors who don't usually work closely: local businesses, business unions and worker unions, national authorities (e.g., the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority, Tax Administration, Police), municipalities and counties, vocational schools and youth organizations.</li> <li>3. Focus on positive branding and identity: instead of only focusing on enforcement or penalties, Medbyggerne builds a positive identity around being a “Co-Builder” (Medbygger), promoting pride, responsibility, and professionalism in the construction industry.</li> <li>4. Combines awareness, education, and enforcement: The initiative blends public campaigns, training, and institutional cooperation combination not commonly seen in similar efforts.</li> <li>5. Scalable and replicable model: The structure allows for local adaptation while maintaining a shared national framework, making it a model that can be replicated in other regions or countries.</li> </ol> <p>► The practice improves other approaches by:</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Building trust and ownership: Moves away from a purely top-down enforcement model to one where local actors co-own the solution.</li> <li>2. Reaching more people through targeted communication: Uses digital campaigns, social media, and short videos to engage both professionals and the public. Reaches also younger audiences and apprentices through interactive tools like quizzes and school outreach.</li> <li>3. Building a recognizable brand (Medbyggerne) that people can identify with and support.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Digitalisation</b></p> <p>What kind of digital tools or platforms were used in this practice? (e.g. online portals, automated case tracking, data sharing, digital databases or other)</p> <p>How did these tools help in reaching your goals? (e.g. Did they save time, facilitate access to data in real time, reduce errors, help detect fraud, or improve coordination between authorities?)</p>	<p>The practice:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Uses data and collaboration more effectively: We have developed a digital tool for municipalities to monitor procurement and contractor compliance.</li> <li>2. Facilitates knowledge transfer between public and private sectors, which was previously fragmented.</li> <li>3. Has a shared website: <a href="http://www.medbyggerne.no">www.medbyggerne.no</a>. The website provides an overview of the status of the focus areas and prioritized activities, including information about challenges and achieved results.</li> </ol> <p>This approach ensured:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Time-saving and simplification by reducing bureaucracy and enabling businesses and employees to access guidance and tools quickly, saving time and improving compliance.</li> <li>• Broader reach and increased awareness by launching digital campaigns, producing educational content (videos, quizzes, newsletters) and shifting public attitudes towards a culture of pride and responsibility in the construction industry.</li> </ul>