

Charter of workers' rights: promoting transparency and preventing exploitation

Malta

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Name of the organisation	Department for Industrial and Employment Relations
Type of organisation	Labour Inspectorate
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Topic of the good practice	Undeclared work
Geographical focus	Cross-country (please specify)
Duration	15/4/2026 – 31/12/2026
Summary of the good practice	The DIER Charter of Workers' Rights launched in April 2026 is being submitted as a good practice under European Labour Authority's priority on tackling undeclared work due to its preventive and awareness raising approach aimed at promoting declared and fair employment. This bi-lingual Charter provides workers with clear, accessible and practical information on their fundamental employment rights and obligations, including wages,

	working hours, leave entitlements, payslips, employment contracts to be aware against abusive or irregular employment practices. By increasing this awareness, the initiative contributes to reducing situations of undeclared, particularly among vulnerable workers who may be more exposed to exploitation or misinformation. This Charters covers the basic employment conditions applicable across sectors, and in order to reach all specially those with a higher risk of undeclared work and vulnerable employment arrangements, such as temporary agency work, subcontracting chains and low-skilled occupations involving migrant and other workers, the intention is to have a leaflet distributed in all households in Malta and Gozo. The initiative also complements DIER's enforcement activities by improving voluntary compliance through education and accessible information provision rather than relying solely on sanctions. It supports workers in identifying irregular employment practices and empowers them to seek formal and lawful employment arrangements. At the same time, it assists employers in understanding their legal obligations and promotes a culture of compliance and fair competition. Thus the Charter brings added value as a transferable and inclusive practice that can be replicated in other EU countries to strengthen prevention strategies against undeclared work, improve working conditions, and support fair labour mobility across different sectors of the economy.
OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES	
Background/context 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)?	► Several key background items led to the need of putting in place the Charter: ► Information asymmetry: Vulnerable workers such as, temporary agency workers, workers in subcontracting chains, low skilled workers, migrants, young persons in employment often lack accessible, clear knowledge of their employment rights and obligations regarding working conditions.

	▶ Undeclared and irregular work: A reliance purely on post enforcement sanctions often creates a gap in preventive awareness and voluntary compliance. ▶ Risk of exploitation: Workers who receive only part of the relevant information or are misinformed about their rights are more exposed to abusive practices. ▶ Relevance and Urgency in the Maltese Context ▶ Malta's economy has distinct sectors reliant on subcontracting chains and migrant workers, elevating the risk of irregular employment and undeclared labour. Thus, the Charter addresses these challenges, also linking them with tackling undeclared work being a core priority for the European Labour Authority. ▶ Traditional enforcement alone cannot reach every household, workplace or vulnerable pocket of the workforce, and additional actions are needed. The Charter created a nationwide educational intervention from the responsible authorities. To this end, leaflets were distributed to to protect fair competition and fair labour mobility.
Objectives What were the main goals of this practice (e.g. better compliance, faster processing, improved worker protection)? (Please limit to three) Who or what were these goals intended to help or change? (Please limit to three)	▶ The Main Goals of this Initiative were to: ▶ Promote voluntary compliance: Shift the focus from relying solely on post enforcement interventions to fostering a culture of compliance and fair competition among employers through education. ▶ Enhance worker protection: Provide clear, accessible, and practical information on rights to shield vulnerable workers from abusive or irregular employment practices. ▶ Tackling undeclared work: Proactively reduce informal and undeclared work arrangements through widespread awareness and targeted educational outreach. ▶ Intended Beneficiaries and Targets

	▶ Vulnerable workers: Migrant workers, temporary agency workers, and workers in subcontracting chains ▶ Employers: Especially SMEs in Malta that form the majority of businesses across different sectors, by supporting them reach a clear understanding of their legal obligations. ▶ The wider labour market will benefit from a structural change in enhancing the awareness regarding the working conditions across Malta and Gozo through fostering a culture of transparent and lawful employment arrangements.
Main activities What were the main steps or actions you carried out to put the practice into effect? Were any tools, materials, partnerships, or processes created?	The Main Steps and Actions were as follows: ▶ Drafting and compiling the Charter: Formulated a comprehensive, bilingual text detailing fundamental employment rights, obligations, wages, working hours, and leave entitlements in accordance with national labour standards. ▶ Launching a national awareness campaign: Unveiling the initiative publicly via a campaign of national official announcements by the Department of Industrial and Employment Relations. ▶ Executing nationwide household distribution: Planned and rolled out direct distribution channels, specifically utilising information leaflets sent directly to every household across Malta and Gozo, to ensure maximum outreach. Tools & Materials, Partnerships and Processes were: ▶ Informational materials: Designed and produced bilingual worker rights charters and household awareness leaflets containing accessible, practical guidance on employment conditions and irregularity "red flags." ▶ Educational compliance framework: Developed a proactive, compliance oriented process that complements traditional enforcement by prioritizing

	education and voluntary employer adherence over post-hoc sanctions. ► Inter-institutional and public outreach: Built a broad public facing educational mechanism leveraging government channels (mainly DIER) to align national practices with European Labour Authority priorities on tackling undeclared work.
Funding/organisational resources	Funding was secured through national budgetary measures via a dedicated line item, following the successful submission and approval of the project proposal at the national level.
PARTICIPATION	
Stakeholders involved 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).	The main Stakeholders involved were: ► Department for Industrial and Employment Relations (DIER): Led the project, information, design, implementation, and overall coordination of the Charter initiative, together with the Ministry for Social Dialogue. ► Trade Unions: These social partners actively contributed by providing feedback during the development phase to ensure comprehensive worker protection. ► The General Public and Workers: Provided practical insights and feedback through DIER freephone queries, helping with the development of accessible content based on real-world concerns.
Target groups 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).	The Targets Groups were the following: ► Vulnerable and high risk workers: Individuals in low skilled occupations, migrant workers, temporary agency workers, and those employed within subcontracting chains, youths in employment, who are most exposed to misinformation, exploitation, and irregular employment practices. ► Employers and business owners: Entities across various economic sectors who are assisted in

	understanding their legal obligations to foster a culture of legal compliance and fair competition. ► The general workforce and public: Workers across Malta and Gozo who receive information regarding wages, working hours, leave entitlements, and contracts to empower them to secure formal and lawful employment arrangements.
Final beneficiaries 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).	The Final Beneficiaries of the initiative are: ► Vulnerable and high risk workers: Workers facing higher exposure to exploitation, misinformation, or informal work arrangements. ► Compliant employers and businesses: Enterprises that operate within the parameters of the law that will benefit from a level playing field, reduced unfair competition from undeclared operators. ► The broader labour market and economy: Society as a whole, which benefits from enhanced legal certainty, strengthened social dialogue, improved working conditions, and fairer labour mobility across Malta and Gozo.
GOOD PRACTICE CRITERIA	
Achievements and outcomes What specific results did the practice achieve? (e.g. How many workers or employers were reached, number of publications created? What processes became faster?) 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?)	The Main Achievements and Outcomes were: ► Widespread national reach: Distributed bilingual informational leaflets across all households in Malta and Gozo, ensuring that foundational employment rights reached every segment of the workforce, including "hard to reach" groups of individual workers. ► Creation of core educational assets: Developed and published the bilingual DIER Charter of Workers' Rights, serving as a permanent, accessible reference guide for both employees and employers. ► Enhanced awareness and legal clarity: Substantially improved the understanding of fundamental rights and obligations including wages, working hours, leave, and

	contracts, among workers and employers alike, directly addressing information asymmetry. ► Fostered voluntary compliance: Shifted the compliance paradigm by empowering workers to identify irregularities and encouraging employers to adhere to legal frameworks voluntarily, reducing reliance solely on enforcement and sanctions. ► Mitigated undeclared work risks: Contributed to reducing informal and irregular employment practices, particularly among vulnerable populations as those mentioned before.
Cost effectiveness How did you keep costs low while still achieving results? (e.g. Did you reuse existing tools, automate processes, or share resources across teams?) Can you show that the outcomes were worth the investment? (e.g. Did small changes lead to big improvements, or were expensive tools avoided?)	► This was achieved through resource optimisation by using funds in an efficient manner, through integrating the initiative into existing national administrative frameworks, and utilising current Departmental infrastructure without the need for expensive external software or private marketing agencies. ► The Return on Investment was also maximized through preventive education. Through the distribution of leaflets that led to the Charter, delivering high returns by curbing undeclared work proactively, which significantly reduced the heavy administrative and financial burdens associated with prolonged investigations, industrial tribunals, and enforcement sanctions.
Transferability 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) What would another country or organisation need to make this work for them? (e.g. certain laws, IT systems, or staff training)	The key features that were important for the success of this initiative are the following: ► Language and accessibility: Translating complex statutory regulations into clear, bilingual, and practical guidance that avoids dense legal jargon and available online. ► Proactive outreach mechanics: Household distribution channels ensuring the material lands physically in the hands of workers.

	► Dual audience utility: Structuring the content to ensure so that it educates vulnerable workers while also guiding employers towards legal compliance. To be replicated, the initiative would need to: ► Define clear foundational labour baselines: A standard national framework governing working hours, minimum wages, leave, and contracts that the charter can accurately summarise. ► Institutional backing: A designated labour authority such as DIER in Malta with the administrative capacity and institutional knowledge to draft content, coordinate public campaigns, and oversee logistic arrangements. ► Feedback System: Develop an accessible support mechanisms such as dedicated helplines to assist workers and keep future educational updates relevant.
Sustainability How is the practice sustainable from a social, financial or environmental perspective? 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?	► The practice ensures long term viability by being permanently integrated into the core operations and regular workflows of the Department of Industrial and Employment Relations, backed by secured financial continuity through dedicated national budgetary line item. ► From a social perspective, it is self sustaining by shifting the national compliance culture through ongoing community awareness, continuous feedback loops via freephone queries, and routine employer education, ensuring the initiative becomes an permanent institutionalised public service rather than a temporary project.
Innovativeness 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?) How does it improve older or less effective approaches? (e.g. By reaching more people, using data better, or simplifying complex procedures)	► The practice moves away from traditional, reactive enforcement toward a proactive educational model that addresses information asymmetry at its root. Rather than relying solely on enforcement or online resources, it actively delivers guidelines to every household across Malta and Gozo. This outreach ensures that "hard to reach", vulnerable segments of the workforce receive practical knowledge before exploitation can occur,

	ultimately transforming the approach into a comprehensive, community wide preventive strategy.
Digitalisation 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) 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?)	► The core of the DIER Charter initiative relies on physical, bilingual household distribution of a leaflet that directed the worker to the online portal Charter. This ensured maximum reach. These digital channels helped facilitate information sharing, allowed workers to conveniently review supplementary rights and submit queries online, and improved overall coordination between authorities by linking physical outreach efforts with accessible digital support systems.