

Increasing compliance and mobility in the EU

FIEC discusses social ID cards and their role across the European construction sector

A recent study in the framework of the “Social Identity Cards in Construction” (SIDE-CIC) project, has mapped the current state of social ID cards in the construction sector across the European Economic Area (EEA).

A Social ID card is a personal identification card issued to a worker that contains essential information about their identity, employment status, qualifications, work experience, and working time.

Coordinated by FIEC and EFBWW, the EU sectoral social partners for the construction industry, and co-funded by the European Commission,

this study examined 19 social ID card schemes in 17 countries, to assess their effectiveness in enforcing labour, social security, and tax legislation, and their role in fostering fair labour mobility.

The study highlights how social ID cards issued by national authorities, paritarian institutions or private companies have emerged as valuable tools for addressing challenges like undeclared work, transparency in subcontracting, and occupational safety.

The cards come in various types – training cards, badges, and digital codes – each serving multiple functions, from tracking worker identification and work hours to verifying occupational safety and health (OSH) training.

KEY FINDINGS AND TRENDS

A significant finding is the widespread adoption of social ID cards in Northern and Western Europe, with growing interest in Southern and Eastern Europe.

For instance, while Italy has two distinct systems (one operational and one under development) countries like Romania and Cyprus are in the process of developing their own cards to address sector-specific needs.

The legal basis for social ID cards varies across countries. Most schemes are grounded

in national laws, while others are based on collective agreements or specific contracts. In countries like Belgium and Italy, social ID cards are integrated into national labour collective agreements, while in Spain and the Netherlands, they result from a combination of national law and collective agreements.

According to the study, 84% of the schemes aim to combat undeclared work, 79% focus on identifying workers and employers, and 42% are used to verify site access. Additionally, 26% record training and work experience, while 21% ensure compliance with occupational safety and health (OSH) training.

The shift towards digitalization is a prominent trend observed in the study. Digital cards and QR codes are increasingly used to streamline data access and management.

For example, QR codes provide swift access to workers’ data stored in centralized databases, allowing for efficient verification and reducing administrative burdens.

This digital transformation aligns with GDPR requirements and enhances data security while minimizing the risk of misuse.

However, the move towards digital solutions also presents challenges such as ensuring compliance with GDPR, maintaining data security and the potential risk of excessive surveillance.

LEARNING AND COLLABORATION

The study emphasises the

importance of maintaining the unique characteristics of national social ID card schemes while promoting interoperability.

The focus should be on creating frameworks that allow different national schemes to connect and share data effectively, increasing labour mobility and compliance across borders.

This approach would support mutual learning and collaboration among countries as seen in examples like Norway’s HSE card influencing the development of Iceland’s Workplace ID card.

Social ID cards are increasingly recognized as a valuable tool for improving compliance, transparency, and worker safety in the construction sector.

The SIDE-CIC project’s mapping exercise provides valuable insights into the current state of these schemes and highlights the benefits of digitalisation and interoperability.

While social ID cards are not the only one solution, they are a critical component of a broader strategy to address sector-specific challenges and promote fair labour practices across Europe.

As the SIDE-CIC project moves into its next phase, the focus will be on developing interoperability frameworks that enable seamless data exchange and enhance labour mobility.

By leveraging digital advancements and collaboration among national social partners, social ID cards can contribute to a more efficient construction industry, benefiting workers and employers.

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FIEC
Brussels, Belgium.
Tel: +32 2 514 55 35;
e-mail: info@fiec.eu
www.fiec.eu

 @FIEC_Brussels

 FIEC EU

Recognised “Sectoral Social Partner” (employers)