

Anything to declare?

FIEC describes its activities in tackling undeclared construction work, as part of the EU social partners group

The European Platform tackling undeclared work describes undeclared work as “any paid activities that are lawful as regards their nature, but not declared to public authorities, taking into account differences in the regulatory systems of the Member States”.

This definition links undeclared work with tax and/or social security fraud and covers diverse activities ranging from informal household services to clandestine work by illegal residents, but excludes criminal activities.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUE

Undeclared work is a complex phenomenon influenced by a wide range of economic, social, institutional and cultural factors, but it is generally recognised that undeclared work tends to obstruct growth-oriented economic, budgetary and social policies.

Also, as a matter of fact, undeclared work remains unfortunately a wide phenomenon nowadays in the construction industry. According to the 2019 Eurobarometer survey on “undeclared work”, 19% of all EU undeclared activities take place in the overall construction industry.

Of course, numbers vary a lot

from country to country. But the most frequent undeclared activities are carried out in the field of home repair and renovation activities (21%). These high figures do not differ much from the latest data (2013), which implies that very little overall progress was achieved to tackle undeclared work in the construction industry.

This reality contributes to the construction industry having a bad reputation and being less attractive for potential employees.

From this observation, the European social partners for construction – FIEC and EFBWW (The European Federation of Building and Wood Workers) – decided to set up an EU-funded project on “Tackling Undeclared Work in Construction” (TUWIC), which ran from 2018 until this autumn.

Two levels of activities have been undertaken in the framework of this project. On one hand, seven partner countries (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Italy, Romania and Spain) got involved and developed actions and measures at their national level, according to their specific needs.

BEST PRACTICES

National activities have been organised among the national social partners for construction, as well as the relevant public authorities, in a spirit of cooperation. The outcomes of these activities have been gathered in a “Toolkit” which aims to present these national best practices to the other EU countries.

FIEC and EFBWW have also prepared a joint European prevention campaign against undeclared work in construction, which has eventually been launched on 24th September, during the European Week of Action of the EU Platform tackling undeclared work, in parallel with the cross-sectoral European campaign #EU4FairWork. For this purpose,



a number of communication materials, such as video, posters and banners, have been circulated on our social media..

WORKING TOGETHER

On 24 September, a high-level conference was jointly organised by EFBWW and FIEC. It gathered more than 200 participants. During this conference, the various speakers – among whom Mrs Lucia Duris Nicholsonova, chair of the Employment Committee of the European Parliament, and Mr Jordi Curell Gotor, director of Labour Mobility at the European Commission (DG EMPL) and Interim executive director of the European Labour Authority (ELA) – and partners to the project debated about the challenges caused by undeclared work in construction and the possible solutions to be implemented at EU and national level.

Highlight of the conference, EFBWW president Johan Lindholm and FIEC vice president Joël Schons presented the joint recommendations of the EU social partners for construction to fight undeclared work in the construction industry.

We namely recommend that sectoral social partners be better involved by public authorities in fighting against undeclared work; that Member States provide more resources to their relevant administration; that Member States adopt a coherent overall policy against this problematic which requires



Toolkit aims to present national best practices to other EU countries.”

transversal competences; that cooperation and coordination is increased at cross-border level; that the European Labour Authority strengthens its role of observatory and support; that the EU and Member States further develop digitalisation and interoperability of the existing databases to improve their information sources; that the European Commission improves the European Exchange of Social Security Information (EESI) and considers the possible options in relation to the instauration of a unique European Social Security Number (ESSN) and an EU company register (connecting national company registers).

FIGHT GOES ON

At present, the campaign is slowly coming to its end, but this issue is still high on our agenda and the ball is in the court of all social partners, at national, regional and local levels, to continue the good work, in cooperation with the relevant public authorities.

ce



FIEC
 Avenue Louise 225,
 B - 1050 Brussels, Belgium.
 Tel: +32 2 514 55 35;
 e-mail: info@fipec.eu
 www.fipec.eu

 @FIEC_Brussels
 FIEC EU

Recognised “Sectoral Social Partner” (employers)