

Monitoring access to social protection for workers and the self-employed

Challenges and opportunities

MUTUAL LEARNING WORKSHOP ON ACCESS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION
DATA, INDICATORS AND MONITORING SYSTEMS

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Introduction

- Focus: Gaps in (the data necessary for) the monitoring of formal effective and adequate coverage
- Aim: Assessing the state of play listing points of improvement and suggestions in a non-exhaustive way
- Monitoring of access to social protection
 - At the intersection of different frameworks (Policy/competences; legal; methodological)
- Some examples of data gaps reported by Member States in 2024
 - Fragmented social security institutions → **fragmented statistics** with **different definitions** and (potentially) different observation units
 - When combining statistics from different institutions, **double-counting** cannot be eliminated
 - A **lack of certain administrative data** (e.g. on sick leave and economic activity).
 - Gaps related to the **quality of the data** and **inconsistency of different information systems in use**
 - Non-availability of data on income obtained from the performance of Member State-specific types of contract

source: pre-workshop survey, 2024

MSs replies during registration

- Almost all expressed a desire for:
 - sharing experiences & best practices on data availability and access to SP
 - identifying needs
- Some state they 'do not know much' on the topic
- Issues regarding
 - data on self-employed
 - how data on non-standard workers and self-employed are is collected and analysed
 - vulnerable groups

MSs replies during registration

Member States expressed interest in:

- Exchange of data between institutions
- Non -take up & calculating take up rate
 - MT mentioned their indicator on take-up as relevant national example
- Temporary disability
- Directive on improving working conditions in platform work
- Expenditures and financing
- The added value of digital tools such as AI and machine learning

MSs replies during registration

Member States expressed interest in (2):

Specific data-related interests:

- Information on register data in a multilateral comparative monitoring approach
- Defining, producing and using social protection statistics
- Effective data collection, PT: new methods for collection
- Availability of data elsewhere
- National experiences with interlinking administration data (micro data, obstacles, GDPR)
- Sharing of good practices on national monitoring of non-coverage
- Discussion on feasibility of harmonised EU data (for example LFS) and state of play of the current activities.
- False/bogus self-employed workers

MS replies to the pre-event survey

- 3 MSs mentioned they have a national strategy to improve data in the area of access to social protection
- All MS indicate they pay attention to the number of and/or impact on persons in non-standard forms of employment when preparing reforms of social protection systems
- Many Member States reported the use of data for impact assessments and the monitoring of social security schemes in general
- 1 MS reported 'no data gaps'

MSs replies to the pre-event survey

Among the other MS, gaps concern

- Self-employed persons and/or non-standard forms of employment in general
- Effective coverage & adequacy for these groups
- Quality of data and consistency between different information systems
- Fragmentation of data & double counting
- Lack of longitudinal data
- Informal employment
- Lack of disaggregated data
- Data on the income obtained from the performance of non-contributory contracts for specific work
- Sickness insurance of self-employed
- Lack of data (e.g. in data warehouse) from other institutions

MS replies to the pre-event survey

MSs approaches for monitoring access (both formal and effective coverage as well as adequacy) to social protection

- aggregated national statistics,
- use of EUROMOD and EU-SILC
- analysis of household livelihoods
- use of administrative data and reports
- forecasting of social insurance
- data collection and dissemination of predetermined data sets to policy making bodies as well as a knowledge based approach on legislation
- extensive statistics on beneficiaries of social protection benefits are publicly available
- processing of data as well as continuous monitoring by social security institutions

MSs replies to the pre-event survey

- Innovative new approaches mentioned
 - improved use and joining of administrative data is the most commonly mentioned
- Regarding the existence (or not) of a “unique identifier” (for nationals and residents)
 - in some MS a UI is used for both employees and self-employed workers
 - a unique identifier is used for all administrative purposes in all majority of MS
 - some MS have
 - a UI independent from employment status for all nationals and residents
 - several identifiers, split into fiscal and social security (Portugal),
 - insurance codes dependent on type of activity

Remaining data gaps and issues

- Lack of data
- Measurement unit
 - e.g. number of contracts rather than the number of individuals lacking formal access
- Comparability of data
- Breakdown of data
- Timeliness of data (e.g. monitoring of changes in employment status)
- Lack of interoperability
 - lack of harmonised and consistent definitions of 'employee', 'worker', 'non-standard worker', 'self-employment', etc. can differ
 - within MSs
 - between MSs
- Both lack of comparability and interoperability indicate the importance of metadata stipulating data limitations
 - e.g. due to the differences in counted concepts

Some good practices already in place

- Belgium: **Labour Market & Social Protection Data Warehouse** of the Crossroads Bank for Social Security (<https://dwh.ksz-bcss.fgov.be/fr/homepage/index.html>)
 - Considerable level of detail
 - Use of:
 - a unique identifier
 - similar definitions
 - observation units
 - prevents double counting
- Czechia
 - Introducing use of **microdata** and **big-data analysis**
- Finland
 - **Use of data for impact assessment and evidence-based policy making**
 - **Kela's Info Tray**: information on social security benefits, a research blog, statistical database and data application all in one single place (<https://tietotarjotin.fi/en/front-page>)
 - Use of a **unique identifier** (<https://dvv.fi/en/personal-identity-code2>)

* Source: pre-workshop survey

Some good practices already in place

- Latvia: LabIS: **data warehouse** or Unified Welfare Information System
 - Data from different institutions
 - **Pseudonymised** data
 - of social insured persons, unemployed persons, beneficiaries of pensions and benefits, persons with disabilities, accidents at work or professional diseases, social services from municipalities
 - Data are combined and provided for statistical purpose for **policy making** and **policy evaluation**, and **for research purposes**
- Lithuania: **data lake project**
 - **Joins administrative data from different institutions** with the possibility of combining them for policy decisions and research purposes
 - Collaboration between Ministry of Social Security and Labour and State Data Agency

Some good practices already in place

- **Portugal's National Data Strategy**
 - Aligns with the **European Data Strategy**
 - Aims to create a secure and accessible **data ecosystem**
 - Focuses on enhancing data quality and **interoperability**
 - Some key aspects and examples of the strategy:
 - Open Data Initiatives
 - <https://dados.gov.pt/pt/>
 - Interoperability and secure Data Sharing
 - <https://www.incode2030.gov.pt/en/estrategia-nacional-de-dados-en/>
 - Support for Innovation and Entrepreneurship
 - Environmental and Economic Goals
 - aligns with broader European goals for sustainable development
 - Transversal data-driven initiatives
 - Interoperability Platform
 - LabX
 - government laboratory for experimenting with innovation in the public sector. LabX promotes new ideas and solutions to improve public administration
 - Integrated Social Support Network (RASI)
 - connects different social support services, enabling better coordination and data sharing among agencies. This helps in providing comprehensive support to vulnerable populations

Some good practices already in place

- **Spain**

- Collaboration of statistical units work and teams in charge of managing the different benefits to produce statistics and microdata for analytical purposes
- **Agreements are concluded between institutions** to link datasets (fiscal and benefits data) for an in-depth analysis when needed
- ***Tarjeta Social Digital*** (Social Digital Card) is a new information system that integrates economic social benefits
 - All social benefits aimed at individuals or families
 - Managed by Public Administrations
 - **At different levels of governance** (National, Autonomous Communities, Local Entities)
 - Offers a **complete view of the social protection each citizen receives**
 - **Making management and control** of economic benefits and aids **more agile and more secure**
 - **Facilitating decision-making** in the design of social policies for public authorities

- **Sweden**

- Possesses a wide array of **administrative microdata**, utilised to create databases for analytical purposes
- And uses a unique identifier for all administrative purposes

Effective coverage and adequacy

- Separate but **intertwined** dimensions of the Recommendation
- **Also from a methodological perspective**
 - The data sources available to monitor effective coverage and adequacy are in many cases the same
- **Administrative data** here also
 - too often **unavailable**
 - when available, frequently **lacking comparability**
 - not even speaking about interoperability
- **Challenges remaining**
 - Monitoring reciprocity or adequacy of social benefits after a risk occurs
 - and difference thereof in relation to the previous status in employment or type of contract
 - As a result, those indicators remain **imperfect proxies** of what one would want ideally to measure
 - Gap between monitoring adequacy by proxy of monitoring deprivation and poverty, and the impact of social transfers on these issues
 - while the Recommendation relates 'an adequate level of protection' also to "maintaining a decent standard of living and providing appropriate income replacement"

Effective coverage and adequacy

- **Other challenges regarding the availability of (administrative) data**
 - The EU-SILC based indicator on effective coverage considers **all social benefits received at individual level**. Monitoring more granularly, e.g. breakdown of benefits per branches of social security, would require administrative data not always (sufficiently) available
 - The LFS-based indicator on effective coverage only captures **registered unemployed**, potentially turning registration into an **intermediating factor**
 - Furthermore, in most EU Member States, information on the receiving of unemployment protection and registration with public employment services is self-declared, raising data-quality concerns
 - While the indicator is unavailable or unreliable in a small number of Member States
 - The monitoring of effective coverage requires monitoring **eligibility rules** in force
 - Eligibility rules can be very **complicated**
 - Including **many qualifiers**
 - Making it often difficult to decide which rule should be retained for a given Member State and reference period
 - Indicators based on the mapping of eligibility rules, **only reflect the rules in place and not the implementation in practice** disregarding potential administrative or other barriers that could result in non-take up

Conclusions

- **Remarkable progress** has been made in the monitoring of access to social protection in the EU since the Council Recommendation on access to social protection for workers and the self-employed
- **Challenges remain**
- Different solutions have been either implemented, put forward or suggested
 - However: **solutions often bring about new issues/challenges**
 - For instance: development of (indicators based on) surveys and models is that said development unavoidably relies on **assumptions and hypotheses**
- In vast majority of cases, challenges exist due to lack availability and/or quality (e.g. detail) of **administrative data**
- Version 0, had already observed that later stages of the development of the monitoring framework could further explore the use of administrative sources.
 - This development aligns with Provision 17 of the Recommendation
- The remaining challenges in the monitoring of access to social protection provide **opportunities and ways forward**

Conclusions

- **Good practices can serve as inspiration and provide lessons learned at the same time**
- **Experience in the Nordic countries** regarding the use of administrative data
- The development and **implementation of digital tools in several Member States**
 - **addressing issues such as cyber security, privacy-by- design, data ownership and interoperability**
- Technological evolutions in the use of
 - **Big Data**
 - **Algorithms and**
 - **Artificial Intelligence**
- could make it possible to address many of the challenges and issues that the pooling of administrative data for the monitoring of access to social protection **(in first instance at MS level)** implies

Questions, comments, suggestions, ... ?

THANK YOU

And thanks to all the people who contributed to this presentation and the paper by providing data (information, documents, feedback, etc.) !