

Improving the Monitoring of Access to Social Protection: Good Practices and Ways Forward

Mutual learning workshop on access to social protection: data, indicators and monitoring systems

26-27 November 2024

Brussels

Outline of the presentation

1. National strategies and policies
2. Policies related to monitoring access for specific groups of workers
3. Improving the monitoring process through integrated data systems, digital solutions, interinstitutional cooperation
4. Suggestions for possible ways forward

1. National Strategies and Policies

- The objective is to explore whether **Member States developed or are developing monitoring policies** following their commitment through the 2019 Council recommendation, particularly in relation to its article 17.
- The guiding question of the background paper:
 - ✓ To what extent Member States have developed/are developing policies and comprehensive strategies related to monitoring access to social protection for workers and self-employed, with a particular focus on evidence and data gathering.
- Two sub-questions are considered as well:
 - ✓ New rules, which help to signal issues with access to social protection and disincentivise abusive use of non-standard forms of work;
 - ✓ How is non-standard work taken into account when MS prepare reforms? (i.e. the number of/impact on individuals in non-standard forms of employment when preparing reforms of social protection systems).

1. National Strategies and Policies

❖ **Focus on comprehensive strategies and policies** put in place to enhance monitoring of access to social protection

❖ **3 main categories of indicators on access to social protection**

- Performance indicators - formal and effective coverage, adequacy based on EU-SILC, EU- LFS and national data
- Context indicators - indicate the prevalence of non-standard employment and self-employment as well as the occurrence of risks throughout people's career
- Policy levers -describe the rules governing entitlements and contributions of the social protection schemes in each Member State

❖ **Issues with datasets and indicators**

- Absence of complete data on assets or behavioural conditions
- Varying legal definitions
- Differences in data collection methods

1. National Strategies and Policies

❖ Improving Statistical Monitoring (examples)

○ Belgium

- ✓ To ensure the availability of objective and timely data, a key focus of implementing the 2019 Council Recommendation is on the increased use of administrative data in policy formulation and monitoring, particularly in the areas of social security, health, and taxation. To achieve this, a collaborative approach was established with key data providers and users.

○ Malta

- ✓ The Maltese implementation plan emphasises the need for disaggregated data to better understand non-standard work and address remaining disparities. Commitment to three studies (2022–2024) on access to social protection: Unemployment: Invalidity & Work-related Benefits Sickness, Maternity & Paternity Benefits
- ✓ Three main phases:
 - Developing Monitoring Framework: Based on measurable policy outcomes and outputs.
 - Testing Phase: Apply and refine the framework to ensure reliability.
 - Based on the results of the testing process, evaluate the proposed monitoring framework's outputs and outcomes. Assess results and make necessary adjustments for implementation.

○ Portugal

- ✓ Green paper on the Future of Work : proposals for registration of all workers and simplifying their access to social security, regardless of their status.

1. National Strategies and Policies

- ❖ **Focus on data gathering and monitoring for non-standard workers and the self-employed**
- ❖ Indicators of effective and adequate social protection coverage rely heavily on income data from the EU-SILC.
- ❖ Limitations, especially concerning self-employment income which is not fully comparable across EU Member States due to varying legal definitions and data collection methods
 - Examples
 - **Cyprus**
 - ✓ Intention to launch an electronic census of all self-employed and addressing bogus self-employment to facilitate proper classification of all employees
 - **Estonia**
 - ✓ Introduction of the entrepreneur account policy in 2019. This system tracks the income and taxes of self-employed individuals, and the bank handling the account automatically sends the appropriate amounts to the Health Insurance Fund and Pension Fund
 - **Slovenia**
 - ✓ Starting in 2023, the information system of the Centres for Social Work automatically collects data regarding the payment of social contributions for self-employed individuals and farmers

2. Policies related to monitoring access for specific groups of workers

❖ Policies to monitor access to social protection for specific groups of workers

- Countries face challenges to reach all individuals (especially vulnerable ones) in need of social benefits and services
- Gender dimension – women may face issues with effective access (short contributory histories, lower adequacy of benefits – need for data)
 - Italy
 - ✓ In July 2021, an overall strategy focused on gender equality was adopted, ‘the National Strategy for Gender Equality’
 - ✓ streamlining the gender dimension in social and economic policy, and the dissemination of tools to assess the impacts of public policies from a gender perspective.
 - ✓ The process of gender mainstreaming has been applied to all stages of statistical activities, and the integration of a gender perspective throughout the statistical system is considered a commitment to data quality and relevance.

2. Policies related to monitoring access for specific groups of workers

➤ Examples of policies improving data gathering in order to reduce non –take up for vulnerable workers/individuals

- **Belgium**

- ✓ Development of microsimulation model (*BELMOD project based on the EUROMOD tool*) to simulate changes in social assistance and social security to reduce non-take-up of benefits

- **France**

- ✓ The “Stratégie nationale de prévention et de lutte contre la pauvreté”, in place between 2018 and 2022, led to the development of mining techniques to identify individuals and households who could be entitled to social benefits from the linked administrative data. Positive results on informing people and increased take up.

- **Ireland**

- ✓ Significant investment in a probabilistic method which uses de-identified survey and administrative data to identify gaps in coverage and prioritises certain vulnerable groups or regions for social protection outreach

3. Improving the monitoring access through specific tools, integrated data systems and digital solutions

❖ Improving monitoring through data integration and digital solutions

- Data exchange to gain further insight as “crossroads of databases”
- Increasing reliance on digital solutions for data protection and collection
- Examples of **interoperability of systems**

○ Belgium

- ✓ *The Crossroads Bank for Social Security plays a central role, linking the various social security institutions databases with one another.*

○ Portugal

- ✓ *Open Data Initiatives: The strategy emphasizes the importance of open data and the reuse of public sector information. This is facilitated through the open data portal, Portaldados.gov, which provides access to a wide range of data from various public bodies.*
- ✓ *Interoperability and Data Sharing: The strategy focuses on ensuring interoperability and secure data sharing across different sectors. This is crucial for creating new services and products, both within Portugal and across borders.*

3. Improving the monitoring access through specific tools, integrated data systems and digital solutions

➤ Examples of improving data gathering and reporting through digital solutions

○ Cyprus

- ✓ An all-encompassing reform of the Social Insurance Services is on-going. It includes better access to information, and the simplification of legislation. One of the highlights is the digitalisation of benefit applications, as well as the further development of the payment system which provides users with the opportunity to pay contributions electronically (users register online with the system). This would vastly improve the availability of data on workers' access, as registration is compulsory for both employers and the self-employed.

○ Spain

- ✓ The Social Digital Card is a new information system that integrates social benefits managed by Public Administrations. It allows each person to have updated information about the benefits. For administrations, as information providers and system users, the Card offers a complete view of the social protection for each citizen. It is expected to facilitate decision-making in the design of social policies.

3. Improving the monitoring access through specific tools, integrated data systems and digital solutions

➤ Examples of **improving data reporting**

○ **Germany**

- ✓ Starting January 1, 2022, employers of short-term employees are required to report their health insurance status to ensure proper coverage. When registering short-term employees, employers must specify whether the employee is covered by statutory or private health insurance .

➤ Examples of **institutional cooperation**

- ✓ Plays a vital role in supporting comprehensive monitoring and responsiveness within social protection systems (examples of interinstitutional cooperation during COVID etc; BE, FR).

4. Possible Ways Forward

❖ Recommendations

- EU could further support efforts to **improve data collection methods** and help Member States to **obtain more accurate and comprehensive insights** on social protection coverage, especially for non-standard and self-employed
- Promote **microsimulation modelling** to analyse the adequacy and effectiveness of coverage
- Promote **integrated data systems**
- **Institutional cooperation** within a country can play a central role in monitoring efforts