



## **PRUEBAS SELECTIVAS PARA EL INGRESO EN EL CUERPO SUPERIOR DE ACTUARIOS, ESTADÍSTICOS Y ECONOMISTAS DE LA ADMINISTRACIÓN DE LA SEGURIDAD SOCIAL**

**CUARTO EJERCICIO: 20 de febrero de 2024**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Nowadays, EU labour markets include significant numbers of people in (solo) self-employment, in jobs not governed by standard contracts, in combinations of dependent employment and self-employment or switching between them. In 2021, almost 40% of the population in employment in the EU-27 (76.7 million people) were in non-standard forms of work, i.e. with a temporary contract (23.7 million), part-time work (36.4 million) and/or self-employed (26.9 million including 18.4 million solo self-employed), as opposed to permanent full-time contracts. While the overall proportion of people in non-standard forms of work has been stable over the last decade and situations vary greatly from one group to another and within groups, some new forms of employment (casual workers, portfolio workers, platform workers) have become more prevalent in EU Member States, and are generally less covered by social protection.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE RECOMMENDATION**

The Council Recommendation aims to ensure that all workers and the self-employed have formal access to and contribute to effective, adequate and transparent social protection, in respect of six branches of social protection: unemployment benefits; sickness and healthcare benefits; maternity and paternity benefits; invalidity benefits; old-age and survivor benefits; and benefits covering accidents at work and occupational diseases.

### **SUMMARISING PROGRESS**

The Council Recommendation's implementation period coincided with the pandemic. In 2020-21, policy attention was very much focused on emergency measures to address its social and economic consequences; fewer efforts were devoted to systemic reforms to adapt social protection branches to new and still changing labour market realities. The emergency measures helped extend social protection to previously uncovered or partially covered groups, but mostly on a temporary basis. At the same time, the crisis also highlighted some deep structural gaps and the need to address these, but only some countries pursued structural reforms.

#### **Positive developments in access to social protection for all**

Measures implemented since 2019 or announced for the future include a number of changes in legislation (or practices) that (will) facilitate concrete access for numerous workers and self-employed people to the key social protection branches covered by the Council Recommendation. It will be important to closely monitor their implementation and impacts and to follow up on those not yet adopted.



Many reforms are concentrated in the area of formal coverage, focusing on extending and improving social protection for the self-employed (in particular solo and dependent self-employed people), in most cases moving from 'no coverage' to 'mandatory coverage'. Reforms were also implemented, or are planned, to improve formal coverage for workers with specific forms of contracts or in specific sectors. In eight Member States, the emergency measures deployed during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide a safety net for those not formally covered did trigger systemic changes in formal access.

There were also some positive developments regarding effective access, for instance reducing the length of the minimum required contributions for unemployment benefits and regarding adequacy, mostly related to old-age benefits for the self-employed or for those with low entitlements, and to a lesser extent to unemployment benefits. As for transparency, available information shows both the many existing good practices across EU Member States and the need for further progress.

### **Challenges remain**

The overall level of ambition varies significantly among the national implementation plans (NIPs), notably in terms of scope, number and timing of the measures (taken or announced). With a few exceptions, most of them do not aim to address all coverage gaps identified in the monitoring framework or in the context of the European Semester.

It should also be taken into account that the starting point is very diverse across the 27 EU Member States. In particular, the NIPs of some of the most advanced welfare states with universal and generous social security systems contain relatively few commitments to new structural reforms. Conversely, it is a concern that some Member States where non-standard workers and self-employed are still not (adequately) covered have not submitted ambitious reform plans. In addition, a few Member States consider that they fulfil the provisions of the Recommendation as soon as all workers and the self-employed are formally covered by the social protection schemes, omitting to take effective access, adequacy and transparency into account.

While a number of measures aim at improving formal coverage for the self-employed, those with non-standard forms of contracts are the focus of fewer measures. Significant gaps in formal and effective coverage remain for both groups, and are likely to continue in the absence of further reforms.

Implementation challenges as acknowledged also by many Member States include: the complexity of improving formal coverage for the self-employed; addressing the situation of specific groups of non-standard workers such as platform workers, domestic workers and farmers; the difficult balance between ensuring more effective access to benefits and financing the system.

The high-level event on social protection of the self-employed in June 2022 demonstrated the strong interest many Member States have in addressing the issue and the need for further mutual learning on how to tackle the gaps affecting both formal and effective access to adequate social protection.

Finally, adequate and inclusive social protection requires strong public support and involvement of all actors. However, there is no evidence that social partners, still less civil society organisations have been closely involved in preparing the NIPs. European social partner organisations stressed this lack of involvement as a key concern.