# Eurocadres

# Access to collective bargaining for freelancers and atypical work relationships

# Project Concept Note

**Background information**

A growing number of workers are not in a regular full-time working relationship with the employers or those who pay their salaries. While approximately 27 million European are currently self-employed, and many more in other 'atypical' work relationships, the ongoing rapid changes in the worklife are putting more and more EU citizens in a precarious position. The 2017 Eurofound study showed, that at least a quarter of the self-employed in the EU face unfavourable working conditions compared to rest of the workforce, and had limited access to collective bargaining. The number of atypical working relationships is expected to rise in the upcoming years, while trade union membership has been in decline.

The EU has responded to this by providing Guidelines on the application of Union competition law to collective agreements regarding the working conditions of solo self-employed persons (EUR-Lex - 52022XC0930(02) - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)) in September 2022. The legislators have also taken regulatory measures, such as the platform work directive, that will address atypical working conditions in larger perspective.

The trade unions across the EU Member States have also developed their responses, ranging from setting agencies for the freelancers to challenging the legislation to provide access to those, who are not in a traditional working relationships. However, the issue is very fragmented from country to country and between different groups. Some may be completely barred from accessing collective bargaining, while others face uncertainty or limitations on their possibility to be presented when workers rights are being negotiated. Similarly the trade unions may be ill-prepared for the changes in the work life and lack both understanding and capacity of their potential to support workers in atypical working relationships.

Due to this, the main objective of this project is to equip the European social partners representing professional and managerial staff to support qualified self-employed workers to access collective bargaining in order to guarantee them decent conditions of work. This is done by breaking the main objective down into following, specific objectives:

- Identifying the current collective bargaining framework for self-employed and assess its functionality in different countries
- Identifying the national level solutions and the potential impact of the Commission's Guidelines
- Identifying the obstacles and finding pathways to overcome them
- Developing policy recommendations to further support the access to collective bargaining for self-employed Professionals and Managers.

Specific attention will be given to digitalised elements of the economy. In doing so, the study will also anticipate the deployment of the draft European directive on platform workers in member countries.

**Project description**

The project will be built on two-fold structure.

Firstly, the project focuses on providing research on the EU framework on the access to collective bargaining for the self-employed and analysis of the national practices in 10 Member States.

Secondly, the research findings will be disseminated and analysed by the trade unions participants. These workshops will lead into creation of political document, that provides recommendations on how to develop the status of atypical labourers and their collective bargaining access further. This can be done by national level best practice identification and policy recommendations.

The project work will be presented in a final conference, that will explore potential actions on both national and EU level. As the project span is expected to overlap with some major policy developments, notably the directive on platform work, the final conference will also provide a chance to reflect on the changes of the landscape.

**Project deliverables**

The project will be built around the following deliverables:

- Research report (including data collection)
- Seminar on main findings
- Workshops on utilising the EU guidelines, legislation and national best practices
- Political report
- Final conference