

KU LEUVEN

HIVA

RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR
WORK AND SOCIETY

 **breakback**

 diesis

BreakBack Project Country case: Belgium

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A quick recap on the Belgian industrial relations system and actors

Some stylised facts about the Belgian IR system and actors

- **Social dialogue at three interlinked levels:**
 - National, sectoral (joint committees, subcommittees), company (trade union delegation, work council, health and safety committee)
- **High bargaining coverage and trade union density:**
 - Strong institutional embeddedness and longstanding traditions
 - Service provision as a core trade union activity (cf. Ghent system): package of services provided to members (from cradle to grave)
- **Three trade unions (representative):**
 - **ACV-CSC**, **ABVV-FGTB** and **ACLVB-CGSLB**
 - ‘Pillarisation’; close connections with political parties and civil society

Trade union membership trends and role of service provision

- **Membership trends:**

- **ACV-CSC** ↓ (~1,5 mln), **ABVV-FGTB** ↑ (~1,5 mln), and **ACLVB-CGSLB** ↑ (300,000)
- Members in all occupations, sectors, regions, etc.
- Active and inactive members
- Changes reflect economic and societal changes
- Changes in internal organisation and ways of working

Trade union membership trends and role of service provision

- **Service provision:**
 - What? Wide range of services provided ('traditional vs. new')
 - Interest representation, negotiation, etc.
 - Paying out unemployment insurance (Ghent system)
 - Other: legal support, career advice, filling out tax forms, etc.
 - How?
 - Individual and collective services
 - Format (face-to-face, digitalisation)
 - Who? Existing members, new members, new target groups
 - Not necessarily relation to becoming active as union delegates
 - Role of membership fees: differentiation

Case studies

Case study selection

Focus on new forms of work and self-employment

- **Context:**

- Rise in new forms of work (platform work) and self-employment as a secondary profession (freelancers)
- Such workers are considered employers under social dialogue logic and traditionally represented by employers' organisations
- Unions defend employment and working conditions of all who workers regardless status → collectivisation of issues
- Similar target group, but different approach

- **Cases:**

- **ACV-CSC** United Freelancers
- **ABVV-FGTB** platform for platform workers

United Freelancers



<https://www.unitedfreelancers.be/home-fr>



- Launched by ACV-CSC in June 2019
- Promoted by several sectoral trade unions and supported by the national confederation
- 4 people directly involved, many more indirectly (internal + external)

United Freelancers

What is the initiative about?

- **Service targeting three groups of workers:**
 - Freelancers (self-employed without personnel)
 - Workers who are self-employed in their secondary occupation
 - Platform workers
- **Why focus on these groups?**
 - Difference between employee and freelancer is often artificial
 - Similar tasks and circumstances, but different rights, obligations and levels of protection due to different employment status
 - Union receives many questions from these groups of workers
 - Needs of employees and freelancers are not identical, so set up a separate service for the latter group

United Freelancers

What services are provided?



Une aide sur mesure

Notre centre de compétence vous aide du début à la fin de votre contrat.



Avantages pour les affiliés

Découvrez les services que nous vous offrons ainsi que ceux de nos organisations partenaires.



Pourquoi s'affilier?

Nous aidons les travailleurs autonomes à renforcer leur position vis-à-vis de leurs donneurs d'ordre (patron / « client »).

United Freelancers

What services are provided?

- **Individual services: individual, legal, professional support**
 - e.g. checking contracts, dealing with unpaid invoices, termination of relationship, court cases, administrative tasks
- **Collective services:**
 - e.g. collective negotiating of contracts, labour conditions, social pact



BASE DE RESSOURCES

Tout ce à quoi vous devez penser en tant que travailleur autonome, regroupé de manière pratique dans une seule base de ressources. Vous ne trouvez pas ici ce que vous cherchez? Contactez notre centre de compétence pour obtenir un conseil sur mesure.

Freelancer: démarrer . Freelancer: travailler . Participation . Bien-être . Sécurité sociale . Fin de contrat

United Freelancers

Users of the initiative?

- **Number of users:**
 - No data available on exact number of users
 - 500 dossiers in 2019; 1,000+ already in 2020
 - Clear spike in number of questions received due to covid-19
 - Many questions about interaction between different statuses, support in becoming self-employed and contractual issues
- **Characteristics of the users:**
 - Diverse in terms of socio-demographic features
 - Most are self-employed (main or secondary job)
 - Helps to retain existing members and attract new members
 - Changing composition of user group at peak of covid-19 crisis

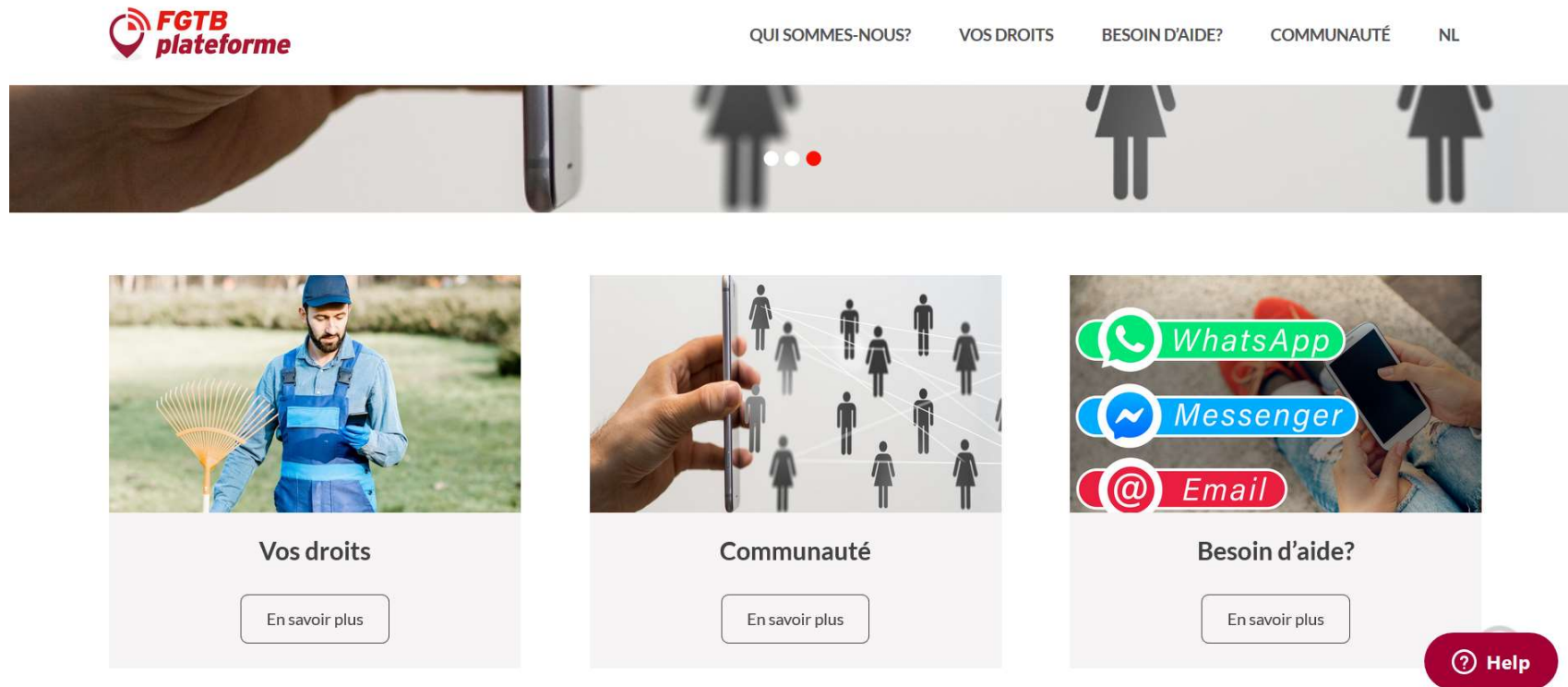
United Freelancers

Service assessment

- Objectives are being met and users appear satisfied
- Examples of how UF helps retain existing members and attract new members
- Stable growth over time, and potential for the future:
 - Raising awareness about the initiative
 - Further development of the knowledge center

ABVV-FGTB Platform for platform workers

<https://www.abvvplatform.be/>



- Launched by ABVV-FGTB in February 2020
- Promoted by several sectoral trade unions, who collaborate
- 10-15 people directly involved, many more indirectly

ABVV-FGTB Platform for platform workers

What is the initiative about?

- **Service targeting platform workers:**
 - BTB-ABVV: transportation sector
 - Algemene Centrale: construction, security, cleaning, etc.
 - Initiatives from different trade unions in their own sectors; but joining forces to provide additional support
- **Why focus on these workers?**
 - Platform workers should have the same rights as employees
 - In principle: same service package is offered to them as to other workers when they join the union, but also dedicated services and activities are provided

ABVV-FGTB Platform for platform workers

What services are provided?

- **Website serves as a platform:**
 - For platform workers in all sectors
 - Information about rights as a worker:
 - Legal framework
 - Social security
 - Taxation
 - ...
 - Community page to interact with other platform workers
 - Dispatch to sectoral trade union that is best able to help them (contact info: e-mail, Facebook, WhatsApp)

ABVV-FGTB Platform for platform workers

What services are provided?

Mag ik bijklussen?

Je bent werknemer

Online platform Zolang het via een door de overheid (FOD Financiën) erkend platform is, heb je het recht o...

Je bent zelfstandige

Online platform Zolang het via een door de overheid (FOD Financiën) erkend platform is, heb je het recht o...

Je bent werkzoekend

Online platform Als je werkloos bent moet de RVA nagaan of de activiteit verenigbaar is met je beschikbaarh...

Je bent gepensioneerd, student of monitor

Online platform Zolang het via een door de overheid (FOD Financiën) erkend platform is, heb je het recht o...

Wat moet ik aangeven aan de belastingen?

Lijst erkende platformen - Wet de Croo

Als platformwerker ontvang je opdrachten door je diensten via een online platform (website) of app aan te b...

Inkomsten uit een online platform

Inkomsten die je krijgt via een deeleconomieplatform moet je aangeven op je belastingbrief. Je hoeft ze dus...

Inkomsten uit verenigingswerk of diensten aan burgers

Verenigingswerk en diensten aan burgers (die niet via een platform geregistreerd worden) moet je via een an...

ABVV-FGTB Platform for platform workers

Service assessment

- **Little information available about users:**
 - No data available on exact number of users
 - Most questions come from platform workers in transportation sector, individuals combining employment with self-employed, and workers who do not speak the national language
- **Service assessment:**
 - Hardly any data available at this stage and no explicit targets
 - Workers do not have to join the union to use the website, but they do in case they want to receive additional support
 - Several examples of platform workers joining the union
 - Some examples also of platform workers becoming active as union delegates; though this is tricky
 - Sectoral trade unions are happy with the work done so far

Strengths and weaknesses

Initial reflections

Strengths:

- Attention for new and growing groups in the labour market
- Reach diverse group of users
- Growth in the number of users / number of requests
- Several cases in which these services helped retain existing members and encourage new members to join

Weaknesses:

- Targets of initiatives are not always clearly defined and target groups are difficult to identify
- Initiatives are still in the early stages and in full development
- Organisational dimension
- No clear link with encouraging members to become active; or participation in union life

Comparative table

	United Freelancers	ABVV-FGTB Platform
Target	Three groups	Platform workers in all sectors
Rationale	Response to societal developments; questions from the field	Response to societal developments; questions from the field
Organisation	Union-led initiative Separate organisation 4 FTEs	Union-led initiative Website launched by AC, but dispatching to multiple sectoral trade unions Many people indirectly
Effectiveness	1000+ dossiers and ↑	Difficult to assess
Membership	Retain members New members (but these are registered by the confederations)	New members Become union delegates

THANK YOU