



Informality and COVID-19 in Eurasia: The Sudden Loss of a Social Buffer

Thursday 11 March 2021

Webinar Draft Agenda

10:00 – 12:30 (GMT+1: France, Belgium, CET)

11:00 – 13:30 (GMT+2: Moldova, Ukraine)

12:00 – 14:30 (GMT+3: Belarus)

13:00 – 15.30 (GMT+4: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia)

13:30 – 16:00 (GMT+4:30: Afghanistan)

14:00 – 16:30 (GMT+5: Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan)

15:00 – 17:30 (GMT+6: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan)

17:00 – 19:30 (GMT+8: Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia)



■ OBJECTIVE

The webinar will discuss the challenges informal workers and firms face in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and policy responses by governments in the Eastern Partner (EaP) region and Central Asia, based on the OECD policy note *COVID-19 and informality in Eurasia*. The region's large informal sectors that have been hit hard by the COVID-19, and policy-makers are encouraged to take action to support the informal sector during the crisis, while working to foster formalisation across the region. This webinar will support these efforts and share ideas and experiences from OECD member and Partner countries to ensure that EaP and Central Asian countries can build back better.

■ CONTEXT

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the socio-economic vulnerability of workers and firms in the informal sector. Large local informal economies, including small shop owners and farmers, migrant workers, informal service providers and traders, have disproportionately suffered from containment measures adopted in response to the pandemic, and poverty amongst informal workers and their households has been rising. In previous crises, the informal sector has often acted as a buffer, providing temporary subsistence revenues and relief, but this crisis, with its lockdowns and mobility restrictions, is hitting informal workers and businesses hard. Public support packages have mostly reached the formal sector, leaving the informal sector largely aside.

The OECD policy note *The sudden loss of a social buffer: COVID-19 and informality in Eurasia* will serve as a basis for discussion during this webinar, during which participants and speakers will share experiences and good practices in OECD and Eurasia countries, discuss the effects of COVID-19 on informal sector workers and identify reform priorities to design an inclusive recovery and build back better.

■ PARTICIPANTS

This webinar will bring together policy-makers, experts and civil society representatives involved in the design and implementation of policies that address the informal economy across OECD and Eurasia countries. Other participants include representatives of the private sector and the development community, as well as EU and OECD officials.

■ TECHNICAL DETAILS

Registration: Advance registration is required. Please find the [registration link below](#):

<https://meetoe.cd1.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJcvde6urzMoGdN0ORc6QXalwfCaEYWubhTC>

After completing the registration form, a personalised confirmation link will be sent following registration. This confirmation link cannot be transferred to other interested participants. Each participants must have their own personalised confirmation link to access the virtual webinar.

Access: Please join the session 15 minutes prior to the start with the link provided following registration.

Working Language: English and Russian

■ CONTACTS

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■ DRAFT AGENDA

Please note that the timing of the agenda below is based on GMT+1 (Paris).

9:30-10:00 Online Access

Moderator: **Mr William Tompson**, Head, Eurasia Division, OECD

10:00-10:30 Opening remarks

- **Mr Andreas Schaal**, Director for Global Relations, OECD
- **Ms Rūta Bilkštytė**, Vice Minister of Finance, Lithuania
- **Mr Badriddin Abidov**, Deputy Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade, Uzbekistan

10:30-10:45 Setting the scene: informality in the Eurasia region and its specificities

This opening session will provide an overview on the difficulty of defining informality, whilst drawing an overview of informality in the region.

- **Ms Judith Van Doorn**, Specialist, Enabling Environment and Enterprise Formalisation, ILO
- **Mr Arnault Prêtet**, Deputy Head of Central Asia Unit, Eurasia Division, OECD

10:45-11:35 SESSION I: The socio-economic costs of COVID-19 for the informal sector

Panellist discussion: main effects of COVID-19 and support measures for the informal sector

Eurasia country representatives and experts will discuss the main effects of COVID-19 on informal sector workers in the region and the role of informal sector in Eurasian economies.

Setting the stage: *Mr Antti Rauhala, Policy Analyst, Eurasia Division, OECD will provide a brief introduction on the effects of COVID-19 on the informal sector in Eurasia, drawing upon recent data.*

Panellists:

- **Mr Abdul Karim Malekyar**, Deputy Minister of Industry and Commerce, Afghanistan
- **Mr Oleksandr Romanishyn**, Deputy Minister for Economic Development, Trade and Agriculture, Ukraine
- **Ms Jane Barrett**, Director, Organization and Representation at Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO)
- **Mr Rustamjon Urinboyev**, Associate Professor – Lund University/Senior Researcher at Aleksanteri Institute

Questions and open discussion with participants

Instant poll

All participants will be invited to take part in an instant poll to gauge the type of support mechanisms which can have an immediate impact on informal firms and workers.

11:35-12:25 SESSION II: Formalising firms for a more inclusive economy

Expert discussion: policy measures to formalise the economy and build back better

Eurasia country representatives will share initiatives to build back better and support the longer-term formalisation of the economy.

Setting the stage: *Ms Talisa zur Hausen, Policy Analyst, Eurasia Division, OECD will provide thoughts on key reform directions for formalising firms to fuel the discussions.*

Panellists:

- **Mr Alessandro Goglio**, Head of the Partner Countries Unit, Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, OECD
- **Ms Tamar Kitiashvili**, Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, Georgia
- **Mr Robin Ord-Smith**, Business Ombudsman, Kyrgyzstan
- **Dr Wimonkan Kosumas**, Deputy Director General, Office of SMEs Promotion, Thailand

Questions and open discussion with participants

12:25-12:30 Concluding remarks and next steps

- **Mr Sven Olov Carlsson**, Ambassador, Head of the Delegation of the European Union in Kazakhstan
- **Mr William Tompson**, Head, Eurasia Division, OECD