Good practice in operation since: 2004

"My contributions": A system to provide workers with direct access to their social security records
A case of the Federal Administration of Public Resources

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Summary

A Web application, in real time, which provides workers with a global picture of all the information provided and payments made by their employer-contributors for all social security components using a simple, accessible and intuitive format to show the status of compulsory payments.

This information can be accessed from the offices of the National Social Security Administration.

Workers can verify the information provided by their employers and compare it with their statements of account; monitoring is thus based on worker comparison, which avoids under-reporting of salaries or omissions which would reduce the future benefits of workers including their health cover and cover for occupational hazards.

This system is constantly evolving and being updated to incorporate new functions and services and to adapt to changes in the legislation.

CRITERIA 1

What was the issue/problem/challenge addressed by your good practice?

In order to check their employment situation as described in the sworn social security declarations, workers were obliged to go to the National Social Security Administration offices during working hours, submit a request and return later to obtain a list which was difficult to interpret. Workers were frequently unaware that payments made by certain enterprises were insufficient or lacking until the time came to claim insurance benefits; by then some of the enterprises involved in their career history had ceased to exist, which meant that claims could not be submitted.

CRITERIA 2

What were the main objectives and the expected outcomes?

This real time web application enables salaried workers who have a computer with internet access to check that they are registered, to monitor contributions, to check where the funds go and make confidential claims (vis-à-vis the employer) based on information concerning the period since nominative sworn declarations were introduced in July 1994.

Simple language is used, with context-sensitive help and mechanisms which enable clear identification of existing problems (a “traffic lights” colour system is used: green indicates full payment, yellow indicates partial payment and red indicates non-payment) and information is provided to enable comparison with the monthly statements of account that all workers are supposed to receive.

In this way, workers play an active part in monitoring their employers’ declarations (comparison-based monitoring), which ensures that previously undetected situations are
brought to light and that workers' contributions cannot be retained without their knowledge. Complaints can be submitted immediately, avoiding problems when claiming pension rights.

While every effort has been made to protect sensitive data (such as salaries, company data, etc.) necessitating secure access with a “tax code” (easily obtained from the employment certificate received on starting work or personally in any agency of the tax administration) there is also a possibility of free access which provides only information on whether or not a person is registered and whether social security and social welfare contributions have been paid, thus enabling monitoring even without the above-mentioned code or if an employment certificate has not been provided.

In order to reach the largest possible number of workers, the launching of the system was accompanied by nation-wide publicity campaigns and training sessions with union groups to enable them to hand on the information and provide support for those workers most in need of protection.

**CRITERIA 3**

**What is the innovative approach/strategy followed to achieve the objectives?**

Given the growing penetration and geographical coverage of services providing access to Internet, this universal network is used as a consultation resource which operates 24 hours a day, thus enabling workers to consult it from home outside working hours.

A “traffic lights” colour system is used: green indicates full payment, yellow indicates partial payment and red indicates non-payment. The system is intuitive and easily identifiable by the layperson; no previous training is required, and the layout ensures that the information is easy to compare with the monthly statements of account that each worker is supposed to receive.

It is thus easy to visualize the information declared by the employer in a format which is similar to that of the statements of account which facilitates comparison with the official receipt they must receive.

A more detailed level of information provides all data used to calculate social security rights is available for assessment by professionals.

In order to enable any differences between the declarations made by the employer and those received by workers to be noted, an “observation post” has been set up which can gather information while protecting workers’ identities to avoid damage to working relationships.
CRITERIA 4

Have the resources and inputs been used in an optimal way to achieve the set objectives and the expected outcomes? Please specify what internal or external evaluations of the practice have taken place and what impact/results have been identified/achieved so far.

The main objective when developing this system was to ensure the transparency of the procedures for the registration, collection and distribution of funds by the tax administration to enable them to be compared with the workers' statements of account.

Workers can thus compare and check employers’ data using the information provided via the web which was previously difficult to obtain, thus increasing feelings of insecurity among contributors.

Finally, claims submitted by workers in confidence through the “observation post” feed into a database used for the investigation and taxation of contributing employers.

The following are among the results obtained since the introduction of the system (it is important to take into account that use of the application is not compulsory).

- There have been more than 42,000,000 voluntary queries from workers since the implementation of the system.
- More than 30,000 emails and 170,000 telephone queries have been handled.
- Training courses have been provided for more than 1,500 trainers at the national level by various trade unions and union bodies throughout the country in order to provide support, particularly for those sectors most lacking in protection.

Although it is a system which focuses on the worker, proof of its effectiveness as a deterrent lies in the number of staff who use it to solve the problems caused by errors in records and the resulting “red lights” which appear in the application and “give a negative company image”. The “my contributions” software thus constitutes a tool which provides workers with direct access to their records, reminding contributors that they cannot act with impunity, as well as providing the tax administration with a tool to generate risk profiles based on the claims made by those same workers.
CRITERIA 5

What lessons have been learned? To what extent would your good practice be appropriate for replication by other social security institutions?

The Federal Administration of Public Resources (Administración Federal de Ingresos Públicos (AFIP)) in Argentina operates on the basis of a "one-stop" system which provides it with an effective and efficient administration of centralized information for the information registration procedures, collection (including registration) and dissemination of the pertinent data to all the social security actors (public and private). Any tax administration can implement this system, taking into account that the benefits of the "one-stop" agency can be achieved through inter-organizational cooperation agreements.

The reduced cost of the equipment needed for data management (servers, data bases, etc.) combined with the spread of internet access, make this a low-cost project while nevertheless providing a nation-wide service with no increase in the number of local agencies or in the staff needed to run them.