

International Network for Knowledge and Comparative Socioeconomic Analysis of Informality

and the policies to be implemented for its formalisation in the European Unión and Latin America

COORDINATOR: Santos M. Ruesga, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid
www.inseai.eu



INSEAI NEWSLETTER

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Project & Network Highlights | December 2025

December marked the closing of an intense year for the INSEAI network, combining academic exchange, methodological advances and ongoing collective efforts around one of the project's core pillars: the construction of a shared database on informality.

Throughout the month, lectures and discussions addressed key dimensions of informality—from measurement and sustainability to care work, tourism and digital platforms—while new podcast and video content continued to expand the network's outreach. At the same time, the **INSEAI Survey on Employment and Wages** entered a crucial phase, with data collection underway across countries and an open call for broader participation from the network.



QR code linking to the INSEAI Survey on employment and wages, open to anonymous participation.

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Network Cooperation: Learning and debating across universities

Several INSEAI Lectures structured the academic agenda in December.

On **15 December**, a lecture hosted at **Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ)** and online brought together **Adriana AnaMaria Davidescu** and **Diana Marina Agafitei** (Bucharest University of Economic Studies – BUES). Their presentation introduced new advances in measuring the shadow economy in Central and Eastern Europe, combining enhanced Currency Demand Approach techniques with dynamic panel models to better capture regional dynamics.

INSEAI 2023 - LECTURE
FROM NATIONAL SYSTEMS TO REGIONAL REALITIES:
NEW ADVANCES IN MEASURING THE SHADOW ECONOMY IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE USING CURRENCY DEMAND AND DYNAMIC PANEL METHODS


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2023


Funded by the European Union

 December 15th, 2023
15:00 (Brazil) / 19:00 (CET)

Place: UFRJ / online
[Link to Meet](#)

ABSTRACT
The lecture presents two empirical studies on measuring the shadow economy in Central and Eastern Europe using enhanced Currency Demand Approach techniques and dynamic panel models. The first study analyses 13 CEE countries (1995-2022) and shows that taxation and enforcement capacity are the main long-run drivers of excess currency demand, indicating that meaningful reductions in informality require strong institutional enforcement. The second study estimates regional (NUTS-2) shadow economy levels in 11 CEE EU countries, revealing significant intra-country disparities linked to regional enforcement, labour market structures, and financial inclusion. Together, the studies provide an integrated framework connecting national determinants with regional heterogeneity in informality. The session will be held in English.

More information: INSEAI2023@uam.es
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INSEAI Lecture on new approaches to measuring the shadow economy in Central and Eastern Europe, December 15.

Earlier in the month, on **11 December**, **Vasile Strat** (BUES) delivered a lecture from **Universidad Católica Argentina (UCA)** examining how informality affects ESG scores in Europe. The session explored the role of institutional weaknesses linked to informal activity and their implications for sustainability assessments and policy design.

On **12 December**, the **University of Valencia** hosted a lecture by **María Leonela Artavia** and **Shirley Benavides** (Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica – UNA), focusing on the implications of unpaid care work for labour market participation, informality and female poverty. The discussion highlighted the gendered dimensions of informality and their relevance for social and labour policies.

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Discussion Series

The INSEAI Discussion Series remained particularly active in December, with a strong focus on Costa Rica.

On **9 December**, **Maria Leonela Artavia** presented an analysis of job insecurity among delivery workers for digital platforms in the Costa Rican Metropolitan Area. Based on survey data covering six dimensions of job insecurity, the discussion placed the Costa Rican case within broader global debates on digitalisation, labour rights and regulatory responses.



Maria Leonela Artavia presenting her research on job insecurity among digital platform delivery workers in Costa Rica during an INSEAI Discussion held on 9 December, with Professor Santos Ruesga, INSEAI project coordinator, also taking part in the session.

Later, on **17 December**, **Shirley Benavides** led a discussion on informal employment in tourism-related activities in Costa Rica's Central Pacific region. The study examined working conditions, occupational health risks, environmental impacts and institutional barriers to formalisation in a region characterised by high inequality and persistent informality. The session adopted a multidisciplinary and mixed-methods approach and included simultaneous translation to facilitate participation.

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INSEAI Survey: Data Collection Underway

Data collection for the **INSEAI Survey on Employment and Wages** continued throughout December. While several hundred questionnaires have already been completed, participation remains uneven across countries, making the involvement of the entire network especially important at this stage.

The survey is multilingual and open to a wide range of respondents, with particular emphasis on reaching contexts where informality is more widespread. To encourage participation, the survey includes a prize draw of **€100 Amazon gift cards**, and dissemination through personal, institutional and social networks is strongly encouraged.

The Christmas period, with increased social interaction, offers an opportunity to further expand outreach and help strengthen the empirical foundation of the INSEAI database.

New Initiatives: Podcasts & Testimonies

December also brought new audiovisual content.

A new episode of **INFORMAL TALKS**, the INSEAI podcast, featured **Pablo Granovsky**, who reflected on work in the digital economy, the role of trade unions and public policies, and the challenges of achieving a fair technological transition. The episode is available on **YouTube** and **Spotify**.



Behind the scenes of the INSEAI podcast INFORMAL TALKS, with
Pablo Granovsky.

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In addition, the **INSEAI Testimony Collection** expanded with a new contribution by [**Matthias Schulze-Böing**](#) (GEWAK, Germany), adding further comparative insight into national experiences of informality and labour market governance.

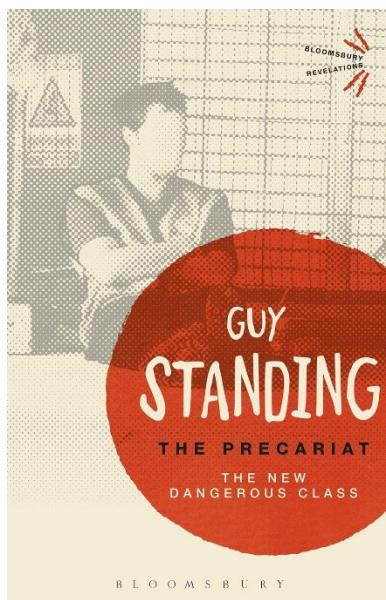
Looking Ahead: Academic Networks and Conferences

As the year comes to a close, attention also turns to upcoming international academic events. In this context, the [**SASE Conference**](#), to be held in **Bordeaux in July 2026**, represents an important opportunity for members of the INSEAI network to engage with broader debates on socio-economics, labour and institutions, and to disseminate project-related research in an international forum.

Cultural Corner: Recommended Reading

[***The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class***](#) (Guy Standing; Bloomsbury, 2021).

This widely read book explores the rise of the “precariat” as a global social class shaped by insecure, informal and unstable forms of work. Written in an accessible style, it connects labour market transformations, informality and social policy, offering a broad framework that remains highly relevant to current debates on work and inequality.



Guy Standing's *The Precariat*, a key reference on labour insecurity and precarious work. Bloomsbury (2021).

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