

Generation Z, the Flexibility–Security Trade-Off, and Hybrid Work Preferences: Evidence from the Czech Republic

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ABSTRACT

Research background: Public administration across Europe faces growing pressure to modernize employment frameworks in response to Generation Z, whose expectations regarding flexibility, autonomy, and meaningful work challenge traditional public-sector structures. While these dynamics are widely discussed, empirical evidence from Central and Eastern Europe remains limited.

Purpose of the article: This article examines work arrangement preferences of Generation Z in the Czech Republic and analyzes how the trade-off between flexibility and income stability shapes these preferences. It also evaluates implications for labour-market policy and public-sector workforce modernization.

Methods: The study is based on a quantitative survey of 317 respondents conducted in autumn 2025. Data were collected through an online questionnaire focusing on work preferences, flexibility orientation, income stability, and attitudes toward platform work. The analysis applies descriptive statistics and chi-square tests to examine associations between key variables.

Findings & Value added: The results show a strong preference for hybrid work arrangements combining stability with flexibility. While flexibility is highly valued, it does not translate into significant interest in platform work, which is perceived mainly as a supplementary activity. Respondents prioritizing flexibility are more open to alternative work forms, whereas those emphasizing income stability prefer traditional employment. Importantly, Generation Z does not perceive flexibility and security as mutually exclusive but seeks balanced employment models. The study also finds support for moderate regulation of platform work, emphasizing the role of public institutions in ensuring protection without limiting flexibility. These findings highlight the need for labour-market policies that integrate structured flexibility with social protection and for public administration to adopt hybrid work models to remain competitive. The paper contributes to debates on labour-market transformation, public-sector modernization, and economic policy.

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INTRODUCTION

Across Europe, public administration and public policy face growing pressure to modernize employment frameworks in response to the expectations of a new generation entering the labor market. Generation Z (born approximately between 1997 and 2012) represents the first fully digital-native cohort whose orientation toward flexibility, autonomy, meaningful work, and continuous development challenges longstanding norms of stability, hier-

rarchy, and formalized procedures typical for public-sector employment.

Understanding how Generation Z perceives work is thus crucial not only for private organizations but also for public institutions, which increasingly compete with the private sector for qualified young talent. Public administration must navigate a dual mandate: maintain continuity, accountability, and service reliability while simultaneously introducing more adaptive, flexible, and attractive work models. This creates a strategic tension in workforce policy—one in which preferences of young workers regarding flexibility versus income stability play a decisive role.

Existing research suggests that Generation Z is motivated by meaningful work, purpose, and opportunities for growth-values inherently compatible with public service missions (Seemiller & Grace, 2019). At the same time, young people expect flexible scheduling, hybrid arrangements, and autonomy in task execution (Eurofound, 2021). These expectations increasingly influence the competitiveness of the public sector as an employer, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, where public administration traditionally relies on fixed working hours and standardized employment structures.

In the Czech Republic, these dynamics are particularly salient. The labor market is characterized by low unemployment, diversification of work forms, and rapid digitalization, all of which create new pressures on institutional practices. Yet, systematic research on Generation Z's preferences within this specific context-and especially their implications for public-sector workforce modernization-is still limited. Most literature arises from Western countries where public-sector HR reforms are more advanced (Berg et al., 2018). This highlights the need to understand how Czech Generation Z workers evaluate flexibility and stability, and how these preferences shape their openness to traditional, hybrid, or emerging work arrangements.

To address this gap, the present study builds directly on the original research questions formulated for this article:

- **RQ1:** What types of work arrangements does Generation Z in the Czech Republic prefer?
- **RQ2:** How do preferences for flexibility versus income stability shape these choices and relate to openness to emerging forms of work?

The study further tests the following hypotheses:

- **H1:** A higher preference for flexibility is positively associated with willingness to engage in platform work.
- **H2:** Individuals emphasizing income stability are more likely to prefer traditional employment over gig economy arrangements.

By analyzing survey data from 317 respondents, this article provides evidence relevant not only for labor market studies but also for public administration and public policy. The findings contribute to ongoing debates about public-sector attractiveness, the modernization of HR practices, and the institutional conditions needed to support hybrid work models while preserving the stability central to public service delivery.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Generation Z and Work Values in the Context of Public Administration

The analysis is grounded in several complementary theoretical perspectives reflected in the existing literature. The concept of flexicurity highlights the need to balance labour-market flexibility with social protection, particularly

in the context of changing employment forms (European Commission, 2020; Eurofound, 2021). At the same time, research on Generation Z emphasises that young workers simultaneously value autonomy, flexibility, and meaningful work, while also seeking income stability and security (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Deloitte, 2023). From an organisational perspective, these expectations can be interpreted in line with broader human resource management discussions on adapting employment practices to evolving workforce preferences (OECD, 2022; Eurofound, 2023).

Together, these perspectives suggest that Generation Z is likely to favour work arrangements that combine flexibility with institutional stability, rather than prioritising one dimension over the other.

Generation Z, typically defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, is the first cohort to have grown up fully immersed in digital technologies, online communication, and globalized social environments (Frombergerová & Brémová, 2026; Jayatissa, 2023; Wajdi et al., 2024). This digital upbringing has shaped their expectations regarding education, careers, and lifestyle choices (Seemiller & Grace, 2016; 2019). Compared to previous generations, they tend to be simultaneously pragmatic-seeking financial independence-and idealistic, valuing autonomy, flexibility, meaningful work, and personal growth (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Berc, 2021; Schroth, 2019).

These value orientations are particularly relevant for public administration. While the public sector traditionally emphasizes stability, formality, and standardized processes, Generation Z increasingly seeks workplaces offering purpose-driven activities, supportive organizational cultures, and opportunities for rapid skill development (Peredy et al., 2024). Survey findings show that flexibility, mental health support, and meaningful work often outrank salary among their priorities (Deloitte, 2023). This shift affects the ability of public institutions to attract young professionals, especially in domains where they compete with private employers offering more adaptive work conditions.

Continuous learning and professional development also play a central role in Gen Z expectations. OECD (2022) reports that young workers increasingly prefer roles enabling reskilling, rotation, and experimentation-features not always naturally embedded in public-sector structures. At the same time, Generation Z expresses strong interest in contributing to societal good, sustainability, and organizational missions (Eurofound, 2023; World Economic Forum, 2022). Public administration inherently aligns with these values, but institutional rigidity may hinder this potential advantage.

Overall, Gen Z emerges as a cohort navigating both aspirational and pragmatic needs: they seek stable income and job security, yet are unwilling to sacrifice autonomy and meaningful engagement (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). This duality makes them especially relevant to debates

about the modernization of public-sector employment and public workforce policy.

Flexibility versus Income Security: Implications for Public-Sector Employment

The trade-off between flexibility and income security is a central theme in contemporary labor-market research, particularly in the context of digitalization and evolving employment norms. Flexibility is associated with autonomy, work–life balance, and adaptability, while income security provides predictability, reliable pay, and access to social protections (Eurofound, 2021). For public administration—traditionally designed around stable, long-term employment—the increasing demand for flexibility presents a structural challenge.

Research shows that flexible work arrangements can increase job satisfaction and productivity, but only when implemented with adequate protections and clear expectations (Chung & van der Horst, 2020). If flexibility is poorly regulated, it risks generating precarity, uneven workloads, and reduced employee well-being—risks that public administration must avoid due to its responsibility for service continuity and equal treatment.

Income security remains particularly valued by young workers in uncertain economic environments. Studies indicate that despite their desire for autonomy, youth continue to prioritize secure employment contracts (OECD, 2020). Therefore, the appeal of public-sector jobs—traditionally known for employment stability—remains strong. However, if stability is paired with rigid working conditions, insufficient career progression, or limited autonomy, public-sector attractiveness may decline among Gen Z.

Recent studies show increasing interest in hybrid models combining flexibility with higher degrees of protection (Rouvroye et al., 2023). Likewise, discrete-choice experiments confirm that workers are often willing to trade some wage benefits for predictable and secure work conditions (Jost & Möser, 2023). These insights underscore the need for public institutions to innovate within HR frameworks—integrating selected elements of flexibility without undermining accountability and reliability.

Policy debates on “flexicurity” illustrate the challenge of balancing autonomy with institutional protection (European Commission, 2020). Central and Eastern European countries—including the Czech Republic—have made slower progress toward flexible arrangements in public administration (Wallace, 2023). This context makes the study of Czech Generation Z particularly relevant.

In the Czech Republic, these dynamics are shaped by specific institutional characteristics of the labour market and public administration. Public-sector employment remains relatively stable and structured, typically characterised by fixed working hours, formalised procedures, and limited flexibility compared to the private sector. While these features ensure predictability and accountability, they may reduce the attractiveness of public-sector ca-

reers for younger cohorts seeking more adaptive work arrangements.

At the same time, the Czech labour market has been marked by the widespread use of non-standard forms of work, including dependent self-employment (commonly referred to as the “švarcsystém”). In such arrangements, individuals are formally self-employed but operate under conditions similar to standard employment, often working for a single client. This practice reflects a structural tension between flexibility and security, as it allows for cost and organisational flexibility while weakening social protection and employment stability.

For Generation Z, this institutional context is particularly relevant, as it shapes both perceived opportunities and risks associated with different work arrangements. Understanding these structural conditions is therefore essential for interpreting young workers’ preferences and their attitudes toward flexibility, stability, and regulation.

2.3 Emerging Work Arrangements and Hybrid Models in Public Administration

The boundaries between standard and non-standard work have become increasingly fluid. Hybrid employment structures—combining elements of traditional contracts, freelance activities, platform-mediated tasks, and project-based work—are gaining traction across Europe (Eurofound, 2020; Aliu, 2022). These models offer individuals ways to balance secure income with personal autonomy.

Digitalization has accelerated these developments. Remote work, telework technologies, and digital collaboration tools are now integral in many sectors, including the public sector. Generation Z, in particular, demonstrates readiness to embrace hybrid and diversified career paths, as these align with their expectations for flexibility and skill diversification (OECD, 2021).

Although platform work itself is largely incompatible with public-sector roles, the underlying drivers of its appeal—autonomy, time flexibility, digital proficiency—mirror broader expectations that public institutions must acknowledge. Empirical evidence shows that an increasing share of young adults supplement formal employment with freelance work or digital platform tasks (Eurofound, 2022). Public-sector HR strategies must therefore recognize that hybrid professional identities are becoming the norm rather than the exception.

Hybrid work brings opportunities—resilience, adaptability, and higher engagement—but also institutional risks. Fragmented income streams, unclear protections, or inconsistent working conditions can undermine social-security systems (Eurofound, 2020). Public administration must carefully navigate these risks to maintain fairness, service continuity, and legal compliance.

Nevertheless, hybrid models present a promising direction for public institutions. Research shows that combining stable employment with structured flexibility supports both employee satisfaction and organizational performance (Kalleberg, 2021; Howcroft & Bergvall-Kåreborn,

2019). For policymakers, this underscores the need to modernize labor regulations and expand social protection frameworks to accommodate multi-sourced or hybrid careers.

Based on the theoretical discussion, the relationship between flexibility, income security, and emerging forms of work can be conceptualised as a trade-off shaped by individual preferences and institutional conditions. Flexible work arrangements, including platform-based work, are typically associated with higher autonomy but lower levels of income stability and social protection. Conversely, traditional employment provides greater security but often limits flexibility.

From this perspective, individuals who prioritise flexibility are expected to be more open to non-standard forms of work, as these arrangements better align with their preference for autonomy. In contrast, individuals who emphasise income stability are expected to prefer traditional employment structures that ensure predictable income and institutional protection.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE, METHODOLOGY AND DATA

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study examines how members of Generation Z in the Czech Republic perceive different forms of work arrangements and how they negotiate the trade-off between flexibility and income stability—an issue increasingly relevant for labor-market policy and for public-sector workforce planning. The research focuses on the following questions:

- **RQ1:** What types of work arrangements does Generation Z in the Czech Republic prefer?
- **RQ2:** How do flexibility and income security shape their job choices?

Based on these questions, two hypotheses were formulated:

- **H1:** A higher preference for flexibility is positively associated with willingness to engage in platform work.
- **H2:** Individuals emphasizing income stability are more likely to prefer traditional employment over gig-economy arrangements.

These hypotheses reflect theoretical debates on flexibility, security, and emerging forms of work, and they are directly relevant to current public-policy discussions around labor-market regulation and public-sector employer attractiveness.

The study employs a quantitative survey design, suitable for identifying patterns in Gen Z preferences and testing relationships between flexibility orientation, stability preferences, and openness to platform-based work. A structured questionnaire allowed for standardized data collection and subsequent statistical analysis.

This design also enables the examination of variables that are of interest to public administration and labor-

market policy, including attitudes toward state regulation of platform work and perceptions of meaningfulness in employment.

Research Sample and Data Collection

The empirical data for this study were collected through an online survey targeting individuals belonging to Generation Z, defined here as those born between 1997 and 2012. In total, the dataset comprises responses from 317 participants residing in the Czech Republic. Recruitment was carried out through university mailing lists, social-media platforms and youth-oriented online communities, enabling access to a diverse group of young people at different stages of education and early labour-market involvement. The sample includes full-time and part-time employees, students engaged in occasional work and respondents not currently participating in the labour market, thereby reflecting the variety of employment pathways typical for this age cohort.

Data collection took place in the autumn of 2025 through an online questionnaire consisting of 34 items covering work preferences, financial attitudes, lifestyle behaviour, education and digital habits. The questionnaire was distributed via the university information system, social media platforms, and QR codes placed within university premises. A total of 317 students from Ambis University participated in the survey.

For the purpose of this article, only the items relevant to the analysed variables—work flexibility, income preferences, platform-work attitudes and basic sociodemographic characteristics—were used and are included in the Appendix. Selected questions were measured using ordinal or Likert-type scales, while others offered single- or multiple-choice options to capture respondents' orientations and experiences. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the research prior to completing the questionnaire.

The sampling strategy reflects a convenience approach based on online distribution through university channels and social media. This method may introduce selection bias, particularly through the overrepresentation of students and digitally active individuals, as well as respondents with a higher interest in flexible forms of work. As a result, the sample cannot be considered representative of the entire Generation Z population in the Czech Republic. The findings should therefore be interpreted as exploratory and indicative rather than generalisable.

Variables and Analytical Methods

The study employs a structured set of variables and analytical procedures to examine how members of Generation Z navigate contemporary labour-market conditions and to explore the implications of their work preferences for public policy and labour-market governance. The operationalisation reflects both behavioural factors and attitudes relevant to the regulation of non-standard and platform-based forms of work. The analysis is based on the following variables:

Independent variables:

- preference for flexibility
- preference for income stability
- perceived importance of meaningful work

Dependent variables:

- willingness to engage in platform work
- preference for traditional vs. gig-economy employment
- attitudes toward regulation of platform work

Control variables:

- gender
- education
- prior experience with platform work

Key variables were operationalised using a combination of Likert-type scales and categorical indicators. For example, the importance of flexibility and income stability was measured using ordinal scales, while preferences for employment types and willingness to engage in platform work were captured through categorical response options. This approach allows for the identification of patterns in work preferences while maintaining consistency with the exploratory nature of the study.

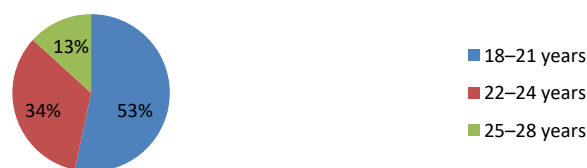
The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, proportions, means, and standard deviations) were used to summarise key characteristics of the sample. Chi-square tests of independence were applied to examine associations between categorical variables and to test the proposed hypotheses.

Reliability and validity were supported through a pilot test involving 25 respondents, which examined the clarity, structure, and comprehensibility of the questionnaire. Internal consistency-where applicable-was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with values of 0.70 or higher considered acceptable. The measurement approach was informed by existing literature and designed to capture key constructs relevant to the study. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous, respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and provided informed consent, and all data were handled in accordance with GDPR requirements and commonly accepted ethical standards in social-science research.

RESULTS**Descriptive Statistics**

The research sample consisted of 317 respondents from Generation Z (born 1997–2012). As presented in Figure 1, the age distribution shows that more than half of respondents (53 %) were between 18–21 years old, while one third (34 %) belonged to the 22–24 age group. A smaller proportion (13 %) were 25–28, indicating that most participants were either entering or were in the early stages of their labor-market experience.

Figure 1: Age structure of respondents



Source: own research

Regarding current work status, the data reveal that Generation Z is already highly active in the labor market, albeit often through non-standard forms of employment (Figure 2). The largest segment reported working part-time (36 %), followed by full-time employees (21 %). A notable share (19 %) indicated that they were exclusively studying, while occasional or temporary work was reported by 14 % of participants. The remaining 10 % identified other forms of employment.

Figure 2: Current employment status of respondents



Source: own research

These findings underline that although a significant proportion of Generation Z remains in education, many are already participating in the labor market through flexible or transitional arrangements. For public-policy and public-administration contexts, this is relevant because it reflects an early tendency toward diversified employment pathways – an important consideration for designing youth employment policies and for public-sector recruitment strategies.

Preferences for Work Arrangements

When asked about their ideal type of income, respondents expressed a clear preference for hybrid arrangements combining the stability of employment with the independence associated with personal projects (Figure 3). Almost half (46 %) selected such hybrid income as the most desirable option.

A further 27 % preferred a stable job with fixed salary and working hours, highlighting that predictable income remains an important determinant for many young workers-especially those at the start of their careers.

By contrast, 19 % favored a fully flexible income model, even at the cost of greater uncertainty, suggesting an entrepreneurial orientation among a minority of respondents. Finally, 8 % stated that their preferences depend on specific circumstances, indicating a pragmatic approach to employment choices.

These findings directly address RQ1, demonstrating that Generation Z in the Czech Republic tends to prefer employment models that balance stability and autonomy rather than committing exclusively to either. This insight

is particularly relevant for public administration, where hybrid arrangements may increase the attractiveness of public-sector work without compromising institutional stability.

Figure 3: Ideal type of income among Generation Z respondents



Source: own research

At the same time, it is important to emphasise that respondents' preference for combined income streams also reflects several persistent challenges in the Czech labour market—most notably the widespread use of bogus self-employment (commonly referred to as *švarcsystém*). According to the latest data from the Czech Social Security Administration, as of 30 September 2025 there were 1,182,086 self-employed individuals (ČSSZ, 2025), while the total labour force in the Czech Republic, based on the most recent measurement, amounted to 5,563,258 (ČSÚ, 2021). This situation also creates potential vulnerabilities for the tax base and the sustainability of social-security funding. For this reason, public authorities may need to intensify oversight of misclassified work arrangements and consider policy measures that reduce the economic appeal of bogus self-employment for employers and workers alike. This phenomenon illustrates the blurred boundary between standard and non-standard employment and highlights the complexity of balancing flexibility and security in the Czech labour market. In this sense, it represents an important contextual factor when analysing Generation Z work preferences, particularly in relation to hybrid and platform-based work arrangements.

Flexibility versus Income Security (RQ2, H1, H2)

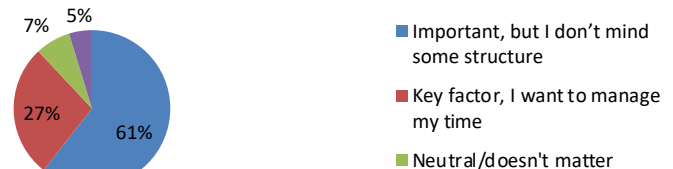
A large majority of respondents considered flexibility to be either important (61 %) or a key factor (27 %) in their work decisions (Figure 4). Only a small minority perceived flexibility as neutral (7 %) or unimportant, instead prioritizing security (5 %). These results confirm that autonomy in managing time and tasks is central to how Generation Z conceptualizes desirable employment conditions.

When examining interest in platform work, however, the findings reveal a more nuanced pattern (Figure 5). Nearly half of respondents (46 %) preferred traditional employment, and 43 % reported that while they were not interested in platforms, they would consider other forms of flexible work. Only 10 % expressed active interest in platform-based employment, and just 1 % were currently engaged in it.

To examine the relationship between flexibility preferences and openness to platform work, a chi-square test of

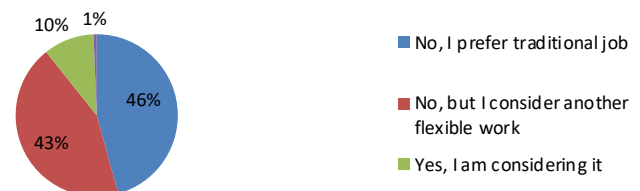
independence was conducted. The association was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 47.56$, $df = 9$, $p < 0.001$), with a moderate effect size (Cramer's $V = 0.22$). This indicates that flexibility preferences are meaningfully associated with openness to platform work, although the strength of the relationship is moderate. Respondents who perceived flexibility as crucial or important were more likely to consider platform work, whereas those prioritising income security tended to prefer traditional employment. However, the findings reflect associations rather than causal relationships. These findings are consistent with H1.

Figure 4: Importance of flexibility



Source: own research

Figure 5: Interest in platform work



Source: own research

A more detailed look at the distribution of responses shows that respondents who rated flexibility as highly important were more frequently represented among those willing to consider platform work or other flexible arrangements. In contrast, individuals who placed less emphasis on flexibility were more strongly concentrated in the group preferring traditional employment.

Similarly, the relationship between preferred income type and interest in platform work was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 59.52$, $df = 9$, $p < 0.001$), with a moderate effect size (Cramer's $V = 0.25$). This suggests that income preferences are associated with different employment orientations, with a moderate strength of association. Individuals preferring stable, fixed-salary employment were less likely to consider platform work, while those favouring hybrid or flexible income models showed greater openness to alternative work arrangements. As in the previous case, the findings indicate associations rather than causal effects. These findings are consistent with H2.

Similarly, the distribution of responses indicates that respondents who prioritised income stability were predominantly concentrated in the group preferring traditional employment, whereas those favouring hybrid or flexible income models were more evenly distributed across alternative work arrangements, including platform work.

Together, these findings address RQ2 by demonstrating that while Generation Z highly values flexibility, this does not automatically translate into an interest in platform employment. Rather, their preferences reflect a balanced

orientation: those who prioritize security gravitate toward traditional jobs, while those seeking autonomy are more open to hybrid models and, to a lesser extent, platform work.

From a public-policy perspective, these results highlight the need to design employment frameworks and social-protection systems that accommodate diverse work preferences while ensuring adequate stability and protection for young workers. For public administration, the findings underscore the importance of offering structured flexibility to attract younger cohorts without compromising accountability and service reliability.

The findings regarding respondents' interest in working through digital labour platforms can be further complemented by the follow-up question (labelled as the eighth question in the article), which examined whether young people perceive platform work as a temporary or long-term form of employment. This additional insight helps contextualize their motivations and clarifies how platform work fits into the broader employment preferences of Generation Z.

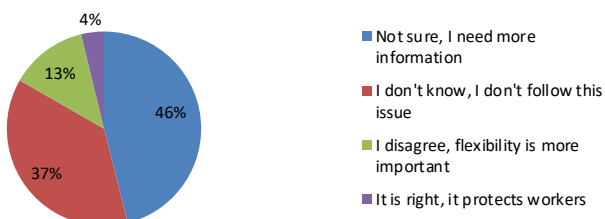
The most common response indicated that platform work is viewed as dependent on circumstances, chosen by 36% of respondents. Another 27% consider it exclusively a short-term side income, reinforcing the interpretation that platform work is perceived mainly as a supplementary activity. 26% reported that they do not consider platform work at all, while only 10% see it as a potential long-term source of income.

These findings complement the results of the main question on willingness to undertake platform work. They show that the low overall interest in platform-based employment is shaped not only by a preference for stability and income security, but also by the fact that most young people do not view platform work as a sustainable or long-term career option.

This pattern is consistent with theoretical expectations suggesting that individuals seek to balance flexibility with income security rather than prioritising one dimension exclusively.

Attitudes Toward Regulation of Platform Work

Figure 6: Attitudes toward regulation of platform work



Source: own research

Figure 6 presents respondents' views on the appropriate level of state regulation of platform work. The results show that Generation Z tends to support moderate and balanced regulatory approaches. A substantial share of respondents favored the view that the state should ensure basic protections—such as transparent working condi-

tions, fair pay standards, and minimum safety requirements—while still allowing platforms to maintain operational flexibility. Only a small minority preferred either no regulation or strict intervention.

These findings complement previous results by illustrating that although young people value flexibility, they do not support fully deregulated labor markets. Instead, they expect public institutions to play a protective and corrective role, ensuring that flexible work arrangements do not lead to excessive precarity. This insight is particularly relevant for public-policy discussions surrounding platform governance and reflects broader European debates about how to regulate emerging forms of work while maintaining both innovation and worker security.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide important insights into how Generation Z in the Czech Republic evaluates work arrangements, balancing preferences for autonomy with expectations of income security. These insights have broader implications not only for employers in the private sector but also for public administration, which increasingly competes for young talent in a diversifying labor market.

First, the strong preference for hybrid work arrangements—combining stable employment with opportunities for personal projects—indicates that Generation Z does not conceptualize flexibility and stability as mutually exclusive categories. Rather, respondents seek employment forms that allow them to maintain predictable income while retaining autonomy over parts of their professional life. This aligns with recent European findings showing that younger workers prefer blended models of work that support experimentation while ensuring a foundational level of security (Jost et al., 2023; Eurofound, 2023).

Second, the results confirm that flexibility is widely valued, yet it does not automatically translate into openness to platform-based or gig work. Although flexibility is perceived as a key attribute of quality employment by most respondents, only a small share expressed interest in platform work. This supports the argument that platform-based arrangements may be perceived as offering insufficient security or insufficient alignment with long-term developmental goals, despite their flexibility. These findings reinforce research indicating that young employees favor flexibility within structured and regulated environments, not at the expense of stability (Chung & van der Horst, 2020).

The significant associations found through chi-square analysis further validate the hypotheses. Individuals with a high preference for flexibility were indeed more likely to consider platform work (H1 supported), whereas those prioritizing income stability preferred traditional, secure employment (H2 supported). Importantly, however, even respondents with strong flexibility preferences still favored hybrid employment over purely platform-based

arrangements. This suggests a nuanced preference structure: Generation Z values autonomy but continues to rely on stable institutional frameworks to mitigate economic uncertainty.

A third important insight relates to attitudes toward state regulation of platform work. Respondents expressed support for moderate regulatory measures that protect workers while maintaining operational flexibility. This illustrates a broader generational expectation that public institutions should act as guarantors of fairness, transparency, and minimum protections in emerging labor markets. For policymakers, this implies that maintaining a balanced regulatory environment may be crucial to ensuring the sustainability and societal legitimacy of platform work as it expands.

Overall, the study demonstrates that Generation Z prioritizes a balanced and institutionally supported model of flexibility, rather than a deregulated or fully entrepreneurial labor market. This has direct implications for public administration, which must reconcile the stability inherent in public service with the growing demand for individualized, flexible work arrangements.

These findings can be interpreted through the lens of flexicurity, which emphasises the balance between flexibility and security in modern labour markets. The preference for hybrid work arrangements reflects an attempt to reconcile these two dimensions rather than prioritise one over the other. Similarly, from the perspective of psychological contract theory, Generation Z appears to expect both autonomy and stability as part of a balanced employment relationship.

The limited attractiveness of platform work as a primary source of income further supports this interpretation. Although platform work offers flexibility, it may fail to meet expectations related to stability and long-term development. This highlights the importance of structured flexibility, particularly in institutional settings such as public administration.

An important contribution of the study is the finding that platform work is predominantly perceived as a supplementary rather than primary form of employment, which adds nuance to existing debates on the role of the platform economy in youth labour markets.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how Generation Z in the Czech Republic evaluates various work arrangements, with a particular focus on the tension between flexibility and income stability. The results highlight that young workers overwhelmingly prefer hybrid models that blend the security of traditional employment with the autonomy of flexible or personal project-based work. While flexibility is highly valued, it does not necessarily lead to interest in platform work, which remains attractive only to a minority of respondents.

The findings confirmed both research hypotheses. A higher preference for flexibility was associated with greater

openness to platform work, while individuals prioritizing income stability preferred traditional employment. However, the dominant preference for hybrid arrangements indicates that Generation Z seeks a balanced approach, minimizing economic risk while retaining opportunities for self-direction and meaningful engagement.

These insights have several implications for public administration and labour-market policy. Based on the finding that respondents strongly prefer hybrid work arrangements combining stability with flexibility, the results suggest that public-sector employers may benefit from introducing forms of structured flexibility—such as hybrid work, remote-work options, and individualized career development pathways—while maintaining the stability and accountability that characterize public service.

Given that flexibility does not translate into a strong interest in platform work, but is instead preferred within stable institutional frameworks, the findings indicate that policies supporting balanced employment models may be more aligned with the expectations of Generation Z than approaches based on fully flexible or deregulated labour markets.

Furthermore, the observed preference for moderate regulation of platform work suggests that young workers expect public institutions to play a protective role. In this context, the results point to the potential relevance of adapting social-protection systems to better reflect hybrid or multi-stream income structures. They also indicate that addressing structural challenges—such as the persistence of bogus self-employment in the Czech labour market—may contribute to improving both fairness and the sustainability of social-security systems. However, these implications should be interpreted with caution given the exploratory nature of the study.

These findings are consistent with theoretical perspectives such as flexicurity and human resource flexibility, which emphasise the importance of balancing adaptability with institutional stability in contemporary labour markets.

Future research should investigate how these preferences evolve as Generation Z gains more experience in the labour market and how institutional reforms in public administration can incorporate flexibility without compromising public service standards. Comparative studies across European countries may also provide deeper insights into how institutional contexts shape generational attitudes toward work and regulation.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings. First, the data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed via university channels and social media, which corresponds to a convenience sampling approach. As a result, the sample may overrepresent digitally active individuals and students, particularly those affiliated with Ambis University.

Second, the findings are based on self-reported data and reflect stated preferences rather than observed behaviour, which may be influenced by social desirability or limited labour-market experience.

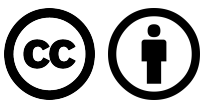
Third, the sample is not representative of the entire Generation Z population in the Czech Republic. Therefore, the results should be interpreted as exploratory and indicative rather than generalisable. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into emerging work preferences among young people and offers a basis for further research in this area.

These limitations reduce the generalisability of the findings and should be taken into account when interpreting the results.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Methodology H. B.; Formal analysis H. B.; Investigation H. B. and L. F.; Resources H. B. and L. F.; Data curation, H. B.; Writing-original draft preparation, H. B. and L. F.; writing-review and editing L. F.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets used and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest. The funders had no role in the design of the study; in the collection, analyses, or interpretation of data; in the writing of the manuscript; or in the decision to publish the results.

AI DISCLOSURE

The authors did not use artificial intelligence in preparing this article.

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