


# Work Organization and Social Responsibility on Digital Platforms: Challenges and Best Practices in Europe


**Rita Remeikienė**

Vilnius university, Law faculty,  
Lithuania  
rita.remeikiene@tf.vu.lt

 0000-0002-3369-485X


**Ligita Gasparėnienė**

Vilnius university, Law faculty,  
Lithuania  
ligita.gasparenienė@tf.vu.lt

 0000-0002-5535-6552

**Jolita Česiulytė**

Mykolas Romeris University,  
Faculty of Public Governance and  
Business, Vilnius, Lithuania  
jolita.cesiulyte@lmt.lt

 0009-0009-2071-4258

## ABSTRACT

**Research background:** Digital platforms have reshaped labor markets by introducing flexible work models such as crowdwork, gig work, and outsourcing. These models create economic opportunities but also legal uncertainties regarding employment status, workers' rights, and regulatory oversight. While previous research has largely focused on platform workers, less attention has been given to platform managers' role in fair labor practices and corporate social responsibility (CSR).

**Purpose of the article:** This study examines the organization and management of work on digital platforms, focusing on regulatory challenges, employment ambiguities, and CSR in platform labor practices. Additionally, it analyzes best practices from European platforms that integrate social dialogue, enhance worker protection, and improve compliance with labor laws.

**Methods:** The research employs systematic and comparative literature analysis to evaluate studies on platform work, focusing on legal issues and CSR in digital labor markets. It reviews European legal frameworks, particularly Directive (EU) 2024/2831 and the Digital Services Act, to assess their impact on platform governance. Furthermore, it conducts an empirical analysis of good practices, highlighting cases of collective bargaining and social responsibility initiatives in European platforms. By comparing regulatory approaches and corporate initiatives, this study identifies key factors contributing to fairer labor conditions in the platform economy.

**Findings & Value added:** Digital platforms operate in legal "grey zones," allowing them to bypass labor laws and limit worker protections. Many platforms fail to ensure fair wages, social security, and transparent communication, while algorithmic management raises concerns over worker autonomy. Collective bargaining and social dialogue have proven effective in improving conditions, with Austria, Denmark, and Sweden securing better wages through formal agreements. Spain's enforcement against Glovo highlights the necessity of legal intervention, as voluntary measures alone are insufficient. Germany's worker-led cooperatives offer an alternative model, strengthening worker bargaining power. However, regulatory fragmentation across the EU leads to unequal protections. Social dialogue and legal enforcement must be combined to balance flexibility with fair labor conditions.

**RECEIVED:** Januar 22 ☉ **ACCEPTED:** March 17 ☉ **PUBLISHED ONLINE:** June 30

**KEYWORDS:** platform work, digitalization, corporate social responsibility, labor rights, regulatory challenges, collective bargaining

**JEL CLASSIFICATION:** J81, J88, K31, J41

**CITATION:** Remeikienė, R., Gasparėnienė, L., & Česiulytė, J. (2025). Work Organization and Social Responsibility on Digital Platforms: Challenges and Best Practices in Europe. *Journal of Business Sectors*, 3(1), 25–40. <https://doi.org/10.62222/TDGY8465>

## INTRODUCTION

As economic units, digital platforms create the basis for resource allocation, exchange and transactions in the market (Gossling & Hall, 2019), help distribute tasks between economic agents (sellers, intermediaries,

buyers) within an economic process (Fernandez-Macias, 2018), and use a decentralized labour resource as an input which helps to fulfil productive goals: to reduce the time of presenting a product to a consumer or providing a service to a client, standardising work, etc. (Idowu & El-

banna, 2020). Digital platform work is typically organized through different models, such as crowdwork, location-based gig work, and outsourcing structures, which offer flexibility but also raise concerns regarding employment status and workers' rights.

An owner or a manager of a digital platform (whether a natural or legal person) is also an economic agent who provides digital services or applications which facilitate market exchanges and transactions between suppliers and buyers. Thus, digital platforms contribute to generating a higher market value of a product or service (Saberian et al., 2020), and redistribute this value in new ecosystems (Kenney & Zysman, 2016). However, the way these platforms organize work and assume (or avoid) employer responsibilities significantly affects labour conditions and the broader socio-economic landscape.

By changing the traditional labour market landscape, digital platforms tend to transform the common modes of work, significantly affect work-related rights and opportunities, and promote self-organising. When analysing digital platform work, many previous studies tend to focus on the working conditions for platform workers (Forde et al., 2017; Berg et al., 2018; Rani & Dhir, 2020; Veen et al., 2020; ILO, ISSA & OECD, 2023, etc.), but literature is sorely lacking the studies to analyse the experience of digital platform managers as employers in terms of their social responsibility when organising and managing digital platform work. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) in this context includes fair pay, social security coverage, transparency in employment status, and compliance with labour rights. Understanding how platforms assume (or fail to assume) these responsibilities is crucial for shaping sustainable platform work policies.

Moreover, digital platforms face various regulatory challenges that influence their role as employers. The rapid development of EU legal instruments, such as Directive (EU) 2024/2831 and the Digital Services Act, aims to clarify employment relationships, enhance worker protections, and ensure fair platform governance. However, the implementation of these regulations varies across countries, leading to legal uncertainty and inconsistencies in platform labour practices. At the same time, some European platforms have already introduced good practices that enhance social dialogue, collective bargaining, and worker protections, offering valuable lessons for balancing flexibility and fair working conditions.

The findings of this research can provide valuable insights for both policymakers and digital platform operators in fostering a more balanced and sustainable platform work environment. For policymakers, this study sheds light on the "grey zones" of platform work, enabling more precise regulations, clearer responsibility frameworks, and stronger social protection measures. Additionally, the analysis helps assess the impact of EU legislative instruments on platform governance and highlights areas requiring further regulatory intervention. For digital platform operators, the study's conclusions can serve as a guide to adopting best practices that promote social dia-

logue and improve working conditions, ultimately contributing to long-term business stability, worker retention, and enhanced reputation.

The major purpose of this research is to analyze the specifics of work organization on digital platforms, emphasizing regulatory challenges, "grey zones" and the lack of social responsibility, as well as to examine best practice examples in Europe where platform employers strengthen workers' social protection, clarify their employment status, and promote education. To fulfil the defined purpose, the following objectives were set: 1) to discuss the specifics of work organisation and management on digital platforms with a focus on the "grey zones", legal regulation, and corporate social responsibility issues; 2) to highlight the main risks encountered by platforms as employers when managing platform activities, particularly in light of recent European legal instruments such as Directive (EU) 2024/2831 and the Digital Services Act; 3) to review the examples of good practices in Europe that demonstrate the existence of social dialogue and collective bargaining between digital platforms and platform workers in order to improve the social protection for platform workers, clarify their employment status, and promote regulatory awareness and education. The research methods include systematic and comparative literature analysis, a review of European legal frameworks, and good practice analysis.

The structure of the article is as follows: The next section provides a theoretical background, reviewing prior research on digital platform work and highlighting gaps related to platform employers' social responsibilities. A new chapter is introduced to present details about the comparative literature review. The subsequent sections analyze regulatory challenges, examine European legal frameworks, and present best practices in platform work governance. The final section discusses policy implications and provides conclusions.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### Legal regulation of work organization and social responsibility on digital platforms in the European Union

The rapid expansion of digital platform work has led to significant challenges in defining the legal status of platform workers, ensuring fair working conditions, and holding platform operators accountable. The organization of work and social responsibility on digital platforms in the European Union is governed by several key legal acts and initiatives aimed at ensuring the rights and social protection of platform workers.

One of the most significant documents is Directive (EU) 2024/2831 on improving working conditions in platform work, which establishes a legal presumption of employment, mandates transparency in algorithmic management, and strengthens social protections for platform workers (EU-OSHA, 2024). This directive seeks to reduce false self-employment and requires platforms to prove otherwise based on national criteria. It also introduces

obligations for platforms to disclose criteria used in automated decision-making, particularly in worker assignment, performance evaluation, and pay determination. By mandating algorithmic transparency, the directive aims to prevent unfair automated decisions, though concerns remain regarding the protection of trade secrets and competitive advantage.

While the directive represents a major step toward protecting platform workers, its practical enforcement remains uncertain. One key concern is how national courts will interpret and apply the legal presumption of employment. For instance, in countries with strong labor protections, courts may favor reclassifying many platform workers as employees, granting them full social security rights. Conversely, in jurisdictions with more flexible labor markets, companies may find legal loopholes to maintain the independent contractor model.

Additionally, several European Court of Justice (ECJ) rulings have significantly shaped platform work regulation. Notable cases include *Uber Spain* (C-434/15), which ruled that Uber should be classified as a transport service rather than a mere digital intermediary, leading to stricter employment classification requirements (Court of Justice of the European Union, 2024). Similarly, *Delivery Hero* (2024) (where UK courts ruled that couriers are self-employed, whereas courts in Italy and the Netherlands challenged this classification due to the platform's algorithmic control over workers' tasks and conditions) and *Glovo* (where the Spanish Supreme Court determined that couriers must be considered employees, given their dependence on the platform's workflow management and lack of autonomy) examined the role of algorithmic control in worker status determination, reinforcing the importance of legal employment presumptions.

Beyond Directive (EU) 2024/2831, other key legal instruments shaping platform work regulation include:

- **Regulation (EU) 2016/679** on General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) – governs the processing of personal data and algorithmic transparency in platform work, granting workers the right to access information about automated decision-making (European Data Protection Regulation, 2016).
- **Directive (EU) 2019/1152** on Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions – establishes minimum labor rights, ensuring clear employment contracts and protection against unfair dismissal (EU-OSHA, 2019).
- **Regulation (EU) 2022/2065** on the Digital Services Act (DSA) – introduces new transparency requirements for platforms, particularly regarding algorithmic management and monitoring of working conditions (EU Monitor, 2022).

Together, these legal instruments create a more comprehensive framework for regulating platform work in the EU. While Directive (EU) 2024/2831 specifically targets employment classification and algorithmic management, GDPR ensures that platform workers have access to

information about automated decision-making, reinforcing transparency. The Transparent and Predictable Working Conditions Directive strengthens fundamental labor rights, while the Digital Services Act introduces broader obligations for platform operators to ensure fair and accountable working conditions. As these regulations evolve, their effective implementation will be crucial in balancing worker protections with the flexibility and innovation of the platform economy.

While some member states, such as Spain and France, have already passed national laws recognizing certain platform workers as employees, others, like Germany and the Netherlands, primarily rely on case law interpretations, leading to disparities in enforcement (European Commission, 2019). Resistance from platform companies also remains a challenge, as they argue that strict regulations may reduce labor market flexibility and innovation (Wen, 2023). However, recent research highlights that different platform models require different regulatory approaches. Findings by Renau et al. (2023) emphasize the need for a clear legal definition of platform work, recognizing that some platform businesses operate under cooperative or worker-owned models, which may require alternative regulatory frameworks.

Due to regulatory uncertainties in some member states, platform workers are increasingly seeking alternative solutions, including collective bargaining agreements and cooperative work models. For example, in Scandinavian countries, platform workers have negotiated collective agreements with employers that ensure fair wages, transparency in rating systems, and workplace protections.

However, as Lamanis (2023) highlights, while collective agreements have improved working conditions in some countries, many platform workers still lack adequate protections. Smaller platforms tend to be more open to cooperation with trade unions, whereas larger platforms continue to avoid engaging in collective bargaining and labor law protections. Moreover, collaboration between trade unions, institutions, and consumers could play a crucial role in strengthening workers' rights.

Some platforms operating under cooperative models (e.g., Fairbnb.coop, SMart, Katuma) offer alternative governance structures, where workers have greater control over decision-making processes, algorithmic transparency, and fair working conditions (Renau et al., 2023). This suggests that platform work regulation should not be limited to traditional employer-employee relationships but should also encourage more participatory and worker-centric models.

The evolving regulatory landscape for digital platform work in the EU reflects a broader effort to ensure fairness, transparency, and worker protection in the digital economy. Directive (EU) 2024/2831 is a landmark legislative effort, but its success depends on coordinated national enforcement, strict penalties for non-compliance, and proactive efforts by regulators to close potential loopholes.



Ensuring fair algorithmic management and preventing regulatory arbitrage will be key challenges in balancing worker rights and business innovation. Moving forward, the success of EU platform work regulation will hinge not only on legal measures but also on the willingness of national authorities to rigorously enforce the directive and the responsiveness of digital platforms to increased regulatory scrutiny. The authors evaluate the current state of the research topic on an international scale. When working on the theoretical part of the paper, the author should predominantly work with articles published in the Web of Science and Scopus databases. It is recommended to use at least 40 sources. The use of monographs is not recommended, other sources should be used minimally. Sources should not be older than 10 years, at least 50% of sources are not older than 5 years.

### Challenges in work organisation and governance on digital platforms

#### *Regulatory and Employment Challenges in Digital Platform Work: The "Grey Zones"*

The activities of digital platforms pertain a very solid technological and social foundation. By managing data centres and applications (algorithms), platforms form large local social relation networks through which geographically dispersed entities are connected and enter into market transactions, on the basis of which platform companies charge commissions. As noted by Gawer (2021), digital platforms facilitate direct interaction between two or more economic agents. From a business management perspective, organisation of the activities on digital platforms represents provision of information services to facilitate transactions and ensure the smooth execution of operations (Tirole, 2018). However, having no real estate, relying on only a minimal number of permanent workers, and devoting most of their budget to the development of search engines and marketing (Acquier, 2017), digital platforms are companies that are difficult to define in legal, institutional, and fiscal terms. For instance, Dieuaide & Azais (2020) provide the information that the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE) classifies the activities of Uber-France as "other business support activities" (code APIE 8299Z), subset "enterprises not classified elsewhere". This shows that even the statistical classification of platform businesses does not reflect the areas of activity in which digital platforms are actually involved (e.g. ride-hailing, catering, mobility). The digitalisation and transformation of platform companies into "hollow" companies allows them to free themselves from many legal and regulatory systems, whether it be competition law, labour law, or tax law.

Digital platform work is transforming the standard employment relationship with a triangular "worker–platform–customer" relationship. In this model, the boundaries of the employment relationship become unclear and undefined: the relationship of subordination disappears, labour law gives way to commercial law, and an employer and an employee as subjects lose their institutional visi-

bility. With the activities of digital platforms expanding and covering more and more sectors of the economy, the scope of the triangular relationship is rapidly increasing. With the emergence of the boundary between professional and labour relations, an alternative model of work organisation is being developed. This model is based on the relationship between customers and independent suppliers. The relationship is established through a company (or a third party) which is largely autonomous vis-à-vis existing institutional frameworks (Dieuaide & Azais, 2020). Thus, digital platforms cannot be unambiguously defined either as market intermediaries or as employers.

In addition, digital companies are not companies "like others". When managing the collected data, platforms act not only as third-party mediators, but also as prescribers because the information enters directly into decision-making processes. This prescriptive power creates conditions for the relationship of influence which neither customers nor independent contractors can intervene (Huws, 2014). Thus, platform workers are in fact neither completely independent nor completely subordinate. In their study, Dieuaide & Azais (2020) reveal that organisation and management of digital platform work are characterised by the confusion of powers between coordination and leadership. When exercising their coordination power, digital platform managers no longer need to have private ownership of the human and material components in the work process on site, nor is it necessary to conclude employment contracts with workers that would establish the conditions for the use of labour and remuneration for work.

Dieuaide & Azais (2020) describe "the grey zone" in the field of employment and labour relations on digital platforms through 3 typical features:

1. the ubiquity of computer systems allows digital platforms not only to escape the payment of taxes, but also to avoid, to a large extent, any obligations under the Labour Code;
2. the activities of digital platforms are characterised by social deregulation, which means loopholes in national/international legal frameworks, which are due to the absence of the relevant legal regulations or poor applicability of the laws currently in force;
3. digital platforms are characterised by an informal privatisation of public space (infrastructure, residential buildings, business premises, any use value, and any available person), which does not always coincide with the interests of local areas.

Nevertheless, some authors (Karanovic et al., 2020; Malgonde et al., 2020; Sandberg et al., 2020, etc.), argue that agreement parties, whether customers or workers, on digital platforms do not always blindly obey the rules established by platform managers, and the influence of these agreement parties is increasing with the evolution of digital platforms. With the growing knowledge about the principles/risks/opportunities of operating on/through digital platforms, the agreement parties gain more power

to make autonomous decisions and take autonomous actions.

This highlights an important dynamic in digital platform work: while platform managers attempt to maintain control through data-driven coordination and algorithmic management, workers and customers are gradually acquiring more agency and negotiating power. However, the ambiguity surrounding employment relationships, regulatory inconsistencies, and the informal privatisation of public spaces indicate that the challenges of digital platform governance remain unresolved. The existence of “grey zones” in platform work not only complicates legal classifications but also raises concerns about fair competition, social protection, and workers’ rights.

Given the ongoing evolution of digital labour platforms and the increasing regulatory attention in the European Union, it is crucial to examine how emerging legal frameworks and social dialogue initiatives can address these “grey zones” and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable platform economy. In this regard, one of the key aspects shaping the future of digital platform work is corporate social responsibility (CSR). While platform companies often position themselves as mere intermediaries, the growing legal and ethical discourse suggests that they also bear social responsibilities towards workers and society as a whole.

#### *Corporate Social Responsibility and Labour Rights in Digital Platform Work*

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is defined as various social practices carried out by a company to align public expectations and stakeholders’ behaviour related to the company’s activities (Tworzydło et al., 2021). Previous studies have confirmed that there exists a direct relationship between a company’s social responsibility and its economic performance (Javed & Husain, 2021; Varzaru et al., 2021, etc.). A company’s reputation as an employer reflects the image of the company as an employer perceived by potential candidates, current workers, and the public. Burbano’s (2016) study revealed that given information about an employer’s social responsibility, potential platform workers were willing to give up the 44 percent wage differential they would otherwise demand.

Many previous studies confirm the lack of social responsibility of digital platforms as employers, which manifests itself in the violation of the essential employment rights (the right to balanced work-rest time, fair wages, etc.: Forde et al., 2017; Veen et al., 2020), the lack of social protection and career support (Rani & Dhir, 2020; Rivera & Lee, 2021), the failure to ensure the adequate communication between workers, customers and platform managers (ILO, 2018), and the manipulation of automated systems (algorithms) used to manage platforms (Berg et al., 2018; European Commission, 2021). However, given the realities, the research on how this social responsibility should be manifested and promoted is extremely relevant.

Having analysed the practical example of the employment status and working conditions of drivers on the Uber platform, Malos et al. (2018) conclude that the greatest manifestation of social irresponsibility of digital platforms is disclaiming employee status, and propose to apply a consistent standard as to employee classification. The authors believe that platform managers must be required to assume the implications associated with employee status as part of their responsibilities to society. Their attitude is in line with the report by the ILO, ISSA & OECD (2023) which proposes that the recognition of the true employment status of platform workers is a significant element of platform social responsibility, since it not only reflects the dependent nature of this type of work, but is also a fundament for determining how and to what extent platforms workers are entitled to entering social and labour protection systems, and what power of collective bargaining they have.

Cherry & Poster (2016) aim at linking ethical labour practices to corporate social responsibility in digital environment. Their study suggests that the indicators of corporate social responsibility of digital platforms are fair wages, transparency in terms of full disclosure of information to workers about their tasks, working hours and wages, and application of fair criteria for worker online ratings. In the authors’ opinion, the social responsibility of digital platforms as employers, manifested through the aforementioned factors, would help create a better working environment online and increase the collaborative potential of platform workers.

Promotion of fairness, transparency, and accountability in the algorithmic management, practiced on digital platforms, is the objective indicated in the European Commission’s (2021) Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on Improving Working Conditions in Platform Work. In this case, social responsibility of digital platforms as employers should manifest itself as ensuring that platform workers know the criteria, based on which the algorithms provide their work evaluation (ratings), and have the access to the data which are related to their work (ILO, ISSA & OECD, 2023).

Considering the fact that digital platform work is a non-standard form of work, where the subjects performing the tasks are treated as independent contractors, Pankova et al. (2020) analysed which conceptual, organisational, managerial, and resource measures can be used to promote socially responsible partnership for sustainable development of employment in the context of digital transformations. Their results revealed that the main measures for this are:

1. modernization of the system of social and labour relations on the basis of socially responsible partnership as a conceptual framework;
2. modernization of the system of social dialogue by expanding the communicative interaction among the labour market actors;

3. stabilisation of the labour market through maintaining social protection of workers;
4. development of an innovative communication platform for socially responsible partnership in the labour market.

These measures are believed to contribute to the optimal social dialogue, which is referred to as a system of collective labour relations, which involves employers (or their representatives), workers (or their representatives), public authorities, and municipalities. However, despite the proposed strategies for fostering corporate social responsibility in digital platform work, significant challenges remain. Many platforms still operate under ambiguous legal and ethical conditions, which allow them to avoid direct employer responsibilities while benefiting from workforce flexibility. Moreover, the implementation of social responsibility measures is often voluntary rather than legally binding, making enforcement inconsistent across different countries and platforms.

Thus, while initiatives promoting fairness, transparency, and accountability in algorithmic management are a step in the right direction, they require stronger institutional frameworks and regulatory mechanisms to ensure widespread adoption. Without these, the concept of corporate social responsibility in platform work risks remaining a theoretical ideal rather than a practical reality. At the same time, the growing regulatory pressure and public scrutiny of platform work highlight the increasing risks that platform operators face when organising digital labour activities.

## METHODOLOGY OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH PROCESS

This study employs a qualitative research approach to analyze the organization of work on digital platforms, focusing on legal ambiguities, regulatory challenges, and corporate social responsibility (CSR). The research integrates systematic and comparative literature analysis, a review of European legal frameworks, and good practice analysis to evaluate platform governance and labor conditions.

A systematic literature analysis was conducted to identify key risks in platform labor management, regulatory gaps, and CSR-related challenges. The literature was selected from Web of Science and Scopus databases, ensuring the inclusion of high-quality peer-reviewed sources. The search focused on studies published between 2013 and 2024, with at least 50% of the sources published in the last five years. The keywords used included "digital platform work," "platform economy," "gig work regulation," "platform corporate social responsibility," and "algorithmic management." Articles were screened based on relevance to digital labor platforms, employer responsibilities, and regulatory frameworks. In addition to academic literature, policy reports from the European Commission, Eurofound, the ILO, and OECD were analyzed to provide a broader institutional perspective.

A comparative literature analysis was applied to examine platform labor policies in different European countries, focusing on regulatory enforcement, employment status, and social protections. The study reviewed key legislative frameworks, including Directive (EU) 2024/2831 and the Digital Services Act, to assess their implications for platform governance. The research also drew upon the Eurofound Platform Economy Database, which documents legal cases, policy developments, and collective agreements in EU Member States. This comparative approach helped identify best practices in social dialogue, worker protections, and regulatory enforcement, with a particular focus on Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Spain, Germany, and Belgium.

The good practice analysis evaluated real-world initiatives aimed at improving working conditions for platform workers. Cases of collective bargaining agreements, regulatory interventions, and worker-led cooperatives were analyzed to determine their effectiveness in securing fair wages, employment protections, and worker rights. The study particularly examined formalized agreements in Austria and Denmark, social dialogue initiatives in Belgium and the UK, legal enforcement actions in Spain, and worker-led cooperatives in Germany.

Although bibliometric analysis could have provided additional insights into research trends in platform labor studies, this study prioritized qualitative analysis to focus on regulatory structures, employer obligations, and labor conditions. Given the complexity of platform work governance, the study relied on in-depth legal and policy document analysis rather than quantitative bibliometric evaluation.

The research process followed a structured sequence:

- Literature selection and analysis: Academic articles, policy documents, and legal texts were collected and reviewed to identify key themes related to platform work, employer responsibilities, and regulatory challenges.
- Comparative legal analysis: European legal frameworks and national regulations were examined to assess differences in platform governance across Member States.
- Case study evaluation: Best practices in social dialogue, worker protections, and legal enforcement were identified through the Eurofound Platform Economy Database and national labor agreements.
- Synthesis of findings: Key risks, regulatory trends, and policy implications were summarized to provide insights for policymakers and platform operators.

By combining systematic and comparative literature analysis with a review of regulatory frameworks and real-world labor practices, this study provides a comprehensive assessment of the legal, operational, and social challenges associated with digital platform work. The findings contribute to ongoing policy discussions on balancing flexibility and worker protections in the evolving digital



economy. This part of the paper states its aim, detailed methodology and data used. The title of the paper must be compatible with its aim and its content. Using of sophisticated statistic methods is needed. Authors can use descriptive statistics as well.

### LEGAL, OPERATIONAL, AND EMPLOYMENT RISKS IN DIGITAL PLATFORM MANAGEMENT EMPLOYERS' RISKS WHEN ORGANISING DIGITAL PLATFORM ACTIVITIES

The rapid expansion of digital platform businesses has introduced significant challenges for platform managers, who must navigate a complex landscape of operational, legal, and employment-related risks. As digital platforms continue to evolve, employers face growing uncertainties related to workforce management, regulatory compliance, and platform governance. The literature analysis has identified several key risks that digital platform managers encounter when organizing business activities, which are summarized in Tab.1.

As shown in Tab 1, the risks associated with digital platform management can be broadly classified into three main categories: (1) workforce-related risks, (2) regulatory and legal risks, and (3) operational and technological risks.

1. Workforce-related risks include high worker turnover, worker skill mismatches, and loss of customer access, all of which stem from the unique nature of platform work. Unlike traditional employment relationships, digital platforms rely on a fluid workforce that is often not contractually bound, making it difficult to ensure workforce stability. Additionally, platform workers may seek direct relationships with clients or fail to disclose their true employment and income status to maximize financial benefits.
2. Regulatory and legal risks encompass uncertainties in employment classification, intermediation instead of a subordinate relationship, and regulatory amendments. Digital platforms often operate in legal grey areas where worker classification and tax obligations remain unclear. As a result, they may be subject to sudden regulatory shifts that require them to comply with new employment laws, minimum wage regulations, and social protection contributions.
3. Operational and technological risks involve modular technological architectures, worker autonomy, and investment uncertainties. Digital platforms function through automated decision-making systems and algorithmic management, which may not always align with the interests of workers or customers. Moreover, operational risks such as fraud, system failures, and unreliable payment mechanisms can threaten the long-term sustainability of platform-based business models.

These risk categories highlight the intricate challenges that digital platform managers must navigate while maintaining a competitive and legally compliant business mo-

del. The following subsections analyze each risk in greater depth, drawing on insights from previous studies.

Table 1: Literature review regarding the major risks encountered by digital platform managers as employers

Risk types	Explanation	Authors
Loss of customer access	A worker can establish direct contact with a customer/user	Baums et al., 2015; Weiss & Grab, 2020
High worker turnover	Interchangeability of workers/service providers; platform work is treated as a secondary source of income, a temporary job	Berg et al., 2018; Weiss & Grab, 2020
Disguise of one's real employment status and income	Abuse of digital platform work for material benefits	Remeikienė et al., 2022
Worker skill mismatches	Platform work does not require workers to have high qualifications or experience	Schmidt, 2017; 'Cedefop', 2020; ILO, 2021
Intermediation instead of subordinate relationship	No formal authority over participating workers	Van Alstyne et al., 2016; Leong et al., 2023
Worker autonomy	Little control of working time, duration	Tomlinson & Corlett, 2017; Tusinska, 2023
Modular technological architectures	Mutual interests of agreement parties are not considered by macrostructures on digital platforms	Van Alstyne et al., 2016; Li & Kettinger, 2021; Leong et al., 2023
Regulatory amendments	Potential introduction of new legal regulations and tax obligations	European Parliament, 2017; European Commission, 2021
Operational risk	Investment and environmental uncertainty, failures in operational, banking systems, scams/frauds, product/service delivery problems	Andriani et al., 2020; Jean et al., 2020

Source: own research

## Analysis of key risks

Managing work on digital platforms involves various challenges, many of which stem from workforce dynamics, regulatory uncertainties, and operational complexities. Below is a detailed analysis of the key risks that digital platform managers face when organizing and managing platform-based work.

**Loss of customer access.** Acting as intermediaries between a product/service provider and a customer/user, platforms do not engage in direct exchanges with a customer/user, which results in weak or non-existent customer/user relationships (Baums et al., 2015; Weiss & Grab, 2020). If a product/service is provided on-location or a service is provided through direct interaction with a customer (e.g. online consulting, private lessons, etc.), there is a risk that a product/service provider working through the platform will establish direct contact with the customer/user, and the platform's services as an intermediary will no longer be needed. Although digital platforms theoretically have the potential to reach a critical mass of users when demand is increasing, there is no guarantee that this critical mass will be reached, and the desired growth spiral effect will be achieved.

**High worker turnover.** Digital platforms are characterised by frequent workforce turnover. Previous studies show that work through digital platforms is often treated not as a main job, but as an additional one. For example, Berg et al. (2018) provide the results of the survey of the workers operating on the platforms 'The Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT)', 'CrowdFlower', 'Clickworker', 'Microworkers', and 'Prolific'. 32 percent of the respondents in the survey indicated that the most important motive/reason for doing platform work was the opportunity to complement the payment earned from other jobs. High worker turnover tends to increase operational instability and hinders the formation of long-term commercial relationships.

**Disguise of one's real employment status and income.** In some cases, digital platform work is selected as informal work by individuals who are entitled to the benefits paid by a state or municipality (e.g. maternity/paternity benefits, unemployment benefits, retirement benefits, utility compensations, etc.). The recipients of these benefits may not want to report their platform work so that the payment of the benefits is not stopped or reduced (Re-meikienė et al., 2022). Informal platform work then not only preserves the right to the benefits, but also provides additional income.

**Worker skill mismatches.** According to the ILO (2021), a typical platform worker tends to have less labour experience than an average worker in the traditional labour market. The concept "crowdwork" refers to the idea that the system is open to anyone regardless of one's qualifications (Schmidt, 2017). The requirements of the skills to execute a task are not related to the general skills or education of platform workers (Cedefop, 2020). For this reason, platforms are likely to have lower-skilled workers than firms in the traditional labour market.

**Intermediation instead of subordinate relationship.** Coordination of work through digital platforms is essential to ensure that workers know their specific tasks and functions (Van Alstyne et al., 2016). Nevertheless, practical coordination of work poses many challenges since the activities of independent contractors are autonomous from a legal perspective. In contrast to the coordination of employee activities in traditional business companies, which are based on a hierarchical structure of subordination, digital platforms do not have any formal authority over their independent contractors (Leong et al., 2023).

**Worker autonomy.** Autonomy is one of the major personal motives to do digital platform work. For instance, Tusinska's (2023) survey of 523 digital platform workers in Poland revealed that autonomy of digital platform work is important for 50 percent of the respondents. Tomlinson and Corlett's (2017) study in the United Kingdom revealed an increasing number of mid-professionals who gave up their permanent full-time employment and accepted a modest decrease in income in exchange for greater autonomy on digital platforms. Worker autonomy means that digital platforms have little control over a worker's working time per day and on particular days, which may lead to a shortage of active labour during peak order times.

**Modular technological architectures.** Macrostructures used on digital platforms are not able to consider the competitive interactions between agreement parties. Thus, although the parties perceive that they have mutual interests, tensions are inevitable (Van Alstyne et al., 2016), and they usually arise between platform managers and workers (Leong et al., 2023). Li and Kettinger (2021) note that the management of digital platforms is usually analysed through the lens of control, authority, and regulation rather than the mutual interests and actions of agreement parties, especially in terms of cooperation when pursuing predetermined goals.

**Regulatory amendments.** Treated as employers, digital platforms are increasingly coming under the spotlight of authorities. For instance, the European Parliament (2017) notes that there is a serious lack of legal regulation which would allow to protect digital platform workers from faulty employment practices, job insecurity and poor working conditions on digital platforms. Although the proposal to introduce additional regulation of platform work at the EU level aims to improve the working conditions for platform workers, it poses additional risks for platform managers, who will have to adapt to the new regulations, and the obligations established with the new provisions (e.g. obligatory health and social insurance contributions) can reduce the profit margin of platform activities.

**Operational risk.** By employing the transaction cost theory, Jean et al. (2020) analysed the risk factors of using digital platforms for internationalisation of new ventures. Their study revealed that such transactions are characterised by investment and environmental uncertainty. Andriani et al. (2020) analysed the risk factors of applying the digital platform model for the elevation of small and



medium-sized enterprises in a developing country (Indonesia). In order to identify the risks of digital platforms for small and medium-sized enterprises, the authors used the SWOT and the Failure Mode and Effect Analysis (FMEA). When assessing the potential risks, the authors also considered the criticality of the risk consequences (severity), the probability of the potential cause to ultimately occur (occurrence), and the level of difficulty or ease of risk control (detection). The results disclosed that the main risks are related to the regulation of digital platforms (e.g. constantly changing government policies regarding digital platforms), operational disruptions (e.g. failures in operational systems, errors in banking systems, scams/frauds), product delivery to a consumer (products can be damaged/lost during the delivery process, long product waiting times, products may not reach a consumer). The risk of scams/frauds, followed by bad customer service and poor product handling were found to be the greatest risks in terms of risk severity, occurrence, and detection.

These risks highlight the complexity of digital platform management and the growing challenges that platform employers face. While digital platforms offer new opportunities for flexible work and innovative business models, they also introduce significant operational uncertainties, workforce instability, and legal ambiguities. Regulatory amendments, particularly at the EU level, are likely to redefine the employment relationships within platforms, increasing compliance obligations for platform operators. Furthermore, as workers become more aware of their rights and alternatives, platform companies must find ways to balance business efficiency with social responsibility to ensure long-term sustainability in the platform economy.

## GOOD PRACTICES IN SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING BETWEEN DIGITAL PLATFORMS AND PLATFORM WORKERS IN EUROPE

### The Legal Context of Social Dialogue in Platform Work

National legislators are not inclined to interfere in relations in the labour market. The laws do not prohibit a person from using his or her labour to conclude contracts regulated by civil law or to engage in independent activities, by which a person seeks to earn income or obtain other economic benefits. Therefore, the essential characteristics of labour relations established in labour codes are significant in that they allow these relations to be distinguished from similar relations arising on the basis of contracts regulated by civil law (e.g. subcontracting, service provision, copyrights, etc.). The absence of the essential characteristics leads to the conclusion that the resulting relations are regulated by the norms of other branches of law (e.g. civil law), and thus these relations cannot be qualified as employment relationships.

In an attempt to address this issue at the EU level, the Member States reached a new provisional agreement of

11 March 2024 regarding the Platform Work Directive. One of the main points of disagreement before the adoption of the Directive was the inclusion of the criteria for determining the employment status of platform workers. The new agreement significantly revised the chapter on the employment status of platform workers compared to the initial draft of the Directive. The New Directive will no longer set out the criteria for determining the employment status of platform workers. Under the new agreement, the EU Member States will have to establish a legal presumption of employment in their national legal systems, and this presumption will apply once the factual circumstances proving work control and management on digital platforms have been established. These factual circumstances will be determined in accordance with national law, collective agreements, and judgements by the Court of Justice of the European Union, although European courts still categorise the employment relationship on digital platforms in different ways (De Stefano et al. 2021). In this way, the legal status of platform workers remains uncertain, and there is no single way to ensure their rights and adequate social protection.

In this case, a particularly significant factor is the position of platforms as employers. It allows for social dialogue between the parties to the employment relationship and the development of collective bargaining experience. Several collective agreements have been signed in Europe, which, though posing legal, practical and organisational challenges, can be considered the examples of good practice (ILO 2021; Roşioru 2022). The study by Lamannis (2023) revealed that the initiatives for social dialogue and collective agreements between both parties to the employment relationship on digital platforms are mainly observed in 10 countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

### Overview of Good Practices in European Countries

Across Europe, social dialogue and collective bargaining initiatives between platforms and workers vary widely. While some countries emphasize direct collective agreements, others focus on worker-led cooperatives and policy frameworks. This research reviews good practices in terms of the social dialogue and collective bargaining between digital platforms and platform workers in the above-mentioned countries. The data for the research were extracted from the Platform Economy database by "Eurofound", which records and reviews both implemented and failed initiatives related to working conditions in the platform economy, as well as the relevant court decisions in all EU Member States. Below is an overview of notable cases.

**Austria:** Collective Agreement for Bicycle Delivery Workers. The collective agreement for bicycle delivery was signed between the trade association for the carriage of goods (Fachverband für Güterbeförderungsgewerbe), the Austrian Trade Union Federation, and the Vida union which represents workers in the transport and service industries. Among other terms, the agreement, which

entered into force on 1 January 2020 (Syndicat European Trade Union, 2024), established the weekly regular working time (40 hours), daily breaks and resting periods, overtime and work on weekends and holidays, holiday and Christmas allowances. A monthly minimum pay of EUR 1.539,98 for full-time employment, with an additional compensation of EUR 0.24/km if a privately owned bicycle is used and another EUR 20 per month if a privately owned mobile phone is used. The employer undertook the obligation to provide workers with personal protective equipment (e.g. helmets, rain jackets, rain trousers, gloves and overshoes) of appropriate quality and pay continued payment to workers in case of accidents and sickness. The collective agreement covers around 950-1000 workers. One of the key strengths of the collective agreement is that it sets minimum standards for platform workers in the sector. However, the main weakness of the agreement is its insufficient coverage: there are still many riders in the sector who are not classified as employees, but who are holding a free service contract (Eurofound, 2025).

**Belgium:** Uber's Social Dialogue with the Transport Union. The agreement on the collaboration to improve working conditions for Uber drivers in Belgium between the Belgian Transport Union ABVV-BTB and Uber was announced in November 2022. The major purpose of the agreement is to conduct social dialogue between the parties to the agreement, to strengthen the social protection of Uber drivers and ensure safe working conditions. Under the agreement, the representatives of the Belgian Transport Union ABVV-BTB will participate in Uber's Driver Hub to represent Uber drivers' interests in the event of issues or challenges and will represent drivers in cases of an appeal (e.g. the loss of access to the Uber app). The parties will meet quarterly to discuss the major problems and concerns. Also, the parties will collaborate to ensure drivers' health and safety and improve the experience of working for Uber (Eurofound, 2025).

**Denmark:** A Collective Agreement Allowing Workers to Choose Employee Status. The platform company Hilfr, which hires workers to provide cleaning services in private households, in April 2018 signed the collective agreement with the United Federation of Danish Workers (3F) which acts as a representative of the rights of workers in the cleaning sector (the Agreement came into force on 1 August 2018) (Ilsoe, 2020). The major advantage of this agreement is that, in parallel with traditional freelancers, who are most often hired to perform work through digital platforms, it recognizes the right of platform workers to choose the status of an employee or a freelancer (the new category of workers – Super Helpers – was introduced). The agreement stipulates that freelancers automatically acquire the status of an employee after 100 hours of work through the platform. The workers, who want to maintain their freelancer status regardless of the number of hours worked, must notify the platform in advance. Although the agreement stipulates that the minimum hourly wage of freelancers is DKK 130 (€ 17) with a welfare supplement of DKK 20 (€ 3) per hour, and the mini-

mum hourly wage of employees is DKK 141 (€ 19), workers of both categories can set their hourly wage higher on their individual profile on the platform. Employees (the Super Hilfrs) have the right to pensions, holiday entitlements and sick pay. Both categories of workers are covered by an insurance scheme for liability and accidents. In August 2024, the Hilfr and 3F signed a new collective agreement on the use of artificial intelligence and algorithmic management in the platform's activities. The new agreement allows the platform to use digital algorithms for ending the employment relationship, but at the same time establishes that a worker must be comprehensively explained the assessments and facts based on which the decision was made. The Agreement can be renegotiated by the parties until March 2025 (Eurofound, 2025).

**Germany:** Worker-Led Platform Cooperatives. German good practice is characterised by collective action of workers and the establishment of cooperatives. In this case, it is not so much the involvement of platforms as employers in the mutual social dialogue that is noticeable, but rather the initiatives of platform workers to unite in defence of their rights. For example, a collective of platform workers opened a 'payday' fund, the purpose of which is to support Berlin platform workers (mostly working in the on-demand food delivery sector), who receive inadequate remuneration from platforms (under EUR 1,800 gross per month). This form of support for platform workers is believed to be more effective and faster than any strategic collective organisations or legal claims. Another example is the project of the Platform Cooperatives Germany launched in 2020. The creation of the Platform was commissioned by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy, and is currently managed by the K8 Institute. Within the framework of this project, the support and consultancy services are provided to platform workers, thus encouraging them to unite into cooperatives. The general aim is to gradually create a competitive alternative to the currently prevailing models of digital platform work. The cooperatives are expected to ensure the bargaining power of platform workers, allow for joint democratic decision-making by their members, increase the transparency of digital platform work, help protect the privacy of the members, etc. (Eurofound, 2025).

**Italy:** Health and Safety Protocol for Food Delivery Riders. The protocol, which aims to protect the health and safety of food delivery riders, was issued by Uber Eats on 10 February 2021. Under this protocol, food delivery platform Uber Eats committed to providing its workers with free helmets, high visibility garments, rain jackets and trousers, waterproof holders for smartphones and other personal protective measures and safety devices. Personal protective equipment and safety devices have to be provided to both newly registered and existing platform workers. The platform also committed to organising awareness campaigns for platform workers on health, personal, road safety and food hygiene, and arrange free training courses. The correctness and effectiveness of the use of PPE, as well as the suitability of the vehicles

used by workers for service provision, should also be regularly checked in accordance with the terms of the protocol (Eurofound, 2025).

**Norway:** Collective Agreement Between Foodora and Trade Unions. The collective agreement between the platform Foodora and the United Federation of Trade Unions (Fellesforbundet) was signed in September 2019. Among other terms, the agreement established the general employment conditions, regulated the payment (minimum hourly rates of NOK 123 per hour and NOK 138 for a rider captain), provided conditions for wage increases (e.g. for work at weekends and work-free days, the deliveries over 4 km, etc.), reimbursement for equipment, extra pay during wintertime, and the scheme of early retirement pensions for the workers. A seniority supplement of NOK 1 per hour was set for the workers after 12 months of continuous employment, with the upper limit for the seniority supplement is NOK 5 per hour. The parties to the contract also agreed on training and consulting for cycle couriers, road safety, customer service and the use of equipment. The agreement also gave platform workers the right to collective bargaining and information. The agreement was renegotiated in late 2020. The new agreement established an improved seniority rate and a minimum wage guarantee. It covers all the workers who work 10 hours per week or more for Foodora in Norway (nearly 40 percent of all workers, with the remaining 60 percent being treated as contractors) (Eurofound, 2025).

**Spain:** Glovo's Transition to Employee-Based Model. Glovo, the Spanish unit of Delivery Hero, showed the initiative to alleviate the problem of uncertainty related to the legal status of platform workers and prevent the potential regulatory penalties, which the company had suffered after the legal actions and accusations for violating workers' rights and execution of unfair competitive practices (e.g. the fine of EUR 57 million in January 2023 by the decision of Spain's Labour Ministry and Inspection; a EUR 295 million lawsuit filed by Just Eat Spain against Glovo for unfair competition) (Eurofound, 2025). The company selected the model, by which riders will be treated as full-time employees (i.e. the traditional freelance model was substituted for an employment-based model) (Delivery Hero, 2024). The decision was announced on 2 December 2024. The new model is estimated to cover about 15,000 riders, who were previously categorised as the self-employed (Eurofound, 2025).

**Sweden:** First Collective Agreement Between a Digital Platform and a Trade Union. The collective agreement between the platform Foodora and the Swedish Transport Workers' Union was signed on 25 February 2021. This was the first case in Sweden, when a digital labour platform signed a legally binding collective agreement. Among other terms, the agreement established the general employment conditions, working hours, schedules, and regulated the wages, paid holidays, life insurance for terminal workers, road hauliers and drivers of delivery vehicles ("FES Future Work", 2022). The agreement ensured the right for Foodora's workers to a fixed hourly wage and a fixed premium for each delivery, as well as to

contractual pension, holiday pay and annual wage increases. The main drawback of this contract was that it covered not all Foodora's workers (many of them were formally employed by Hungry Delivery (now DH Logistics, a subsidiary of Foodora). The contract expired in April 2023. A new collective agreement between the parties is expected to be established until April 2025 (Eurofound, 2025).

**Switzerland:** Multi-Enterprise Collective Agreement for Bicycle Couriers. In February 2019, the Swissmessengerlogistics (SML), employer's association for urban courier services in Switzerland, signed the collective bargaining agreement with the trade union Syndicom. Under this agreement, bicycle couriers were guaranteed a minimum hourly wage of CHF 20.35 (\$20.40). Couriers were also entitled to surcharges, additional pay for on-call services and paternity leave. The working hours of couriers were set at 42.5 hours per week. The agreement covered about 600 bicycle couriers (Swissinfo, 2019). This agreement was not a regular collective agreement, but rather a multi-enterprise framework agreement since the SML in this agreement was represented by 19 urban delivery companies. In December 2021, platform Chaskis (the company mainly operating for Uber Eats) also joined this agreement (Lamannis, 2023). This is an example of an agreement in which more than two parties can be involved in the collective bargaining process. With more such examples, it can be expected that collective agreements between digital platforms and their workers will eventually cover the entire sector.

**United Kingdom:** Uber's Education and Career Development Initiatives. In 2017, Uber introduced the initiative called the 'Earnings advice sessions', aimed at providing drivers working on the platform with various consultations, including advice on how to balance work hours and maximize earnings. This initiative was expected to help platform drivers earn more than the fixed hourly average rate, and thus increase their social well-being. Showing an initiative to promote driver's education, Uber in the same year began collaborating with the education platform Futurelearn, through which Uber drivers could complete a free course and get the Certificate of Achievement, and gave drivers free access to the Bussu App, through which drivers can improve their English language skills. Uber drivers in the UK now also have free access to the Open Classroom, through which they can receive management, business development and leadership training (Eurofound, 2025).

The diverse approaches to social dialogue and collective bargaining in digital platform work across Europe highlight the fragmented nature of platform labour regulation. While some countries, such as Austria, Denmark, and Sweden, have successfully implemented collective agreements that formalize employment conditions, others, like Germany, rely more on worker-led cooperatives to increase bargaining power. Meanwhile, Spain's regulatory pressure has forced companies like Glovo to transition to an employment-based model, demonstrating that strong enforcement mechanisms can drive structural



change in the platform economy. However, several challenges remain:

- Limited coverage – Many agreements apply only to specific sectors (e.g., food delivery and cleaning), leaving a large portion of platform workers without formal labour protections.
- Regulatory inconsistencies – The absence of an EU-wide framework means that platform workers in different countries face varying levels of rights and protections.
- Platform resistance – Many companies continue to prefer independent contracting models, prioritizing flexibility over employment security.

Despite these challenges, the reviewed cases suggest that collective bargaining and social dialogue can be effective tools for improving working conditions in the platform economy. The growing recognition of platform workers' rights, combined with legal developments at the national and EU levels, signals a shift towards greater accountability for digital labour platforms. Moving forward, a balance must be struck between ensuring fair working conditions and maintaining the flexibility that has driven the success of platform-based business models. Strengthening cooperation between stakeholders – workers, platforms, trade unions, and policymakers – will be essential in shaping a fair and sustainable platform economy in the years to come.

## THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study contributes to the academic discourse on digital platform work by expanding the understanding of employer-side risks, regulatory ambiguities, and corporate social responsibility (CSR) in platform governance. While previous research has largely focused on platform workers' conditions, this study highlights the challenges faced by platform managers in balancing operational efficiency with labor protections. The findings support existing theories on labor precarity, algorithmic control, and regulatory fragmentation but also introduce new perspectives on employer accountability in the platform economy. By analyzing the intersection of digital platform management and legal compliance, this research enhances the theoretical discussion on platform-based labor models and governance structures.

From a practical perspective, the study offers insights for policymakers, platform operators, and labor organizations. The comparative analysis of European best practices demonstrates that formalized collective agreements, social dialogue mechanisms, and regulatory enforcement are key factors in improving platform worker protections. Policymakers can use these insights to develop clearer legal frameworks that address employment classification, social security, and algorithmic transparency. Platform managers, in turn, can integrate CSR-driven policies that enhance worker protections, ensuring compliance with emerging legal standards while maintaining operational flexibility. Furthermore, the study highlights the potential

of worker-led cooperatives as an alternative model for strengthening bargaining power in the platform economy. These insights are particularly relevant for designing sustainable, fair, and legally sound platform labor policies that balance innovation with social responsibility.

## CONCLUSION

The analysis of digital platforms as economic entities has demonstrated that their legal, institutional, and fiscal status remains ambiguous due to their lack of physical presence, minimal reliance on permanent employees, and strategic investment in digital infrastructure over traditional labor relations. This ambiguity allows platforms to operate within regulatory "grey zones," often circumventing competition law, labor law, and tax obligations. As a result, platform workers face challenges in securing clear employment status, fair wages, and adequate social protections.

The concept of social responsibility in digital platforms remains underdeveloped, with many companies failing to meet fundamental labor rights such as fair working hours, social security, and transparent communication mechanisms. Algorithmic management practices have further exacerbated concerns over worker autonomy and fairness, highlighting the need for greater oversight and accountability. Collective bargaining and social dialogue have been identified as key mechanisms to address these shortcomings, fostering cooperation between platforms, workers, trade unions, and public authorities.

The empirical analysis of good practices across Europe revealed that the most effective initiatives involve formalized agreements, safety protocols, and education programs. Countries such as Austria, Denmark, and Sweden have successfully institutionalized collective agreements, ensuring better working conditions and wage protections for platform workers. Additionally, employer-led initiatives in Belgium and the United Kingdom have focused on education and social dialogue to improve worker welfare. Spain's regulatory intervention against Glovo, however, highlights that legal enforcement remains a crucial factor in pushing platforms toward fairer employment practices. This suggests that voluntary measures alone may not be sufficient to guarantee worker protections, and stronger legislative frameworks may be required to ensure compliance.

A noteworthy alternative approach has emerged in Germany, where worker-led cooperatives have strengthened bargaining power without direct employer involvement. This demonstrates that platform workers themselves can play a proactive role in shaping fairer working conditions by establishing independent bargaining structures and alternative business models. If scaled effectively, cooperatives could provide a sustainable counterbalance to traditional platform work structures, promoting a more democratic and worker-centered model of digital labor. Despite these positive developments, several challenges remain unresolved:

1. Regulatory fragmentation – The lack of an EU-wide approach means platform workers in different Member States experience varying levels of protection.
2. Limited sectoral coverage – Most collective agreements only apply to specific industries (e.g., food delivery, cleaning), leaving many gig workers unprotected.
3. Employer reluctance – Many platforms continue to resist formal employment models, preferring independent contractor arrangements to maintain operational flexibility.

### Limitations

While this study provides valuable insights into platform labor governance, it has several limitations. First, the research relies primarily on secondary data sources, including policy reports, legal frameworks, and case studies, rather than primary data collection such as worker or employer interviews. This may limit the depth of firsthand perspectives on platform labor experiences. Second, the study focuses on European regulatory frameworks and best practices, meaning that findings may not be fully generalizable to non-European contexts where platform work is regulated differently. Third, the dynamic nature of platform labor regulations presents chal-

lenges in maintaining up-to-date analyses, as ongoing policy developments may rapidly shift the regulatory landscape. Additionally, while the study highlights best practices, it does not conduct a quantitative impact assessment of regulatory interventions on worker conditions. Future research could benefit from empirical evaluations of how legal enforcement and social dialogue impact platform workers' financial security, work stability, and overall well-being.

### Final Considerations

Despite these limitations, the research confirms that social dialogue and collective bargaining are valuable tools in improving platform worker protections. However, they are not universally applied and often require legal intervention to be effective. Moving forward, a multidimensional approach will be necessary, combining sectoral agreements, enhanced legal frameworks, and worker-led initiatives. A balance must be found between preserving the flexibility of platform work and ensuring fair competition, social protections, and long-term sustainability in the digital economy.

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