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# Mapping the Transformation:

## Intersectional Analysis of Platform Work and the Shifting Labor Landscape



June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026



**Auditorium,**  
University of New York in Prague  
Londýnská 41, Prague 2, Czech Rep.



# BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

This event is based upon work from COST Action < Platform Work Inclusion Living Lab, CA21118 >, supported by COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology).



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Conference:  
**Mapping the Transformation: Intersectional Analysis  
of Platform Work and the Shifting Labor Landscape**

# **Book of Abstracts**

June 30th, 2026  
Auditorium, University of New York in Prague.  
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# Stakeholders, Involuntary Entrepreneurship and the Path-Dependent Transformation in Czech platform work

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## Abstract:

The regulation of platform work has become a key testing ground for contemporary political economies responding to digitalization, labour market restructuring, and widening inequalities. While EU-level initiatives—most notably the Platform Work Directive—signal an attempt to recalibrate the relationship between employment, entrepreneurship, and social protection, national transposition processes reveal substantial institutional divergence. This paper examines the Czech case to ask whether the politics and policies surrounding platform work regulation reflect a meaningful transformation in approaches to digitalization and entrepreneurship, or whether they reproduce established models of labour market governance. Drawing on a feminist and intersectional perspective, the paper argues that the Czech transposition process is shaped by strong path dependency rooted in a labour market characterized by rigid standard employment relations, widespread bogus self-employment, and a long-standing reliance on entrepreneurial status as a substitute for social policy reform. Within this context, platform work is predominantly framed by institutional actors not as a site of involuntary entrepreneurship and structural precarity, but rather as an extension of individual choice, flexibility, and market participation. This framing obscures the unequal distribution of risks and responsibilities in platform-mediated labour and marginalizes questions of dependency, vulnerability, and power.

The paper specifically investigates how key stakeholders involved in the Czech transposition process interpret platform-related precarity, how their positions evolve over time, and how techno-optimistic narratives surrounding innovation and competitiveness are mobilized to justify a minimalist implementation of the directive. Particular attention is paid to how gendered and intersecting inequalities are rendered visible—or remain invisible—within policy debates. Existing scholarship demonstrates that platform work frequently reproduces labour market segmentation and disproportionately affects workers situated at the intersections of gender, migration



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status, care responsibilities, and socio-economic precarity. Yet these dimensions remain largely absent from dominant regulatory discourse in the Czech Republic.

Empirically, the analysis draws on ten qualitative interviews and a series of policy consultations conducted between 2023 and 2025 with institutional stakeholders involved in shaping platform work regulation, including representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, trade unions, and other relevant actors. These data are complemented by long-term engagement and feedback-based cooperation with stakeholders, enabling the paper to trace discursive shifts and strategic repositioning over time. Methodologically, the paper combines interpretive policy analysis with discourse analysis to examine how platform work, entrepreneurship, and precarity are problematized, depoliticized, or rendered invisible within regulatory debates.

The findings suggest that while risks associated with platform work—including algorithmic control, income instability, and limited social protection—are recognized by some actors, they are consistently reframed through narratives of personal responsibility and entrepreneurial autonomy. Platform workers are positioned discursively as entrepreneurs by default, even where entry into self-employment is driven by limited alternatives in the labour market. Rather than signalling a shift toward socially embedded digitalization, the Czech transposition process reproduces existing institutional compromises, legitimizing regulatory minimalism through narratives of competitiveness and technological progress. By foregrounding involuntary entrepreneurship as a missing category in policy discourse, the paper contributes to debates on platform capitalism, labour regulation, and institutional continuity in digital economies.

**Keywords:** Platform Work, Labour Regulation, Czech Republic, Involuntary Entrepreneurship, Policy Discourse



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# When Flexibility Becomes a Constraint: Worker Preferences, Institutional Misalignment and the Implementation of the Platform Work Directive in Poland

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## Abstract:

The adoption of Directive (EU) 2024/2831 on improving working conditions in platform work marks a significant regulatory shift aimed at addressing employment misclassification and power asymmetries in digital labour markets. While existing debates have primarily focused on legal frameworks and platform strategies, less attention has been paid to the potential misalignment between regulatory objectives and worker preferences shaped within specific institutional contexts. This paper addresses this gap by analysing the anticipated implementation of the Platform Work Directive in Poland through the lens of platform workers' experiences and interpretations of their working conditions.

The analysis is based on a large-scale nationwide survey conducted in early 2025 among 3765 platform workers (couriers and ride-hailing drivers), complemented by 21 in-depth interviews. The study captures workers' evaluations of their employment conditions, contractual arrangements, income strategies and expectations regarding potential regulatory changes. The empirical material is interpreted within the framework of Labour Process Theory, with particular attention to the relationship between flexibility, autonomy and control in platform-mediated work.

The findings reveal a strong declared attachment among workers to flexible working time arrangements, commonly understood as the ability to choose when to work. However, this preference coexists with structural constraints that significantly limit workers' control over key aspects of the labour process, including access to tasks, income stability and contractual transparency. Flexibility, in this context, emerges not as an indicator of autonomy, but as a constrained and conditional form of labour market participation. Workers often operate under conditions of partial information, mediated by intermediaries such as fleet partners, and are subject to fragmented contractual arrangements that obscure their employment status.

These conditions generate a specific form of normative tension. On the one hand, the Directive seeks to strengthen employment protections by introducing a presumption of



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employment and reducing asymmetries of power. On the other hand, many workers express concerns that such regulatory interventions could undermine the limited flexibility they currently value, even if this flexibility is associated with economic insecurity and restricted agency. This tension points to a broader problem of regulatory misalignment: policies designed to enhance worker protection may not fully resonate with workers' lived experiences and adaptive strategies developed within existing institutional arrangements.

The Polish case is particularly illustrative due to its distinct labour market structure, characterised by the widespread use of civil law contracts and the institutionalised role of intermediaries in platform work. These features complicate the transposition of EU-level regulations and shape workers' perceptions of both risk and opportunity associated with formal employment status. By situating worker preferences within this institutional context, the paper contributes to ongoing debates on platform governance by highlighting the importance of incorporating workers' interpretative frameworks into analyses of regulatory change.

The paper argues that effective regulation of platform work requires not only formal legal adjustments, but also a deeper understanding of how workers make sense of flexibility, autonomy and security under conditions of algorithmically mediated and institutionally fragmented labour. In doing so, it calls for a more nuanced approach to platform regulation that accounts for the complex interplay between governance, labour market institutions and worker subjectivities.

**Keywords:** Platform Work Regulation, Labour Process Theory, Employment Misclassification, Digital Labour Markets



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# Obstacles and Opportunities to implementing the Platform Work Directive in the V4 and Western Balkans

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## Abstract:

The adoption of the EU Platform Work Directive represents a landmark intervention in the regulation of digital labour markets which could reclassify 5.5 million platform workers in the Union as employees. However, the Directive will be only as strong as its implementation, and the gap between legislative intent and its practical impact depends heavily on the institutional, political, and social conditions in which the regulation lands. This paper examines the practical barriers to effective implementation of the Platform Work Directive in the Visegrad Four (V4), as well as four Western Balkan countries (Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Albania), with a particular focus on worker classification and the presumption of employment.

Drawing on 34 semi-structured interviews with national government officials, researchers, trade union and private sector representatives across eight countries, this paper - part of a one-year research project 'The Platform Revolution' - identifies three main barriers to implementation: low institutional readiness, limited political will, and low social mobilisation.

While all three barriers are present to varying degrees across both regions, their relative weight differs. Low political will is particularly evident in the V4, where some governments have shown active resistance to reclassification, with some fearing that tackling bogus self-employment in platform work could invite broader scrutiny of labour market practices. In the Western Balkans, the more acute challenge is institutional: unadapted legal frameworks, widespread informality and insufficient administrative capacity among ministries and labour inspectorates currently leave many platform workers in a regulatory void. Finally, low social mobilisation is a shared challenge across both regions, driven by high worker turnover, the prevalence of platform work as a secondary activity, and the fragmentation of worker identities across platforms and sectors.

The paper argues that these diverging barriers require differentiated regulatory responses. In the V4, the Platform Work Directive is a first step. However, without reinforced labour inspectorates, structured dialogue between platforms and workers, and stronger awareness-raising among workers about their rights, implementation risks



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remaining largely formal, with few workers reclassified as employees in practice. In the Western Balkans, where platform work remains largely unregulated, and institutional capacity is limited, a strict binary classification approach risks causing unintended harm. It could stifle innovation in ICT and creative industries - a segment of the platform industry that makes up an increasingly valuable part of the labour market in some Western Balkan countries. Meanwhile, it may also discourage formalisation among workers in the informal economy, and create enforcement obligations that cannot realistically be met. A more gradualist approach - lowering barriers to formal registration and extending protections regardless of formal employment status - could prove more effective to improve conditions for the most vulnerable workers while building the institutional capacity needed for further regulation over time.

**Keywords:** Platform Work Directive, worker classification, Visegrad Four, Western Balkans, Implementation barriers



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# Solidarity in and out: Exploring labor struggles and class identification among precarious migrant workers in Romania and Germany

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## Abstract:

My research project examines the social implications of platform labor governance, focusing on the labor rights and collective mobilization of the platform workers in Romania and Germany. First, the presentation examines how new labor platform governance impacts job quality, wages, collective agreements, and precarious job opportunities of migrant workers in the platform-based sectors, such as the delivery and transport sectors, in the context of the new EU Directive on platform work. Second, the presentation shows how the support groups, online communities and concrete collective actions are facilitating mutual aid, information exchange, and collective mobilization and how they influence class identification and solidarity among workers. It looks at how workers interact with trade union actors and ad hoc groups to contest the inequalities of the platform-imposed precarities. The demonstration includes key factors affecting workers' solidarity: 'solidarity in', where the close connection with colleagues, native and migrant workers, plays a role in mobilization and self-organization. Solidarity 'in' helps bridge structural inequalities and facilitate collective action. Second, when the solidarity is 'out', there is an employer dependency and unclear boundaries against external entities. Solidarity is out due to fear of losing jobs, visa permits, and other family of life struggles. Finally, solidarity emerges as a collective response to the inequalities shaping platform and gig employment, fostering shared commitments between workers and trade union actors to defend their labor rights (Anderson, 2010). The findings demonstrate that the workers can mobilize to challenge unequal treatment and social exclusion threats in the labor market. Collective mobilization can enable workers to use digital solidarity as a tool to overcome social divisions and class struggles and to identify as a united group. The research employs an integrated methodology that combines qualitative research methods, informal interviews with low-qualified and migrant workers, and engaged digital ethnography on social media platforms and online groups. The research focuses on two sectors: delivery and transport (platform delivery services and groceries), each highlighting challenges in social protection schemes, social dialogue, and flexible working arrangements.



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**Keywords:** solidarity, digitalization, delivery sector, platform labor, social protection



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# The Limits of “Platform Work”: Directive (EU) 2024/2831, Slovak Transposition, and the Exclusion of Digital Sex Work

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## Abstract:

Directive (EU) 2024/2831 on improving working conditions in platform work is widely framed as a universal European response to algorithmic management, employment misclassification, and the precarity of platform-mediated labour. This paper argues that, on closer reading, the Directive’s protective scope is structurally selective: its definitional architecture excludes — or at best ambiguously addresses — one of the most feminised, racialised, and stigmatised segments of contemporary digital labour, namely creators on hybrid content/sex-work platforms such as OnlyFans. Through an intersectional and feminist legal analysis grounded in the perspective of an EU Member State currently undertaking transposition (Slovakia, deadline 2 December 2026), the paper examines what this protection gap means for both EU-level rule design and national implementation choices.

The argument proceeds in three steps. First, the paper revisits the four cumulative conditions for qualifying as a “digital labour platform” under the Directive, with particular attention to the requirement that the service be provided “at the request of the recipient” and that the platform organise work performed by individuals as a necessary and essential component. It shows that platforms whose business model relies primarily on hosting and monetising subscription-based or broadcast content — rather than on task-by-task assignment — fall outside, or only partially within, the Directive’s reach, even when they exercise extensive control through algorithmic visibility, monetisation rules, payment infrastructure, and account-level sanctions.

Second, the paper foregrounds the empirical stakes of this exclusion: 76% of online sex workers identify as cis women, 19% as trans persons, and 20% live as migrants in their country of residence; 69% report online harassment, 34% doxxing, and 26% stalking. Protective tools such as blocking and geo-blocking carry direct income penalties, and deplatforming functions as a de facto dismissal without procedural safeguards. These figures cannot be read as marginal edge cases of platform work; they index where gendered, racialised, and class-based vulnerabilities concentrate — and precisely where the Directive’s “universal” rules currently do not reach.



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Third, the paper turns to the Slovak transposition context. The recent amendment of § 1(2) of the Labour Code (effective 1 January 2026), which removes “working time determined by the employer” from the definition of dependent work, opens space to recognise algorithmically mediated subordination — but only if enforcement institutions develop the technical and sectoral expertise to do so. The paper closes with *de lege ferenda* proposals: (i) treat the Directive as a floor rather than a ceiling, supplementing it with national rules that explicitly cover hybrid content/sex-work platforms; (ii) recognise algorithmic management as an indicator of control under § 1(2); and (iii) extend procedural safeguards modelled on Arts. 10–11 to account-level decisions, regardless of whether the platform formally falls within the Directive’s scope.

**Keywords:** platform work, Directive (EU) 2024/2831, algorithmic management, digital sex work, Slovak labour law



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# Delivering on the Promise? The EU Platform Work Directive and the Regulation of Intermediaries in Germany's Food Delivery Sector

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## Abstract:

This presentation offers a socio-legal analysis of recent efforts to strengthen labour protections for food delivery workers in Germany, situating these developments within ongoing debates surrounding the implementation of the EU Platform Work Directive (PWD). Drawing on qualitative empirical data—including semi-structured interviews with workers and stakeholders, participant observation, and discourse analysis of policy debates and advocacy materials—the presentation examines both everyday workplace practices and the political mobilization advocating for a ban on subcontracting in the sector.

The findings reveal a marked proliferation of subcontracting arrangements in Germany's food delivery industry. These arrangements frequently obscure employment relationships and enable platform companies to distance themselves from formal employer responsibilities. As a result, a significant proportion of workers operate without standard employment contracts, thereby lacking access to labour rights, including the rights to collective bargaining. These practices are embedded within the specific institutional context of German labour law enforcement, which relies predominantly on individual litigation before labour courts rather than proactive oversight by labour inspectorates. This reactive enforcement model places the burden on individual workers to assert their rights, a task that is challenging given their limited resources.

The absence of robust enforcement mechanisms has contributed to the expansion of subcontracting structures and has intensified calls from trade unions, worker organizations, and policymakers for regulatory intervention. In particular, there is growing support for the introduction of a direct employment requirement (Direktanstellungsgebot) in the sector, akin to the reforms implemented in the German meat processing industry, where subcontracting was largely prohibited in 2021. Proponents argue that such a measure would simplify employment relationships, enhance accountability, and improve compliance with labour standards.



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Against this backdrop, the presentation critically examines the relationship between national-level regulatory initiatives and the EU-level framework established by the PWD, with particular attention to Article 3, which addresses the regulation of intermediaries. While the Directive has generated considerable optimism as a tool to improve working conditions in platform-mediated labour, the analysis highlights significant concerns regarding its limited scope and potential effectiveness in sectors characterized by complex subcontracting chains.

Ultimately, the paper underscores the central importance of enforcement structures in shaping labour outcomes in the platform economy. It argues that regulatory reforms must extend beyond formal legal classification and address the institutional capacities required for effective enforcement. The presentation illustrates how variations in enforcement regimes across EU Member States influence both the prevalence of precarious work arrangements and the prospects for meaningful reform. The findings suggest that, while the PWD represents an important step, it is unlikely to resolve the structural challenges of the sector without complementary national measures that strengthen enforcement.

**Keywords:** Subcontracting, platform work, labour law, enforcement, Platform Work Directive



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# The Limits of Platform Work Directive: Endogenous Inequalities and Exogenous Constraints

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## Abstract:

The adoption of the EU Platform Work Directive represents a landmark in the regulation of platform-mediated labour. Yet, current debates largely focus on its national implementation, often overlooking the broader structural dynamics that may shape its effectiveness. This paper proposes an analytical distinction between endogenous and exogenous factors that constrain the regulatory trajectory of platform work in Europe.

On the one hand, endogenous dynamics emerge from within the platform economy itself. The paper examines the persistent use of evasive strategies by platform companies, including legal reclassification, organizational fragmentation, and technical redesign of labour processes to circumvent the Directive's presumption of employment. At the same time, it highlights the limits of a generalized notion of the "platform worker" by foregrounding the intersectional composition of the workforce. Drawing on an intersectional perspective, the paper argues that axes of race, class, and migration status contribute to the fragmentation and stratification of platform labour, shaping workers' exposure to precarity and their capacity to claim rights.

On the other hand, exogenous pressures further complicate the regulatory landscape. The paper analyses how rising geopolitical tensions—particularly between the European Union and the United States—may affect regulatory autonomy, especially in light of pressures to soften the application of digital and labour regulations toward US-based firms. Additionally, it explores the growing integration of artificial intelligence into platform management, emphasizing its implications for automation, algorithmic control, and the opacity of decision-making processes.

Against this backdrop, the paper asks: how do endogenous and exogenous factors interact to limit the transformative potential of the EU Platform Work Directive? Adopting a critical political economy approach, and drawing on policy analysis and emerging empirical evidence, the paper develops a framework for understanding the structural constraints of platform work regulation.

The paper argues that addressing these challenges requires complementing regulatory interventions with efforts to strengthen European infrastructural autonomy and to support new forms of worker organization capable of overcoming fragmentation. In



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doing so, it contributes to ongoing debates on labour governance, intersectional inequalities, and the future of work in the platform economy.

**Keywords:** Platform Work Directive; Artificial Intelligence; European Union; Big Tech



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# Between platform and worker: untangling liability in subcontracting chains

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## Abstract:

The study examines the European rules governing the economic entities defined as “intermediaries” and their liability within global supply chains involving digital labour platforms, with particular reference to the obligations established by Article 3 of the Directive (EU) 2024/2831 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2024 on improving working conditions in platform work.

The analysis focuses on the definition of “intermediaries” under Article 3 of the Directive, considered in light of its scope of application and the identification of the legal subjects bound by its provisions. It further explores the applicable legal framework governing both the scope and the allocation of the obligations laid down therein, which entail the attribution of employer-related responsibilities shared among intermediaries, contractors, and other collaborators involved in subcontracting chain. The study also addresses the need to ensure coordination between these rules and national systems governing the allocation of liability in triangular employment relationships or, more in general, in subcontracting chains, as classified under domestic legal orders in alignment with the European legal framework. These include, in particular, temporary agency work, subcontracting arrangements, and the corresponding definitional and sanctioning regimes relating to the unlawful supply of labour.

Particular attention is devoted to the fragmentation of legal frameworks and its implications for the allocation of responsibilities within employment relationship, as well as for the effective protection of workers, including their trade union rights. Moreover, enforcement deficits – stemming, inter alia, from the absence of a labour inspectorate at Union level – significantly undermine the effective implementation and practical effectiveness of the Directive.

In conclusion, significant areas of ambiguity persist, particularly with regard to the involvement, within the value chain, of third parties who are not parties to the worker’s direct contractual relationship. It remains uncertain whether even a technically rigorous transposition of the Directive will, in all circumstances, suffice to adequately address wage-related concerns.



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**Keywords:** platform work, Platform Workers' Directive, intermediaries, subcontracting chain, legal liability



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# Gender, platform work and neuro-rights in Spain: labour law challenges in the transposition of the Platform Work Directive

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## Abstract:

The transposition into Spanish law of the European Platform Work Directive creates a crucial opportunity to reassess labour protections in the digital economy. Focusing primarily on the field of Labour Law, this study analyses how the Spanish implementation of the Directive may address discrimination affecting women platform workers. Special attention is given to the legal implications of algorithmic decision-making systems used for task allocation, performance evaluation, reputational scoring and dismissal as these mechanisms may reproduce indirect discrimination based on gender.

The paper further explores an emerging and insufficiently regulated dimension of platform work: the potential integration of neurotechnologies capable of collecting or inferring cognitive, emotional, or behavioural data in digitally mediated labour environments. From a labour law perspective, these practices raise urgent questions concerning workers' privacy, mental integrity, autonomy, data protection, and equality rights. The concept of neuro-rights is therefore introduced as a necessary normative framework for anticipating new forms of workplace control and protecting workers against intrusive data extraction practices.

Neurotechnology can interpret emotional or cognitive variations associated with factors such as caregiving burden, structural stress, or specific biological and social processes in a biased way. These interpretations can translate into automated decisions affecting hiring, promotion, or professional evaluation, thus reproducing gender inequalities under the guise of technical objectivity.

Added to this is the growing capacity of artificial intelligence systems to infer mental states from multiple data sources, both neural and behavioral. Voice, facial expressions, digital habits, and interaction patterns can be combined to construct highly intrusive psychological profiles. In the case of women, these profiles can incorporate cultural



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biases that associate certain emotional expressions with less stability, less rationality, or less leadership ability, reinforcing existing gender stereotypes.

Methodologically, the paper combines doctrinal legal analysis of the Platform Work Directive and its Spanish transposition with critical examination of existing labour and anti-discrimination law, identifying regulatory gaps in relation to algorithmic bias and neurodata governance. It argues that the effectiveness of the Directive will depend not only on presumptions of employment status and transparency obligations, but also on its capacity to integrate stronger gender-sensitive safeguards against discriminatory and neuro-invasive labour practices.

This contribution highlights the need for a broader legal framework capable of confronting the evolving intersection between digital labour exploitation, technological surveillance, and gender inequality in platform economies.

**Keywords:** Neuro-rights, data protection, Gender, Algorithmic discrimination, Platform work regulation.



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# Algorithmic Management and the (De)Regulation of Employment in Platform Work in Europe: Implications for Social Protection and Inequalities

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## Abstract:

Platform work has become a central dimension of contemporary labour market transformation in Europe, reshaping employment relations through digital intermediation, flexible labour arrangements, and increasingly pervasive systems of algorithmic management. While platformisation is often framed as enhancing labour market efficiency and flexibility, it simultaneously generates new forms of precarity and inequality that are unevenly distributed across gender, migration status, and socio-economic position. This paper examines, through a socio-legal and intersectional lens, how algorithmic management structures influence the organisation of platform work and contribute to the (re)production of intersectional labour market inequalities. It focuses on the ways in which algorithmic systems, such as automated task allocation, dynamic pricing, behavioural monitoring, and rating-based evaluation, function not only as technical infrastructures but also as mechanisms of labour discipline and social sorting. These systems shape access to work opportunities, income stability, and visibility within platforms, often reinforcing pre-existing structural disadvantages. A key analytical concern is the discrepancy between the formal classification of platform workers as self-employed and the empirical realities of algorithmic control and dependency that characterise their work. Despite the narrative of entrepreneurial autonomy promoted by platform companies, empirical studies demonstrate that algorithmic governance frequently determines key aspects of labour processes, including task distribution, performance evaluation, and even deactivation decisions. This raises critical questions regarding the adequacy of current employment classifications and labour law frameworks in addressing digitally mediated forms of control. The paper situates these dynamics within the evolving regulatory framework of the European Union, particularly the Directive on Platform Work, which seeks to improve working conditions and strengthen transparency in algorithmic management systems. This paper is based on a narrative literature review combined with a comparative socio-legal analysis of existing empirical studies on platform work in



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Europe. While the Directive represents a significant step toward addressing regulatory gaps, this paper argues that its effectiveness will depend on national implementation and enforcement, which may vary significantly across Member States and institutional contexts. From an intersectional perspective, the paper highlights how platform work disproportionately affects groups already positioned in structurally vulnerable positions in the labour market. Women, migrants, and young workers are often overrepresented in lower-paid, less stable segments of platform work, particularly in care, delivery, and cleaning services. Algorithmic systems may exacerbate these inequalities through biased rating mechanisms, unequal access to high-value tasks, and opaque performance evaluation systems that disadvantage already marginalised groups. In this sense, algorithmic management does not merely organise labour but actively contributes to the reproduction of social stratification in digitally mediated economies. The paper contributes to ongoing debates on the adequacy of EU labour law in addressing algorithmically mediated forms of work. It also advances intersectional approaches to platform labour by linking algorithmic governance with differentiated labour market outcomes. Methodologically, the paper draws on a narrative literature review combined with comparative analysis of socio-legal and empirical research on platform work in Europe. By integrating insights from labour sociology, feminist political economy, and digital governance studies, it provides an interdisciplinary account of how algorithmic systems intersect with existing structures of inequality and regulatory regimes. Overall, the paper argues that platform work should be understood not simply as a technological innovation or labour market trend, but as a structural transformation of work that reshapes power relations, deepens intersectional inequalities, and challenges existing models of social protection and labour regulation in Europe.

**Keywords:** Algorithmic Management, Platform Work, Intersectional Inequalities, Digital Labour Governance, Employment Classification



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# Platform Work and Labour Regulation in the Global South: An Intersectional Analysis of Informality and Worker Protection

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## Abstract:

Platform work is expanding rapidly across the Global South and is reshaping labour relations in contexts already marked by high informality and weak regulatory capacity. While digital platforms present new income opportunities, they also raise concerns about employment status, income security, and access to social protection. Existing research has focused largely on advanced economies, where regulatory reforms are emerging. There remains limited empirical work that examines how platform labour operates within informal labour markets and constrained institutional settings in the Global South. This study addresses this gap by analyzing platform work through an intersectional lens, with a focus on employment classification, algorithmic control, and access to protection. It adopts a qualitative comparative case study design, examining ride hailing and delivery sectors across two urban contexts. The study draws on three sources of data: 40 semi structured interviews with platform workers, worker representatives, and policy actors; a survey of 120 workers; and analysis of labour laws, policy documents, and platform agreements. Data are analyzed using thematic and content analysis, supported by descriptive statistics. The findings show that platform workers are uniformly classified as independent contractors, with no access to formal employment protections. Income is highly variable and, after deducting fuel, data, and maintenance costs, often falls below minimum wage benchmarks. Workers report long working hours, averaging 10 to 12 hours per day, driven by the need to stabilize earnings. Task allocation and performance evaluation are governed by opaque algorithmic systems, where ratings and acceptance rates determine access to work. Deactivation occurs without clear explanation or effective appeal mechanisms. The study also finds a near absence of social protection. Workers rely on personal savings and informal support networks in cases of illness or income shocks. Regulatory frameworks do not explicitly address platform work, and enforcement capacity remains limited. Gendered patterns are evident, with women more likely to engage in part time work due to care responsibilities and safety concerns, and facing reduced access to high earning periods. Workers also bear environmental and operational risks, including fuel price volatility, exposure to extreme weather, and poor urban infrastructure. The paper contributes to ongoing debates by situating platform work within the structural conditions of informality and weak institutions. It shows that global platform models adapt to these

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environments in ways that intensify risk transfer and deepen labour Precarity. The findings highlight the limits of policy approaches developed in advanced economies and underscore the need for context specific regulation. The study calls for clearer employment classification, inclusive social protection mechanisms, and stronger regulatory oversight. It also points to the need for renewed trade union strategies that reflect the dispersed and informal nature of platform labour.

**Keywords:** Platform work, Informal labour markets, Algorithmic management, Social protection, Global South.



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# Regulating Platform Work Beyond Employment: Welfare, Rights, and the Indian Experience

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## Abstract:

This paper examines the evolving regulatory framework governing gig and platform work in India, focusing on the Code on Social Security, 2020 and subsequent state-level legislations enacted in Rajasthan, Karnataka, Bihar, and Jharkhand. Situating these developments within the broader political economy of labour informality, fiscal constraint, and platform-led growth, the paper analyses how regulatory approaches incorporate platform workers into social protection systems without fundamentally altering labour relations.

The rapid expansion of platform work in India is often framed in terms of flexibility, entrepreneurship, and employment generation. However, this narrative obscures the structural drivers underpinning its growth, including limited formal job creation, declining real wages, and persistent labour surplus. Rather than representing a voluntary shift towards autonomous work, platform labour frequently reflects constrained choices within a precarious employment landscape. Digital platforms reorganise informality through algorithmic management, enabling firms to retain control over labour processes while externalising economic risks onto workers. These dynamics raise concerns about income security, working conditions, and the absence of enforceable labour rights.

Against this backdrop, the paper evaluates recent regulatory interventions across five dimensions: welfare benefits, funding mechanisms, governance structures, regulatory obligations, and labour rights. It finds that while the Code on Social Security provides an enabling framework, it remains largely indeterminate in its operational design. In contrast, later state legislations introduce greater specificity, particularly in welfare provisions, cess-based funding models, and procedural safeguards such as transparency in algorithmic decision-making and protections against arbitrary deactivation.

Despite these advances, a consistent pattern emerges across national and subnational frameworks: regulation remains predominantly welfare-oriented rather than rights-based. By avoiding the question of employment classification, these laws allow platforms to retain their intermediary status, thereby circumventing obligations related to wages, social insurance, and employer liability. Collective labour rights, including unionisation and bargaining, are largely absent or restricted. Platform workers are thus



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incorporated as beneficiaries within scheme-based welfare systems rather than recognised as rights-bearing workers.

The paper argues that this trajectory reflects a calibrated political economy strategy. Faced with the dual imperatives of promoting platform-led growth and maintaining fiscal discipline, governments have adopted contributory, fund-based models that limit public expenditure and avoid imposing binding obligations on platform firms. This approach also mitigates concerns around capital mobility and competitive federalism, while enabling selective inclusion without extending broader labour rights across the informal economy.

In comparative perspective, the Indian case offers insights for debates in Europe, particularly regarding tensions between welfare incorporation and employment classification under emerging regulatory frameworks such as the EU Platform Work Directive. While recent interventions mark an important moment of formal recognition, they fall short of transforming the structural conditions of platform labour. Instead, they institutionalise a model of “welfare without rights,” reflecting the broader constraints shaping labour governance in the digital economy.

**Keywords:** Platform Work Regulation, Social Protection Systems, Labour Informality, Welfare without Rights, Gig Economy Governance



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# Between Refusal and Exclusion: Platform Work, Digital Barriers, and Pragmatic Resilience among Women Artisan Entrepreneurs in Greece

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## Abstract

This paper examines the complex and ambivalent relationship between women artisan entrepreneurs and the platform economy, drawing on mixed-methods empirical research with women entrepreneurs in Athens' silversmithing and goldsmithing sector. Rather than treating digitalisation as a straightforward emancipatory pathway, the paper interrogates why highly skilled women in a traditional craft industry remain largely outside platform-mediated markets — and what this reveals about the gendered limits of the Platform Work Directive (EU 2024/2831).

The empirical findings reveal a dual dynamic. Some participants make a conscious, strategically reasoned decision to avoid e-commerce platforms, driven by concerns about price transparency: participation in online marketplaces exposes handcrafted, heritage-based products to direct comparison with mass-produced goods, undermining decades of accumulated relational capital and the perceived value of craft skill. Others express a desire to engage with digital tools but face structural barriers, the cost of outsourcing digital marketing, the pace of technological change, the absence of targeted support, that render participation effectively inaccessible. As one participant stated: "E-commerce is essential now, but it's inaccessible to me. It requires continuous changes — SEO, social media, online payments. I don't have those skills, and I can't afford to hire someone" (I-54).

Both dynamics are analysed through the framework of Pragmatic Resilience — developed from the empirical study of women's artisan entrepreneurship in Southern Europe — which captures how women in structurally constrained positions develop adaptive, non-linear strategies that navigate, resist, or selectively engage with dominant economic logics while preserving livelihood and autonomy. The paper argues that the boundary between strategic refusal and structural exclusion is itself a product of intersecting inequalities — of gender, age, class, and access to digital infrastructure — and that collapsing this distinction obscures the differentiated ways platform transformation is experienced by women in traditional creative sectors.



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Engaging with feminist political economy and Social Reproduction Theory, the paper argues that the platform economy does not neutrally expand opportunity for all categories of self-employed workers. For women artisan entrepreneurs, algorithmic visibility, price-based competition, and the erosion of relational market dynamics constitute new forms of structural disadvantage. The Platform Work Directive, in its current form, addresses gig economy precarity but remains largely silent on self-employed women in heritage craft sectors, whose vulnerability stems not from algorithmic management per se but from the marketisation pressures platform logic introduces into economies built on trust, provenance, and long-term client relationships.

The paper offers an empirically grounded, intersectional analysis of how platform transformation is experienced — and variously refused, negotiated, or resisted — by a category of women workers largely invisible in mainstream platform work research. It calls for a more nuanced, gender-sensitive regulatory approach that recognises the heterogeneity of women's self-employment and the specific vulnerabilities of heritage artisan entrepreneurship in the European digital single market.

**Keywords:** platform work, women's entrepreneurship, pragmatic resilience, digital exclusion, craft heritage, intersectionality, Platform Work Directive



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# The Economics of Entangled Time: Simultaneous Production-Consumption, Synthetic Substitutability, and the Terminal Limits of Human Capital

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## Abstract

This paper develops a general equilibrium model that reclassifies digital platform engagement from leisure consumption to simultaneous production-consumption — a dual state in which users consume algorithmically curated content while simultaneously producing structured behavioural data that serves as a primary factor input to AI training, targeted advertising, and algorithmic product development.

The model extends Becker's (1965) time allocation framework by introducing a third time state — Entangled Time — and derives two principal results with direct implications for platform work regulation.

**Result 1: Non-decreasing marginal utility of interface time.** Algorithmic recommendation systems operate as a Preference Expansion Function that discovers new user preferences at a rate that can exceed the rate of biological fatigue. Under this condition, users exhibit corner solutions in time allocation — they allocate all discretionary time to the interface. This mechanism constitutes a form of algorithmic management that shapes labour supply without explicit employer direction, raising questions about the boundary between autonomous consumption and managed production.

**Result 2: Zero-wage equilibrium.** Because user engagement is perfectly inelastic to compensation — users provide all discretionary time regardless of payment — the platform's profit-maximising fiat wage for behavioural data labour is exactly zero. The zero wage arises not from exploitative intent but from structural market absence: no competitive market for behavioural data exists, and no legal framework classifies platform engagement as labour.

**Calibration and measurement.** The paper defines Dark GDP — the aggregate shadow value of uncompensated behavioural data labour invisible to the System of National Accounts. Using directly observable revenue from digital advertising (\$680B), enterprise AI (\$300–500B), and data brokerage (\$250–350B), the conservative floor estimate is approximately \$1.3 trillion per year. This unmeasured output accounts for a quantifiable fraction of the secular decline in the global labour share documented by Karabarbounis and Neiman (2014).



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Policy instruments. The paper proposes three institutional redesigns directly relevant to the European Platform Work Directive's regulatory framework: (1) an Algorithmic Monopsony Standard replacing the Consumer Welfare Standard for platform regulation, (2) an Algorithmic Severance Tax — a Pigouvian levy on data extraction calibrated to the empirically estimated shadow wage, and (3) a Cognitive Depreciation Allowance addressing endogenous human capital decay from prolonged algorithmic interface exposure.

Empirical identification. The proposed strategy uses Apple's App Tracking Transparency (ATT) framework as a natural experiment, enabling two-stage least squares estimation of the causal relationship between behavioural data extraction and platform revenue. The working paper is available on Zenodo: <https://zenodo.org/records/19544419>

**Keywords:** Algorithmic Management, Behavioral Data Labour, Zero-Wage Equilibrium, Digital Platform Economy, Entangled Time Model



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# Algorithmic deactivation and the limits of legal protection under the Platform Work Directive

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## Abstract

The rapid expansion of platform work across Europe has fundamentally reshaped the organisation of labour, placing algorithmic management at the centre of employment relations. Among the most critical yet underexplored dimensions of this transformation is algorithmic deactivation, whereby platform workers can be excluded from digital labour platforms through automated or semi-automated decision-making processes. In practise, deactivation often functions as a form of termination of the working relationship, yet it remains largely unregulated within traditional labour law frameworks. This paper examines whether and to what extent the Platform Work Directive (EU) 2024/2831 addresses the legal challenges posed by algorithmic deactivation. It argues that, despite introducing important safeguards concerning transparency, human oversight and the regulation of automated decision-making, the Directive does not fully resolve the structural gap between algorithmic control and labour law protection. In particular, the classification of platform workers as self-employed in many contexts continues to limit access to procedural guarantees typically associated with dismissal, including the right to be heard, the right to justification and access to effective remedies. The paper adopts a legal analytical approach, combining doctrinal analysis of the Directive with insights from emerging case law and policy developments at the EU level. It situates algorithmic deactivation within broader debates on employment classification, digital control and the fragmentation of employer responsibility. Particular attention is given to the tension between formal legal status and the reality of managerial control exercised through algorithms, raising the question of whether deactivation should be treated as a form of dismissal under EU labour law. In addition, the paper highlights the uneven implications of these regulatory gaps across different national contexts, including EU candidate countries where the Directive does not yet apply but where platform work is rapidly expanding. This perspective allows for a critical reflection on the external dimension of EU labour regulation and its limits, addressing transnational forms of digital labour. By framing algorithmic deactivation as a form of automated termination, the paper contributes to ongoing debates on the future of

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labour law in the platform economy. It calls for a redefinition of dismissal protection in light of algorithmic management and argues for stronger procedural and substantive safeguards to ensure that digital labour does not operate outside the reach of fundamental rights.

**Keywords:** algorithmic management, platform work, dismissal protection, algorithmic deactivation, labour law



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# Regulating algorithmic management: Legal gaps in the implementation of the Platform Work Directive, a comparative perspective.

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## Abstract

The rapid expansion of platform work across Europe has brought algorithmic management to the forefront of labour regulation, fundamentally reshaping how work is allocated, monitored and evaluated. From task assignment and performance rating to disciplinary decisions and deactivation, algorithmic systems increasingly operate as de facto managers, raising critical concerns regarding transparency, accountability and workers' rights. The challenges posed by algorithmic management extend to the core elements of the traditional employment relationship, namely its formation, the role of the employer and its termination. In platform work, these functions are increasingly performed by algorithmic systems, which mediate access to work, allocate tasks, evaluate performance and in some cases, trigger deactivation or termination. This transformation raises fundamental questions regarding the identification of the employer, the attribution of responsibility and the adequacy of existing legal frameworks. It also places significant pressure on EU member states to develop regulatory responses capable of adapting both legal doctrine and practise to the realities of digitally mediated work. In response, the Platform Work Directive introduces, for the first time at the EU level, a set of rules aimed at regulating algorithmic management in the workplace. These include obligations related to transparency, human oversight and the protection of workers against automated decision-making. This paper critically examines the extent to which these regulatory objectives are realised in practise by analysing emerging national approaches to the implementation of the Directive. Adopting a comparative perspective, the paper focuses on three jurisdictions, Spain, Germany and France, each of which reflects a distinct regulatory model. Spain has taken a proactive legislative approach, introducing transparency obligations concerning algorithmic management through the so-called "Rider Law". Germany, by contrast, relies primarily on data protection frameworks and the institutional role of works councils to



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mediate algorithmic control. France occupies an intermediate position, combining elements of judicial intervention and collective labour rights in addressing platform work. The analysis demonstrates that, despite the harmonising ambition of the Directive, significant divergences persist in how algorithmic management is regulated across Member States. These differences reflect not only variations in legal traditions and institutional capacity, but also the competing conceptions of the employment relationship and the role of collective representation. As a result, workers in similar platform-based roles may experience markedly different levels of protection depending on the national context. The paper identifies three key legal gaps in the current framework. First, the Directive establishes procedural safeguards without sufficiently addressing underlying power asymmetries between platforms and workers. Secondly, enforcement mechanisms remain fragmented, with limited coordination between labour inspectorates, data protection authorities and judicial actors. Third, the interaction between algorithmic management rules and broader labour law protections remains underdeveloped, creating uncertainty in the practical application of rights. The paper argues that regulating algorithmic management requires more than the formal transposition of EU rules; it demands a coherent integration of labour law, data protection, and collective rights at the national level. Without such alignment, the risk remains that the Directives' protective ambitions will be unevenly realised, reinforcing rather than reducing fragmentation in the governance of platform work.

**Keywords:** AI Act, digital labour platform, algorithmic management, Directive on Platform Work, labour rights



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# **Conference: Mapping the Transformation: Intersectional Analysis of Platform Work and the Shifting Labor Landscape**

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