The diversity of platform work and its implications for work and employment

International Symposium ‘Future of Work’

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Established in 1975

Based in Dublin

Brussels Liaison Office

Budget of € 20.5 million (2018)

91 staff members

EU agency

About Eurofound
What is platform work?

- Paid work
- Three parties involved
- Break-down of jobs into tasks
- On-demand services
Scale of platform work

- 8% do it at least once a month
- 6% as significant income
- 2% as main job

Coverage of DE, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IT, LT, NL, PT, RO, SE, SI, UK
Types of platform work in Europe

- Scale of tasks
- Skills level required
- Format of service provision
- Form of matching
- Selector

Eurofound identified 10 common types of platform work
Focus on three types of platform work

On-location platform-determined routine work

On-location worker-initiated moderately skilled work

Online contestant specialist work
On-location platform-determined routine work

- Low-skilled routine tasks
- Delivered in person
- Task assignment based on an offer and decided by the platform
- Young, male, highly educated workers
- To enter the labour market
- To earn additional income
On-location worker-initiated moderately skilled work

- Low to medium skilled tasks
- Delivered in person
- Task assignment based on an offer and decided by worker
- Male, highly educated workers
- Slightly older, more likely to have children
- Has another job
- Building client base
- Choice of tasks
Online contestant specialist work

- High skilled tasks
- Delivered online
- Task assignment based on contest and decided by client
- Male, highly educated workers
- Has another job
- Building client base
- Choice of tasks
- Opportunity to use creativity
## Employment and working conditions

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Key messages

Platform work is a small, but dynamically growing employment form.

It offers opportunities from a labour market and individual perspective...

... but also some challenges for the affected workers and related to established concepts and institutions.
Policy pointers

• Overarching key issue: employment status

• Need to consider heterogeneity in platform work

• Platform-determined platform work, e.g.
  – Standards of working conditions, incl. health and safety
  – Representation
  – Algorithms and ratings
  – Dispute resolution

• Worker-initiated platform work and online contests, e.g.
  – Transparency of information on tasks
  – Taxation of for side earnings
Emerging solutions: Eurofound’s web repository on the platform economy

Deutscher Crowdsourcing Verband (DCV) (German Crowdsourcing Association)

The German Crowdsourcing Association (DCV) provides information to its members, which may be individual persons, companies and/or organisations and functions as an advocacy group on their behalf. The DCV’s webpage mentions specifically that it represents the interests of its members and the entire German crowdsourcing industry, in particular in current regulatory initiatives. Affiliated with the DCV is the German Crowdfunding Network, which provides support to consultancies, platform operators, start-ups, scientists and capital providers from Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

Estonian Sharing Economy Association (Eesti Jagamismajanduse Liit)

In 2016, the NGO Eesti Jagamismajanduse Liit (Estonian Sharing Economy Association) was founded in Estonia. The founding members are a mix of work-related platforms and platforms following the wider understanding of the platform economy. Representatives of the association have met with the Estonian Minister of Economic Affairs and Infrastructure to discuss how the state can eliminate obstacles to their operations and to discuss opportunities for cooperation between the state and platforms.

Sharing Economy Denmark (SEDK)

Sharing Economy Denmark, SEDK, is an association that represents businesses in the Danish sharing economy sector. According to its webpage, the association provides ethical guidelines in collaboration with its members which aims to help “define, support, regulate and create trust” in the Danish sharing economy. Guidelines include the demand for member organisations to strive to improve the quality of user ratings, to provide clear and easily comprehensibly terms of use, to offer open and reasonable procedures to users, to install systems to appropriately address questions and complaints, to collect information of the impact of their businesses on the Danish economy.

http://eurofound.link/platformeconomy
Further reading

Employment and working conditions of selected types of platform work

http://eurofound.link/ef18001
Thank you for your attention!

eurofound.link/digitalage
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Working conditions (1)

- **Flexibility, autonomy and control**
  - Theoretical flexibility to select tasks, schedule, work organisation
  - Very limited for on-location platform-determined work:
    - schedules, sanctions for decline, monitoring by the platform
  - Autonomy in worker-initiated tasks, but monitoring and rating by clients
  - High for contests

- **Earnings**
  - Low, but predictable and market prices for on-location platform work
  - High unpredictability and potential for unpaid work in contests

- **Work intensity and working time quality**
  - Potentially long, unsocial working hours with limited breaks in on-location platform-determined work
  - Dependence on client in worker-initiated work
  - Potentially tight deadlines in contests
Working conditions (2)

• Health and safety
  – Locally delivered tasks: physically demanding, potential harassment, accidents, physical environment
  – Online tasks: computer- and posture-related
  – Higher risks due to youth, inexperience, lack of guidance and measures in place, stress, work intensity

• Social aspects
  – Good for work-life reconciliation
  – Limited contacts with the platform
  – Community-building in on-location platform-determined work
  – Client relations in worker-initiated work
  – Isolation in contests
Employment conditions

• **Employment status:**
  – Highest potential for misclassification for on-location platform-determined work

• **Labour market access:** In general, low entry barriers

• **Employability, transitions, career progression:**
  – Quasi non-existent within platform work
  – Limited prospects for on-location platform-determined work
  – Stepping stone to self-employment in worker-initiated tasks
  – Portfolio building in contests

• **Representation:**
  – Limited interest of worker-initiated and contestants
  – Some activities by traditional trade unions
  – Worker initiatives, but rather for information and exchange