Coordination by platforms
Implications on job quality

Workshop on Protecting Workers in the Online Platform Economy
Parallel session 3: Characteristics of online platform work and workers

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About Eurofound

- Established in 1975
- Based in Dublin
- Brussels Liaison Office
- Budget of €20.5 million (2018)
- 102 staff members
- EU agency
Eurofound’s understanding of platform work

- Paid work organised through online platforms
- Three parties involved:
  - Online platform
  - Client
  - Worker
- To conduct specific tasks or solve specific problems
- Form of outsourcing/contracting out
- Break-down of ‘jobs’ into ‘tasks’
- On-demand services

- No platforms for sales, accommodation, financial services
- No non-commercial transactions
Increasing heterogeneity within platform work

- Relationship between platform, client and worker
- Geographic scope of the platform
- Size of platform
- Market position of platform
- Sector, occupation
- Dynamism of platform

Platforms’ structural characteristics

- Scale
- Complexity
- Type of activities
- Required skills
- Format of service provision

Tasks

Platforms’ business model

- Transparency of client and worker
- Fees to platform
- Realisation of payments
- Conduct of platform
- Autonomy
- Additional services offered
- Type of contract between platform and worker
- Access to social protection
- Access to representation

Matching process

Accessibility

- Clients
- Technical
- Social
Impact on job quality (1)

- Labour market access
  - In general, low entry barriers
  - Technical and social eligibility criteria on some platforms
  - Ambiguous findings as regards discrimination

- Employment status
  - In general, legally unclear and determined by the platform
  - Main activity tends to be outside of platform work

- Social protection

- Representation
  - Some activities by traditional trade unions
  - Worker initiatives, but rather for information and exchange
  - Limited awareness (and interest?) of platform workers
Impact on job quality (2)

• Income
  – Unpredictability and insecurity
  – Unpaid working time notably in contests
  – Extent varies with the size of the tasks
  – Price competition in online tasks vs. market prices in local and high skill tasks
  – Often unclear taxation

• Working time and work-life balance
  – Strongly depends on whether platform work is the main source of income, but overall satisfied with work-life balance
  – Perception to need to be available at all times
  – Potential for long and anti-social hours (shift assignment)
  – Neglecting social and family life
  – Mentally occupied when not working
Impact on job quality (3)

- Flexibility, autonomy and control
  - Theoretical flexibility to select tasks, schedule, work organisation
  - High for contests and worker-initiated tasks
  - In other cases influenced by availability of tasks, algorithms, surveillance mechanisms, ratings
  - Information asymmetries

- Social and professional isolation

- Health and safety
  - Higher risks due to youth, inexperience, lack of guidance and measures in place, stress and work intensity
  - Locally delivered tasks: physically demanding, potential harassment, accidents, physical environment
  - Online tasks: computer and posture related
Impact on job quality (4)

• Work content, skills development
  – Limited in micro and locally delivered tasks
  – Good potential in online and higher skill tasks
  – Anecdotal evidence of limited intention to use platform work as skills enhancement

• Employability, transitions, career progression
  – Limited prospects in micro and low skill tasks
  – Stepping stone to self-employment in worker-initiated tasks
  – Portfolio building in contests

• Data privacy and data protection – data collection and use
• Intellectual property rights
• Conflict resolution mechanisms
Thank you for your attention!

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