# HANDBOOK ON MEASURING DIGITAL PLATFORM EMPLOYMENT AND WORK

## UNECE MEETING 14-16 MAY 2024
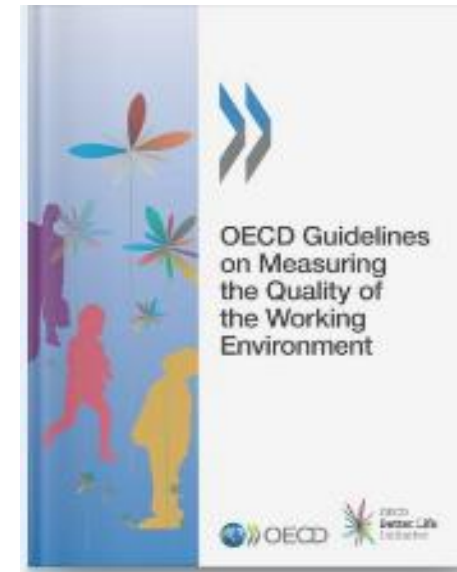
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OECD
BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

# MOTIVATION

# Activities of OECD/SDD-WISE on Quality of Employment

- ✓ **OECD Guidelines on Measuring QWE** designed for NSOs

- ✓ Academic research on **determinants of workers' health and well-being (Murtin et al., 2024)**

- ✓ **Employee well-being survey** at the disposal of companies and other stakeholders

# The Handbook: Rationale and history of the project

- **Work mediated by online platforms** raises several *policy challenges* (job quality, legal rights and work protections) as well as *measurement challenges that this Handbook aims to address*.

- **2018**: Future of Work project (OECD /ELS&STI);  implementation of the COLLEEM survey (JRC); ILO issues a Resolution at ICLS-18 and creates a new category of "dependent contractors".

- **2019**: ESTAT establishes a LAMAS Task Force to pilot a survey module in LFS 2022

- **2020:** Creation of the Technical Expert Group in charge of completing this Handbook: OECD-ILO-EC (DG EMPL, Eurostat, JRC, Eurofound) +14 NSOs

- **2021**: EC Directive on "Working conditions of people working through digital labour platforms"

- **2022**: Presentation of the draft Handbook at CSSP and finalisation

- **2023**: Publication of the Handbook (3 April); AMPWork survey (JRC); discussions at ICLS-23 last October

Handbook on Measuring Digital Platform Employment and Work

# Key issue: operationalising platform employment and work

- In general, platform workers are individuals who:

  **i) use a platform offering integral services (i.e. customers can pay workers)**
  **ii) are matched with customers**
  **iii) provide a service**
  **iv) in return for money**

- This concept is **operationalised differently** across countries

| Canada | Canada Internet Use survey | Provided platform-based peer-to-peer services or online freelancing |
|---|---|---|
| Denmark | Denmark's Labour Force Survey | Performed work through websites or apps (e.g. Uber) |
| EU Member states | Eurostat Community Survey on ICT Usage and e-commerce in Households and by Individuals | obtained paid work by using an intermediary website or apps |
| Finland | Finland's Labour Force Survey 2017 | Earned income through capital or labour platforms |
| France | Ad Hoc module of the European LFS (6th wave sample) | Self-employed in main job that contact clients through a platform or a third party business |
| Switzerland | Swiss LFS | Provided taxi or other services via an internet platform or mobile application |
| United Kingdom | UK ONS | Used an online platform to find work |
| United States | Bureau of Labour Statistics Contingent Worker Supplement | Use a platform for digitally or physically delivered tasks |
| | US CPS Computer and Internet Use supplement | Offered services via the internet |
| | FED Report on the Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2017. Survey of Households Economics and Decision-making (SHED) | Secondary income from online tasks or ride sharing |

# Survey practices have not been aligned…

There were many differences across NSOs surveys, for instance:

- **Concept**: paid work? Specific activity?
- **Reference period**: last 12 months/6 months/week
- **Frequency and intensity of activity**: Yes/No
- **Definition of platform work in survey**: Yes/No
- **Examples of platforms named**: Yes/No
- **Reference to earned income**: Yes/No
- **Labour vs. Non-labour platform**: Yes/No
- **Breakdown of activities**: Yes/No

# ...leading to low consistency across sources

*There is little consistency across different estimates*
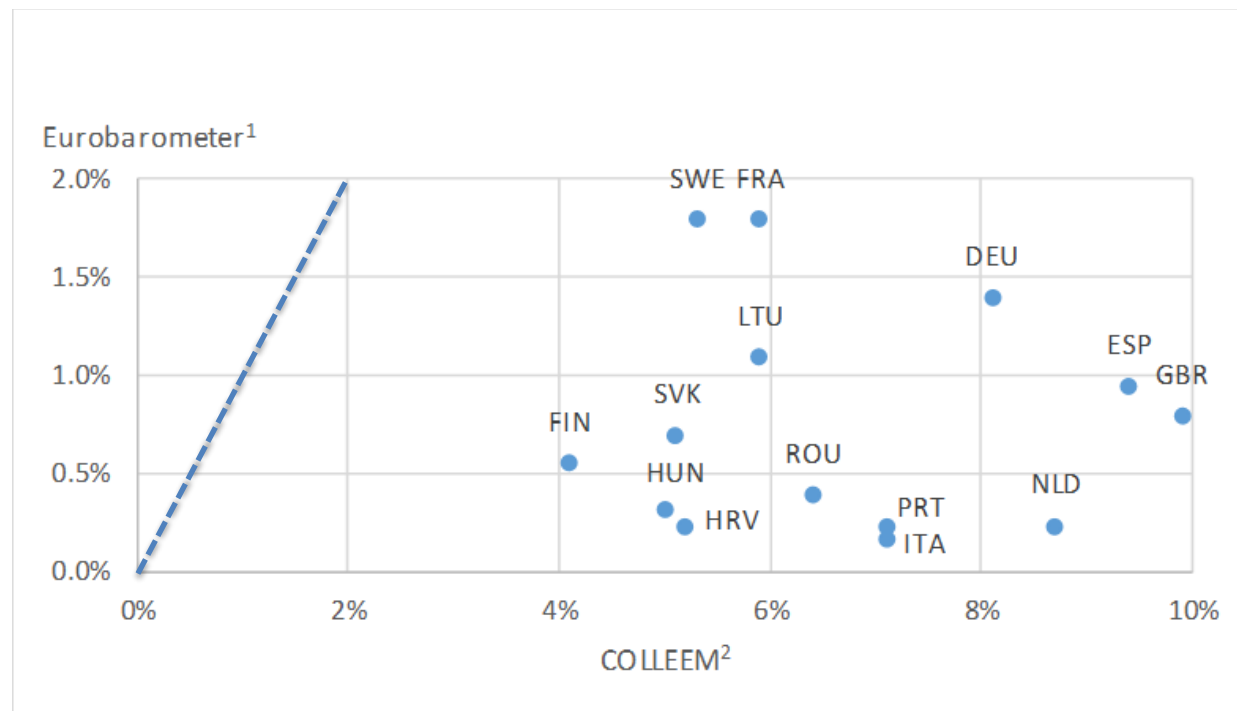


*Source*: OECD, based on data from Eurobarometer (2016) and Pesole et al. (2018).

# OVERVIEW OF THE HANDBOOK

# Why looking at Digital Platform Employment (DPE)?
## Ch.2, *OECD/WISE & ELS, JRC*

Chapter 2 lists key **Policy issues in relation to gig work**:

- Collective bargaining rights
- Fair pay
- Working time
- Dispute resolution
- Occupational safety
- Social responsibility of platforms
- Training for job opportunities
- Bringing DPW into the tax and benefit systems
- Cross-border issues

Builds the case for the **Statistical Agenda: address diverging measures and diverging concepts**

**Figure 1.1: Estimates of platform work in 16 European countries by frequency and income earned**

Percentage of the working age population

Legend:
- Ever PW
- Freq PW
- > 10 hrs
- > 25% inc
- Main
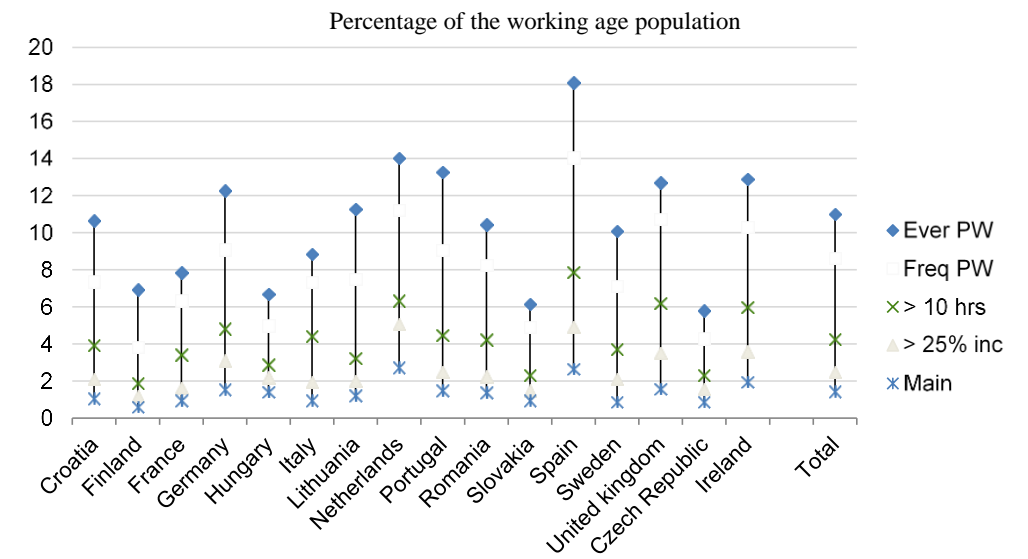
*Source: 2018 JRC COLLEEM survey*

# What is Digital Platform Work?
## Ch.3, *ILO*

In line with already existing standards on labour statistics, Ch. 3 provides:

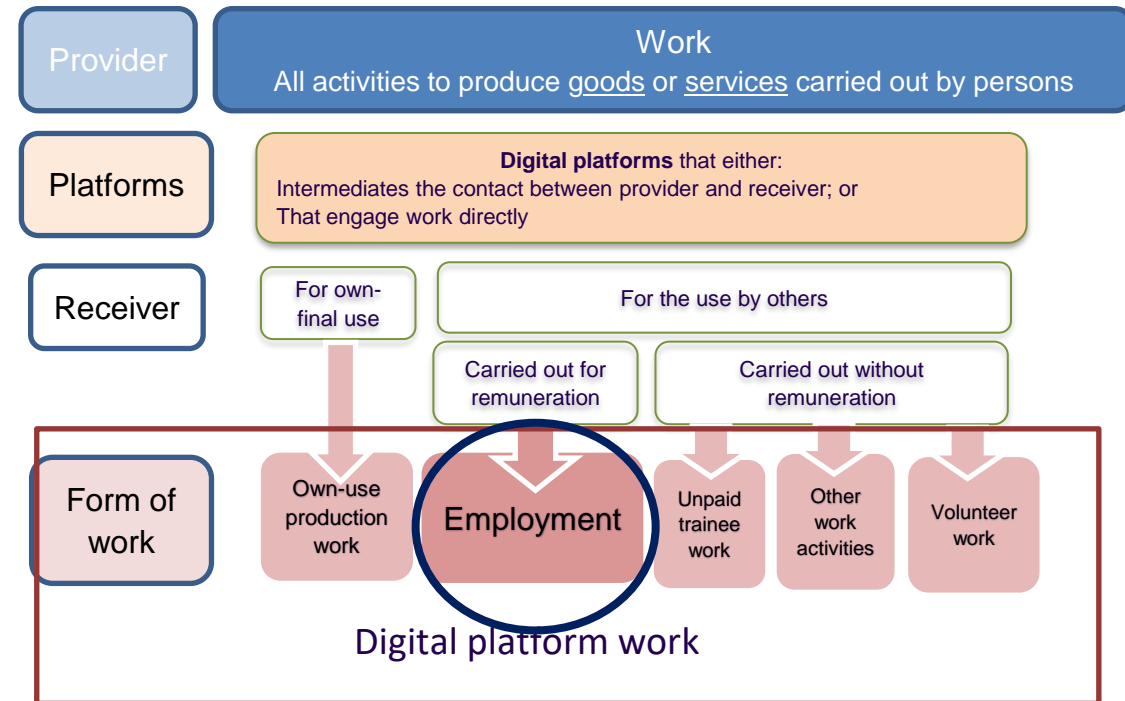- A **conceptual framework** for digital platform work with a focus on employment
- **Operational definitions** of digital platforms and digital platform employment
- A **typology** of digital platforms
- **Practical recommendations** for how to deal with the special challenges that surround digital platform employment

| Provider | Work<br>All activities to produce goods or services carried out by persons | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Platforms | **Digital platforms** that either:<br>Intermediates the contact between provider and receiver; or<br>That engage work directly | | | | | |
| Receiver | For own-final use | For the use by others | | | | |
| | | | Carried out for remuneration | Carried out without remuneration | | |
| Form of work | Own-use production work | Employment | Unpaid trainee work | Other work activities | Volunteer work | |

Digital platform work

# Ch.3, cont. - Proposed general definitions of digital platforms and digital platform employment

- Digital platform can be viewed as a digital service that:
  - ➤ enables the interaction between the provider and the receiver OR
  - ➤ that directly engages a worker to provide a service for the platform

- *Definition of DPE: Any activity to produce goods or services for pay or profit carried out by persons through or on a digital platform or a phone app and:*
  - ➤ *the digital platform or a phone app* **controls and/or organizes** *essential aspects of the activities, such as intermediating with the clients or providing the tools needed for conducting the work, facilitates payments and distributes and prioritize the work to be conducted; and*
  - ➤ *the work is for at least one hour in the reference period.*

# Critical review of previous statistical initiatives
## Ch. 4, *OECD/STI (L. Russo & P. Montagnier)*

- **Terminology and definitions not harmonized** across countries
- **No optimal approach** to capture all aspect of digital platform employment:

➢ **Different survey vehicles are complementary**, e.g. official surveys likely to be the best tool to estimate total number of digital platform workers, other methods may provide complementary insights;

➢ **Choice of method depends on research objectives**, resources available, and trade-offs faced by statistical agencies or researchers.

| Method | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---|---|---|
| Labour Force Survey | • Same sampling frame as general statistics on labour market → comparability with overall data on labour market | • Could be unreliable in coverage of secondary jobs and self-employment<br>• Small absolute number of digital platform workers may hinder further analysis of their characteristics<br>• Past week as reference period not suitable to capture occasional digital platform workers<br>• Difficulties in understanding the question may lead to unreliable results or overestimates<br>• Small differences in question wording may have a large effect on estimates |
| ICT Usage Survey | • Same sampling frame as for statistics on ICT → comparability with other aspects of online activities and the digital economy | • Small sample size, associated with small absolute number of platform workers, reduces reliability of findings<br>• Difficulties in understanding the question may lead to unreliable results or overestimates |
| Ad-hoc Survey | • Higher flexibility compared to official surveys, it could explore a wider spectrum of issues<br>• Lower cost of online surveys | • Potential selection and sampling biases<br>• Potential measurement bias linked to survey method used<br>• Monetary incentives given to respondents may bias the results<br>• The above biases reduce comparability |
| Administrative data (tax data) | • No issues related to sample size and techniques<br>• Lower burden on data providers<br>• Lower cost of data collection | • Potential problems of timeliness, relevance and accuracy<br>• Often no distinction of digital platform employment from broader non-standard work<br>• Differences in administrative systems across countries<br>• Potential underestimation due to blurred regulatory boundaries, cross-border nature of digital platforms, underreporting by workers and if source of income not identifiable |
| Big data | • Reliable results | • Results not representative<br>• No access to underlining (privately-owned) data |
| Web-scraping | • Real-time updates<br>• Comparability across time | • May be difficult to extend to platforms in other languages<br>• May provide trends but not absolute numbers<br>• Ethical issues (data used for other purposes than those consent was given to) |

# Drawing practical lessons from past initiatives
## Ch.5, *ESTAT, ILO, OECD/WISE*

- This chapter **draws lessons from different testing exercises** as it reviews:

    1. Labour force surveys (US, CHE, SGP, ESTAT)

    2. ICT use surveys (CAN)

    3. Business surveys (FRA)

    3. Tax registers (BEL)

    4. Ad hoc surveys (JRC)

    5. Commercial data and big data

- Each source is reviewed according to a **common template** informing: i) Original purpose of analysis; ii) Reference population and sampling; iii) Implied operational definition; iv) Key results and learned lessons

# A convenient tool to define the conceptual scope of surveys

BLS survey 2017

Eurostat LFS pilot survey 2022

# Measurement recommendations (1)

- **General recommendations**: i) measuring the concept described by the definition of DPE in Ch.2; ii) use filter questions to identify DPE; iii) put a low cognitive burden on respondent

- **LFS:**
  - Tool n.1 to measure the number of DP workers and employees
  - Disentangle various activities (DPE, unpaid work…)
  - Document the frequency of DPE, including during the reference week
  - Avoid platform naming in introduction, can use names in follow-up questions
  - Document status in employment based on new ICSE-18 classification

# Measurement recommendations (2)

- **Business surveys:**
  - ➤ Align definition of DP with that used by LFS
  - ➤ Document the importance of DPE for business turnover
  - ➤ Update the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) to capture platform companies
- **Ad hoc surveys:**
  - ➤ Should be routinely used to describe DPW experience across countries
  - ➤ Should share some questions with working condition surveys (EWCS, ISSP…)
- **Big data and commercial data**:
  - ➤ More data sharing agreements with platform companies