Presentations index

ORIGAMI

ORIGAMI PROJECT

Final conference

EECS, Brussels

20 November 2025

Project recap

- Project name: ORIGAMI (hOme caRe dIGital platforMs and Industrial relations)
- Funded by DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion – EMPLC – Quality Jobs, Working Conditions and Social Dialogue "Improving expertise in the field of industrial relations – SOCPL-2022-IND-REL-01"
- Duration: 24 months (November 2023 – October 2025, extended to December 2025)
- A comparative approach: the research is carried out in Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain
- Research focus: platforms providing caregiving and cleaning services in domestic contexts
- Research question: What features characterise platforms in this sector, and what specificities arise from the welfare needs and regulatory frameworks of different countries?

https://origamiproject.it/

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Digital Care Platforms in Ireland

Podcast

ORIGAMI

Home Care Digital Platforms
and Industrial Relations

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CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore

↘ with Caroline Murphy

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The landscape of care and cleaning platforms

We have found 69 platforms

	Carers	Cleaners	Carers and cleaners	Tot.
Denmark	0	1	1	2
France	2	8	4	14
Ireland	1	2	2	5
Italy	8	6	11	25
Netherland	1	7	5	13
Spain	3	4	3	10
Tot.	15	28	26	69

Our classification proposal

Two classification criteria

1) Organization of work – degree of centralization of organizational functions
i. Matching yes: the matching is directly governed by the platform
ii. Matching no: the matching is governed by the client or by third-party businesses operating inside the platform

2) Working conditions – formalization of the employment relationship
i. Contract yes: the platform directly or indirectly intervenes in the formalization of the employment relationship
ii. Contract no: the platform does not intervene in the formalization of the employment relationship

Our classification proposal

Matching yes

Digital agency
(n=22)

On demand
(n=12)

Contract yes ——————————————————— Contract no

Regulated
marketplace
(n=4)

Marketplace
(n=31)

Matching no

Key dimensions of Platform Model Heterogeneity

	Marketplace (n=31)	Digital agency (n=22)	On demand (n=12)	Regulated marketplace (n=4)
International scale	45%	9%	0%	25%
Visibility of profiles	84%	41%	66%	75%
Reputational system	81%	50%	83%	25%
Centralized price-making	3%	68%	67%	50%
Replacement service	3%	59%	33%	25%

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Classification by country

	Marketplace	Digital agency	On demand	Regulated marketplace	Tot.
Denmark	1	0	0	1	2
France	6	4	4	0	14
Ireland	3	0	1	1	5
Italy	12	8	3	2	25
Netherland	6	5	2	0	13
Spain	3	5	2	0	10
Tot.	31	22	12	4	69

Findings

Country	Care & IR Model	Expectations Toward Platforms	Observed Outcomes	Explanation of Differences
Denmark	Strong public services, centralized IR (social democratic)	Platforms expected to complement public care while respecting collective agreements (digitalisation)	Limited presence; regulated models with union involvement (e.g., Hilfr)	Low market demand; strong regulation and union capacity limit expansion
France	Mixed public-private care, formal IR, collective agreements (corporatist)	Platforms can enter the system if they conform to existing standards	Strong presence of marketplaces, mainly in cleaning	Presence of intermediaries but development of platforms outside the regulatory framework.
Italy	Familialist model, informality, fragmented IR	Platforms expected to fill public care gaps flexibly and informally	High number of platforms; dominance of marketplaces	High unmet demand, weak regulation, informal practices, and marginal role of unions and the state
Spain	Hybrid (familialist/corporatist), with growing regulatory efforts (delivery and algorithmic management)	Development of platforms outside the regulatory framework	Growth of digital agencies (e.g., Cuideo)	Family-based demand + regulatory tools support digital agencies
Netherlands	Liberal-universalist, care individualized, weak IR in care	Marketplaces, mostly in the household services	Platform mostly in the household services; some effects via litigation	Individualized care, unclear regulation, and flexible models fill institutional gaps
Ireland	Liberal regime, privatized care, union organising but not in platform work	Platforms expected to function as private market providers	Dominance of marketplaces with low transparency and regulation	Residual welfare model and lack of platform-specific regulation allow fragmented development

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Limitation to the comparative analysis

- There is no reliable data on the number of users of each platform

- The variation in how the sector is defined across the countries. Categorisation based on formal qualifications and agencies types of agreement (France), location of the work (Ireland and the Netherlands), the type of employer (Italy), the legal employment framework (Spain) or the type of care provided (Denmark).

- Convergence towards optional familialism model

- Obstacles to industrial relations (the work is often not perceived as such; a significant proportion of the work is undeclared; the workforce often consists of individuals with weak bargaining positions). Main challenges: formalisation and professionalisation

Limitation to the comparative analysis

1. Platform heterogeneity, that partly reflects and reproduces welfare and labor market configurations → we need to conceptualize platforms not only as disruptive actors but also as potential institutional innovators within care ecosystems.

2. Regulation matters but in fragmented and uneven ways → we need to explore how legal, fiscal, and social protection tools are (or fail to be) mobilized in response to platformization, and by whom.

3. Digital agencies show potential for formalizing work and improving worker protections, yet stratification risks persist → we should critically examine the promises and limits of "formalization through platforms", especially regarding care quality, workers' agency, and social equity.

4. Scarce presence of industrial relations, but where mobilized, they produce tangible effects — through existing collective agreements (France, Denmark), litigation (Netherlands), and regulatory spillovers from adjacent sectors (Spain) → could these fragmented initiatives pave the way for the development of new models of labour regulation in the platformized care economy?

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ORIGAMI – FINAL CONFERENCE

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Investing the highly regulated French care sector through a platform: the case of a digital agency

Origami's final conference

Nicole Teke-Laurent, Clémence Ledoux, Lorena Poblete, Annie Dussuet, Pascal Caillaud

Nantes Université

cnrs

The French version of a digital agency: a "mandataire" model in a highly structured sector

- Focus on care platforms

- French landscaping (14 platforms): 3 care, 3 care and cleaning, 8 cleaning platforms

- Necesity to adapt to strong regulations

- Digital agencies → an entry through the « mandataire model »

A dense legal framework for providers of care

Direct employment (*salariés du particulier employeur*)

Mandataire mode

Prestataire mode
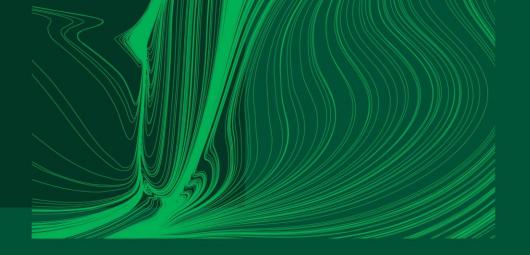
DigitSoin – a care digital agency

- Created in 2016 / National level

- Digital agency – a digitalized version of a proxy agency under the *mandataire* regime

- Services provided to more than 6,000 families

- From 20 agencies in 2022 to more than 100 agencies in 2024

- Strong investment in digitalization : fundraising of 3M€, enabled to triple their team dedicated to R&D for algorithmic management and AI

- Member of an employers' union

Low impact for the sector

- 6 interviews : 1 founder, 6 workers
- Aged 31 to 75 years old
- Often career change (burnout, care of a family member)
- Advantages : more autonomy ; access to work ; replacements
- But: few distinctions with other forms of mandataire agencies.
- Barriers to entry are stronger than for other kinds of activities, such as cleaning, due to strong regulations for the care sector.

Conclusion

A case study of transition: from traditional care agency to a digital platform model

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Digital Labour Platforms in Care

- Context: care provision and workforce in Ireland

- Model: long term care provision

- Key lessons : future of care sector

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Ireland Care Requirements in 2025-2040

- By 2040, one in five people in Ireland will be over age 65

- The over 85 population is projected to double

- Demand for long term care at home support hours, expected to grow by 91% by 2040 (Economic and Social Research Institute, 2025)

- Based on 2020 figures the vast majority of home care is paid for by government/state funding

- Difficult to estimate the extent to which care may be sourced and paid for informally.

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Irish Care Provision Context

- Unlike residential care, no statutory right to home-based care enshrined in legislation (though reform is proposed)

- Social care services funded from general taxation and managed by the Health Service Executive (HSE), either directly or by a list of approved external providers in different localities.

- The Home Support Service scheme is aimed at those over the age of 65 who may need support to continue living at home. Assessment is based on medical needs ,not means tested on a financial basis.

- The Consumer Directed Home Support Scheme (CDHS). This applies where an individual is approved for the Home Support Service but where the HSE does not have resources available to deliver the service (e.g. location of carers).

- Additional supports, above the level funded by the HSE, must be privately funded.

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Workforce

- 18,000 home care workers in Ireland.

- The HSE employs over 5,300 and the remaining 13,000 are in the private and nonprofit sector

- Strategic Workforce Advisory Group was established in March 2022 to examine, and formulate recommendations to address, the challenges in frontline carer roles in the home support and long-term residential care sectors.

- Home care workers were not included in the list of jobs eligible for a work permit until 2023.

- The scheme for work permits in Ireland is operated on an 'employer-led' basis, making it difficult for family carers to employ a home care worker to provide care in the home independently of organisations.

- Informal market

- When it comes to career status and progression a study by Timonen and Lolich (2019) of care workers in Ireland found that sector was not viewed as attractive

A new model

HomeCareDirect.ie
Transforming The Way We Care

- Online platform for personal care services

- Founded in 2018

- Emerging from a traditional care Irish based care agency

- Embracing a local, sustainable approach to care provision

- Unique offering in the Irish home care landscape, where digital platforms are relatively rare in the care sector..

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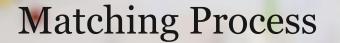
Relational model of care

- Approach based on two important pillars : having a well-paid and motivated carer and having the same carer consistently

- The organisation has been a vocal advocate for changes in the design of home care services nationally, arguing that payment arrangements between the commissioning body (Health Services Executive) and traditional homecare agencies need to be more prescriptive to ensure that carers receive fair pay.

- HCD's strategy has been to attract workers from an untapped labour market of individuals who are not currently in the workforce but would be willing to take up locally based care roles.

- The model aims to make care a more sustainable career through providing better incomes and flexibility for workers: *"One of the reasons we have a capacity issue in the home care sector with carers is that caring presently isn't a very attractive career." (HCD, Manager).*

Worker Profiles

- Mainly female workforce

- Relatively mix of Irish and migrant workers

- Many have care experience from previous roles working with agencies as employees

- More experienced care workers with existing speciality training in areas of care work such as dementia care, autism care and skilled in performing specialised care tasks

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Matching Process

- **Limited algorithmic intervention**

- **Review but not a rating system**

- **Client can choose from carers based on qualifications,, experience and the fee rate listed on profiles**

- **Initial contact via the organisation and directly between client and carer thereafter**
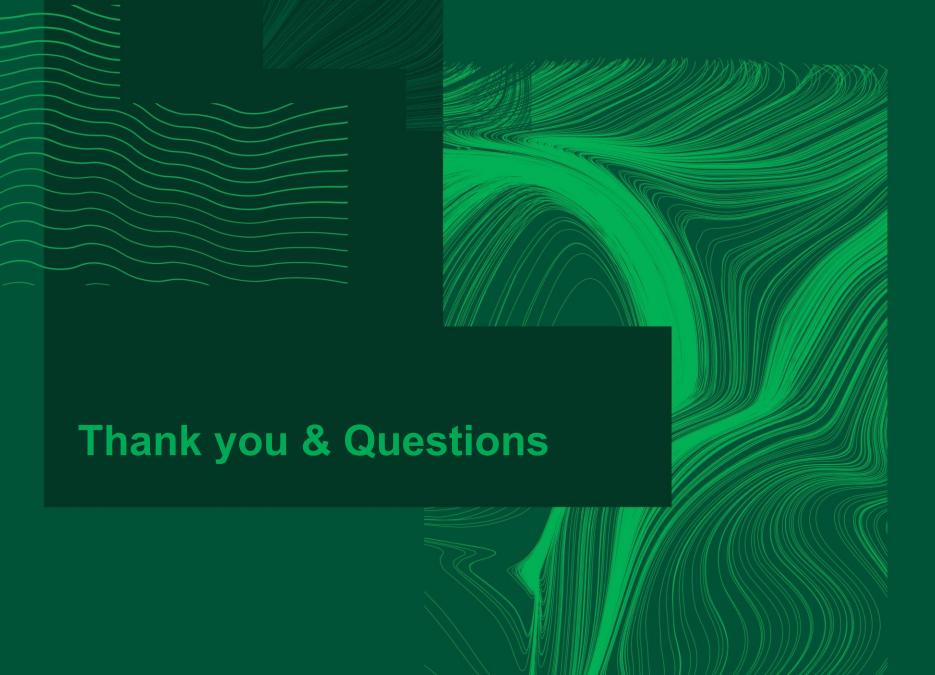
Workers experiences

- Can referred to ability to earn substantially more than they previously made with agencies.

- Workers appreciate the stability of hours, predictability of routine and higher income

- Ability to have direct communication with clients around their needs fostering a more personal and fulfilling work environment. Found Clients generally very honest on demands of the job

- Performs a range of tasks from care to housework but always on the basis of care work is what is requested, therefore do not do roles that solely involve the provision of domestic tasks

- Care beyond the front door approach

- Common to know other workers on the platform and be able to swap and arrange care as a group

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Lessons

- Matching carers and clients as locally as possible

- An element not often addressed in relation to care, is the aging demographic of the care workforce itself. Where a worker is fit and wishes to continue to engage in care work, the platform model facilitates them to do so.

- Acknowledgement that the model is may not be suitable for all carers or all clients but has capacity to address unmet needs for particular cohorts

- Long term training and development of the care workforce

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Thank you & Questions

Final conference ORIGAMI Project, 20 November 2025

The case of CUIDEO: Stepping stone towards formal employment or perpetuation of precarity?

Óscar Molina
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Institut d'Estudis del Treball – IET
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

Introduction to the CUIDEO case

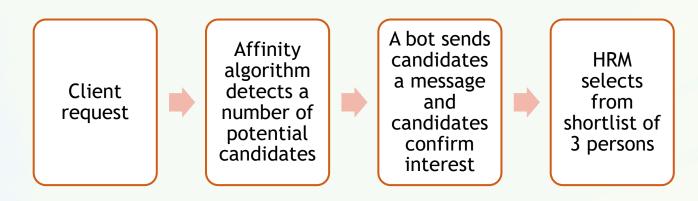- Biggest digital care placement agency in Spain
- Founded 2016, large investment rounds; rapid national expansion to become first agency
- Three (actually four) service models:
  - Cuideo Selección
  - Felizvita (Madrid and Barcelona)
  - Cuideo Assist
  - Recently opened its first day-care residence in Barcelona as direct care provider
- Presents itself as a technological solution to care shortages

How Cuideo works?

- Worker onboarding (CV + interview + vetting)
- Family needs assessment
- Cuideo Affinity algorithm → shortlist of candidates
- WhatsApp bots + human HR oversight
- Contract handled either by Cuideo or by families with Cuideo's admin support

| Client request | → | Affinity algorithm detects a number of potential candidates | → | A bot sends candidates a message and candidates confirm interest | → | HRM selects from shortlist of 3 persons |

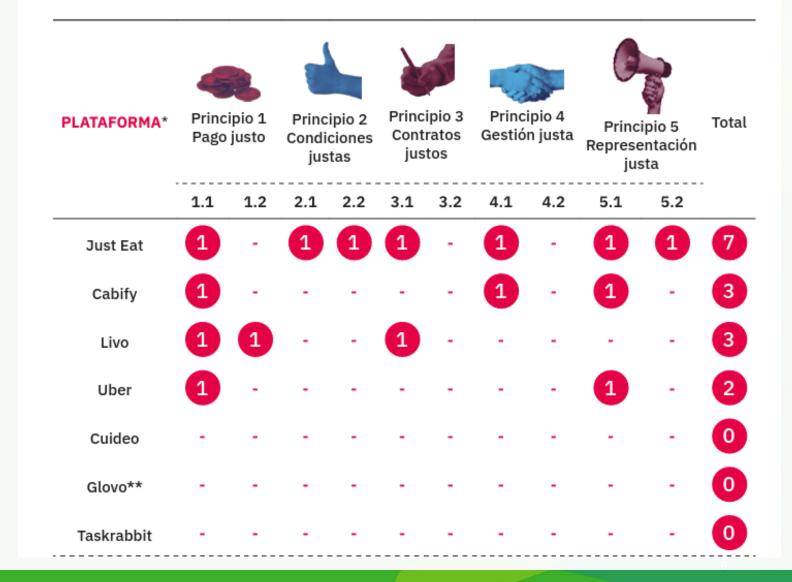# Algorithmic matching at Cuideo

- Semi-automated matching

- Selection influenced strongly by client ratings

- Lack of transparency on algorithmic weighting

- No real-time monitoring, but high reputational pressure to achieve good ratings from clients to get new job offers

- Risk of discriminatory client preferences influencing matches

Working conditions and worker experiences

- Mostly migrant women, 40–55
- Mixed formalization:
  - More structured than other platforms like Care.com
  - Still widespread underpayment, unpaid hours, and pressure to perform extra domestic tasks
- High rotation, low professional identity, weak collective organization
- Perceived risks: physical strain, emotional burden, reputational pressure

Working conditions

- Fairwork work project
- Ratings for Cuideo Selección
- 19/11/2025 Cuideo published an article requesting the right to rectification for what it considers false information

PLATAFORMA*	Principio 1 Pago justo		Principio 2 Condiciones justas		Principio 3 Contratos justos		Principio 4 Gestión justa		Principio 5 Representación justa		Total
	1.1	1.2	2.1	2.2	3.1	3.2	4.1	4.2	5.1	5.2	
Just Eat	1	-	1	1	1	-	1	-	1	1	7
Cabify	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	3
Livo	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3
Uber	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	2
Cuideo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Glovo**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Taskrabbit	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0

Cuideo in the Spanish care sector

- Claims to formalize part of a highly informal sector

- Improves administrative processes but not necessarily job quality (at least in Cuideo Selección)

- No signs of workers' organization within Cuideo (either in Selección or Felizvita)
  - Care platforms have established together with family organisations, a new actor (AESPD) whose aim is to participate in CB

Thank you very much

Social dialogue and innovative social strategies on care and cleaning platforms across Europe

Anna Ilsøe, FAOS/UCPH
Liv Bjerre, FAOS/UCPH

20 NOVEMBER 2025

Building on innovative case studies

Five case studies examining social partners' strategies – or the absence thereof – in addressing working conditions for care and cleaning workers in the platform economy:

- Denmark (Ilsøe & Bjerre 2025)

- France (Ledoux & Teke 2025)

- Ireland (Murphy, Ryan & Gibbons 2025)

- Italy (Pais 2025)

- The Netherlands (Hesselink & Been 2025)

Aim

- **Compare** the findings from the national country case studies

- Discuss their wider **potentials for informing ways to regulate and strengthen social dialogue** in these subsectors of the European platform economy

Which types of initiatives?

- Drawing on three strands of literature:

- Industrial relations/employment relations

    - Asymmetry of bargaining power

    - Mobilisation to balance the bargaining power

- Social dialogue

All types of negotiations, consultations, participation and information exchange between, or among, representatives of governments, employers and workers, on issues of common interest (ILO 2024)

- Neo-corporatism, three arenas:

    - Unilateral, bipartite, tripartite

Methodology – case studies

Case selection and data collection

- Purposeful sampling: relevance and richness (from a limited population)
- Desk research + interviews

Within-case analyses

- Institutional framework of labour market regulation
- Regulation of digital labour platforms
- Empirical case context
- Initiative (description, stakeholders, motivations, process, outputs   and outcomes)
- Challenges and implications

- Across-case analysis
- Examine the different stages in the development of initiatives,moving from their initiation and development through their implications to their viability

Cases

Country	Case	Sector	Focus	Interviewees (37 interviews)
Denmark	Hilfr	Cleaning	Collective agreement (bipartite)	Platform Manager Workers Union Government (Total of 5 interviews)
France	Right to occupational health	Cleaning + Care	State-led regulatory reform implemented via collective agreements (unilateral + bipartite)	Government Employers' associations Provider federation Unions Workers (Total of 8 interviews)
Ireland	None	Cleaning + Care	The absence of social dialogue (tripartite)	Government Employers' association Unions Worker's rights organisation Cleaning company (Total of 10 interviews)
Italy	The Family Assistant project	Care	Municipal initiative for formalising platform care work (unilateral)	Municipality Cooperative (training provider) Platform provider Labour agency Unions Workers (Total of 11 interviews)
The Netherlands	Helpling	Cleaning	Union-led court case (unilateral)	Unions Platform (Total of 3 interviews)

Results – Visibility and agenda setting

- Existing conditions and regulations decrease agenda setting

- Visibility of platform work (number and profile of workers) → enabling factor, but neither sufficient nor necessary factor

- Invisible workforce + challenges unionising of domestic and migrant workers → under the radar

- Actors with interests in governing platform work or in negotiating collective agreements (reflecting IR regimes) → agenda setting

- Scope of coverage: narrowly targeted or unilateral → easier to develop

Results – Implications of initiatives

- Varying kinds of binding results, but common denominator: recognition of platform workers as employees/agency workers

- → Access to a range of labour rights and protections
    - Barrier: lack of knowledge (÷ information, language barriers)

- Enforcement unclear

- Unintended outcomes:
    - Potential to weaken traditional union bargaining efforts (IT)
    - Platforms adjust to avoid regulation (NL)

Results – Viability of initiatives

Organisation and **representation** over time

- Employee status → enable association and collective representation
- Employer status clarification: Multiple employers (FR, IT) complicates collective organisation
- IR system can help mitigate these barriers (FR)

Formalisation

- Formalisation → anchoring → sustainability
- Range from collective agreements (DK, FR), to a formalised municipal collaboration (IT), to court rulings (NL)
- Formalisation may be a necessary, but not a sufficient factor
  - IT: project-based nature, limited support from social partners
  - NL: lengthy legal processes ☐ adapt business models)

Arena

- Bipartite/tripartite anchoring ☐ long-term viability

Barriers

- Mobilisation in practice, e.g. DK: few of the Hilfr employees are union members

Conclusion

- Illustrative examples, not representative/generalizable

- Innovative initiatives can emerge when actors mobilize around shared concerns

- Initiatives are more likely to succeed when supported by all key stakeholders

- New arenas and constellations of actors may complement rather than replace traditional industrial relations

- The cases illustrate alternative routes for embedding protections in fragmented and often informal sectors

- Challenges: difficulty of establishing and maintaining traditional industrial relation actors

- EU Platform Work Directive – will national presumption rules be implemented and enforced for workers on cleaning and care platforms?

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- Project history:

Local initiative launched in 2023 by a small municipality in the North of Italy (Piazzola sul Brenta – Padua), funded by the Veneto Region under a programme supporting Active Aging..

- Strategic aims of the project:

1. Addressing low-intensity family needs (accompaniment, companionship, etc.)
2. Combining labour regulation with workers' flexibility needs (supporting women employment)
3. Creating a new professional figure — the **Family Assistant** — distinct from the more conventional role of the **carer** in terms of the nature of the tasks performed (minor support services) and the temporary character of the employment relationship

- (Ideally) a **two-step process**: initial municipal support → transition to cooperative-led self-sustainability.

Project consortium

Four key actors:

1. **Municipalities** (Piazzola sul Brenta, in collaboration with several neighbouring municipalities): overall coordination of the project

2. **Social Cooperative** (Cooperativa Jonathan): design and delivery of a 13-hour training course for workers

3. **Digital provider** (WelfareX–CGMoving – cooperatives consortium): creation of the digital infrastructure to facilitate the matching between families and assistants

4. **Cooperative employment agency** (Cooperjob):

– Handles the regularization of the employment relationship under the National Domestic Workers Collective Agreement.

– The client is the employer, but salary payments and social security contributions are managed by the employment agency.

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A **one–sided social dialogue model**, public–led and cooperative–supported:

After initial attempts to involve trade unions and trade associations, the municipality took full control of the project in cooperation with partner cooperatives

Unions showed resistance and low interest, due to:
1) Limited familiarity with platform work in personal care.
2) Concerns about the introduction of new market intermediaries in a sector already marked by informality

On the other hand, interviews with workers indicate that trade unions are not seen as a point of reference, often due to previous negative experiences.

Platform cooperativism is a global movement encompassing projects or businesses that primarily use a digital interface to sell goods or services while relying on democratic decision-making and shared ownership of the platform by workers and users (Scholz, 2023)

Literature has focused primarily on startups, but now also cooperatives or cooperative federations that decide to implement a platform to supplement their business operations are emerging (Bunders, 2021; Mannan & Pek, 2021)

This study offered an opportunity to assess whether some of the challenges identified for platform cooperatives could be mitigated by leveraging existing cooperative actors, or, rather, whether cooperative-run platforms remain vulnerable to the typical risks of platformization and to the isomorphic and competitive pressures that often emerge as they scale.

1. **Training:** workers' access to the platform is restricted to those who have completed the training
   – Driver of professionalization for workers
   – Accountability towards clients

2. **Task specialization:** matching process based on the description of specific job tasks

3. **Formalization of employment relation**
   – Workers receive full social protections and wages above minimum standards
   – However, they do not lose flexibility in organizing their work: they can choose which job offers to accept based on time/place and the specific job tasks required.

4. **Governance model:** partial alignment with the platform cooperativism principles
   – While the platform is not formally a cooperative, the key actors involved in the consortium are cooperatives (managing core functions such as training, employment relations, and matching infrastructure)

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1. **For workers:**
   – Regularization of the employment relation (formal contracts and higher wages)
   – Driver of professionalization (training initiatives)
   – Flexibility in terms of tasks preferences and working hours.

2. **For families**
   – Reliable, pre–screened workers;
   – Reduced risk of informal arrangements.
   – Trust enforced by municipal endorsement.

3. **For municipalities:**
   – Welfare innovation without direct provision of services

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1. **Administrative burden for both workers and clients**: a new contract is required for every service provided (e.g., 1 hour of companionship).

2. **Limited reach of the initiative**: small municipality size (< 15,000 residents) limits the project reach (at the time of our study, only a few job offers had been registered)

3. **Economic sustainability**: long-term financial viability of the project is uncertain once public funding ends.

4. **Scalability issues**: Project strongly tied to local territorial structures and difficult to be replied in other contexts.

5. **Social actors' involvement**: Exclusion of unions may weaken long-term legitimacy and representation of workers

The platform–cooperativism model may find viability when embedded within a broader network of **actors** such as employment agencies, training providers, and local authorities.

The interconnection among different actors also constitutes its primary vulnerability: the exit of any single participant can cause project failure or substantial delays – as demonstrated by this case study.

This model focuses on improving working conditions for platform workers **without involving trade unions**. Could cooperatives emerge as new representatives of workers' interests?

Thanks for your attention

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Collective bargaining on Danish cleaning platforms – effects of the Hilfr1 and Hilfr2 agreements for company and workers
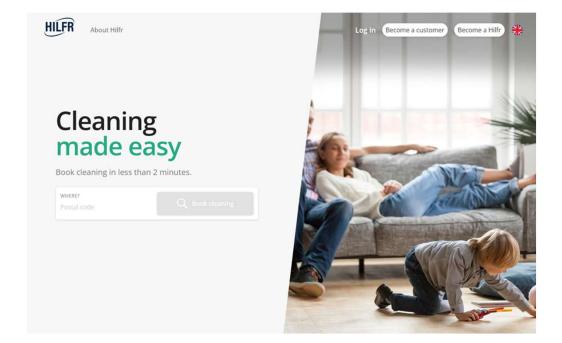
Anna Ilsøe, FAOS/UCPH
Liv Bjerre, FAOS/UCPH

Hilfr

- Danish cleaning platform (private households) founded in 2017.

- 70 active workers, 500 customers. Second largest cleaning platform in Denmark, Happy Helper is market lead.

- Danish context: low unemployment (3%); no sector-level agreement for cleaning in private households; no legal presumption rule

The Hilfr1 agreement (2018)

- Hilfr contacts the union 3F and wants to negotiate in 2018. The union is hesitant at first, but a one-year agreement is concluded in the same year.

- Company agreement with a two-tier model (10p.). Employed Superhilfrs (33% of gigs in 2019; 66 % of gigs in 2021), hourly wage (19 €) plus benefits. Sick pay and pension. Rules on profile deletion and ratings (inspired the EU directive).

- Motivation: branding as socially responsible platform work, trouble with tax payments & tax deductions (growth barrier).

- Challenges during re-negotiations:
    - verdict from the Danish Competition Authorities (2020)
    - corona crisis (2020-21)
    - negotiation of the EU Directive on platform work (2021-2024)
    - change in Hilfr management (2022, 2024)
    - low union density, no workers representatives.

EU Platform Work Directive (2024)

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- National presumption rules (implementation 2024-2026):

  ➢   Platform workers as employees

- Rules on algorithmic management:

  1.   Workers cannot be fired by algorithms
  2.   Bad language removed from ratings
  3.   Transparency: use of data
  4.   Data protection: certain type of personal data cannot be processed

The Hilfr2 agreement (2024)

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- Company agreement renewed (14 p.).

- One-tier model (all workers are employees).

- Minimum hourly wage (23 €) plus benefits. Improvements on pension and sick pay. No minimum hours.

- Collective rights on AI and algorithmic management:

  - digital union club

  - AM as an employer responsibility (labour court)

  - processual disadvantage falls on the employer

  - fair and equal treatment as an employer responsibility

  - collective waiver of individual rights

  - third party collection of employee data not allowed

- Motivation: branding as socially responsible AI.

Impact for workers and management

- Higher minimum wage per hour. Most workers set even higher hourly wages

- Management has stopped new recruitments to increase working hours per worker (40 employees)

- Worker satisfaction: hourly pay and nice customers (compared to competitor Happy Helper).

- Handheld adjustments of algorithmic management

- Mostly foreign-born workers, low union density, impact of digital union club still to be seen

Future perspectives

Implementation of the EU Platform Work Directive in Denmark: more platform workers will be employees

- mostly in transportation? Or also in care and cleaning?
- will agreements create a level playing field?
- more collective agreements on platform work and AI?

Aim

Exploring how social dialogue can influence working conditions & social protection for platform workers in the personal services and household sector

› Trade union influence on Helpling

Outline
› Dutch (PHS) platform landscape
› Industrial relations (PHS) platforms
› Helpling
› The Case
› Implications
› Conclusion

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› Diverse platforms

› Within PHS
- 13 active platforms (2024)
- 3 factors of an "Invisible sector"
    - Hidden work
    - Fragmentation
    - No traditional alternative
- Home services regulation (RDAH)
- Ambiguous employer status
- Fragmented funding

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- › Little representation for PHS platform workers
  - . Social partners focus on B2B
  - . Sector fragmented
    - Public vs private
    - Care vs cleaning
- Little to no mention in CLA

- › Lack of cooperation between social partners and platforms
  - . Potential and threat of platforms
  - . Potential and threat for platforms

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› International platform

. Founded in Germany, 2014; The Netherlands

. Cleaning only platform

. Workers via RDAH

› Difficulties

. Digital marketplace vs. Digital agency

. Unclear employer status

. Platform leakage

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> The Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (FNV) & Helpling worker, 2017
  - Social protection

> Additional issues:
  - Double mediation fees
  - Influence on scheduling, contracts, income
  - Cleaning CLA not applied
  - Ambiguous employer status

FNV: Helpling is an employer (or digital agency)

> Correspondence FNV to Helping, 2018
> Rulings:
  - Helpling as intermediary, 2019
  - Appeal: Helpling as temporary work agency, 2021
  - High court: Helpling as temporary work agency, 2025

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› Helpling workers as employees
  . Helpling's bankruptcy
  . Workers without compensation

› Private households user undertaking

› Influence on other platforms
  . Hups remodel & refocus
  . HomeWorks "joining" the platform trend

› RDAH rework

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› Social dialogue clarifies platform conditions

› Platforms unable to sustain under traditional work regulations

› Reforms within regulation & platform models, not in social dialogue

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Thanks for your attention

Unmasking gender disparities in the digital economy:
Beyond access and numbers

Uma Rani
Research Department, ILO Geneva

Origami Final Conference on «The role of digital platforms in the ongoing transformations of the home care sector», EESC, Brussels, November 20, 2025

ilp.org

Broader research questions

➢ Are the digital transitions or transformations leading to increase in women's labour force participation rates?

➢ Are they leading to addressing gender gaps and bringing about gender equality in terms of incomes and benefits, skills & career progression?

➢ Data sources (Platform surveys)

➢ ILO global and country surveys in Kenya and India, 2022-23

➢ Taxi, delivery, Beauty services, domestic services, tutoring, healthcare (country level) (15,000 workers)

➢ Freelance and microtasking (global) (3250 workers)

Empirical literature

- Digitalisation would narrow the digital divide and address gender inequalities (World Bank, 2021; World Economic Forum, 2021) and improve access for women to labour markets (UN Women, 2020; OECD, 2018), and are presented as engines for economic development

- "Flexibility" to balance work and family

- Narrative and assumption that platform work would eliminate gender gaps and inequities in access and pay (Barzilay & Ben-David, 2017) or digitalisation would reduce digital divide (Dixit and Bandalay, 2022) is increasingly being contested

- Ability of platforms to narrow gender gaps in participation rates (Ghosh, 2022; Raval, 2019); and the neoliberal appeal of entrepreneurial activity and its pitch of 'flexibility and autonomy' (Mishra and Raju, 2020) is increasingly being contested

- Even if some jobs are created, the issue of the quality of jobs being created both in terms of benefits and remuneration as well as the content of work continues to be a concern

Digital transformations through platforms: increase in labour force participation rates for women

▸ Taxi, delivery, domestic services, healthcare, beauty, personal services, and similar sectors.

  ▸ Platforms do not always generate new opportunities, as many of these services already exist within traditional labour markets. Workers may be self-employed, salaried, or paid daily wages.

  ▸ Labour processes and work relationships are being reshaped through algorithmic management techniques.

  ▸ Platforms represent more than just technological innovation; they function as instruments of institutional change that frequently reinforce some of the existing social and economic inequalities

➢ Employment relationship
➢ Income instablility, lack of access to work
➢ Lack of work-related and social protection benefits
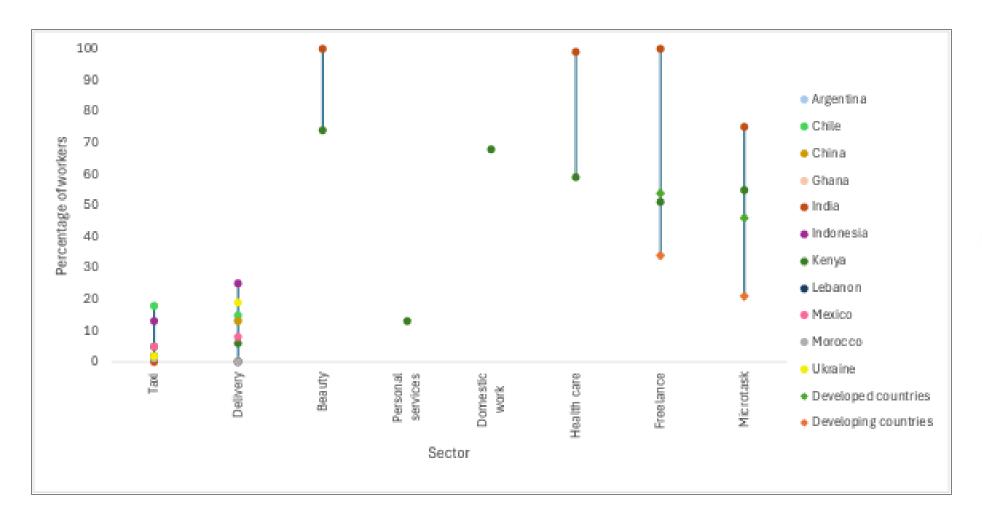➢ Increasing precariatisation

The «Flexibility» Paradox

▶ Myth: Women can easily juggle platform work with household duties

▶ Reality: "Flexibility" is often a tool to legitimize double or triple shifts (paid work + unpaid care work + **unpaid work**) raising issues of "time poverty"

▶ Women workers face penalties for declining gigs or not working peak hours, losing control over their work

▶ Case Study: Domestic workers on *SweepSouth* (South Africa) are penalized for declining work, effectively forcing them to accept all bookings regardless of personal schedules (Sibiya and du Toit, 2022; Kalla, 2022)

▶ Promised flexibility often translates into unpredictable schedules and increased pressure"
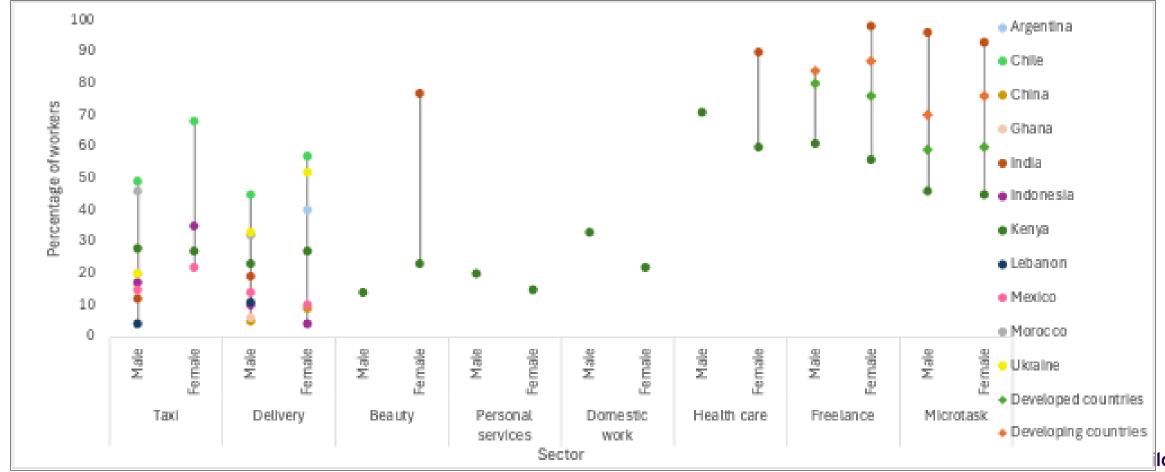
Occupational Segregation: Platforms replicate traditional gender divisions

▶ Even when women enter male sectors (e.g., ride-hailing), they face discrimination from clients (e.g., lower ratings due to bias against female drivers)
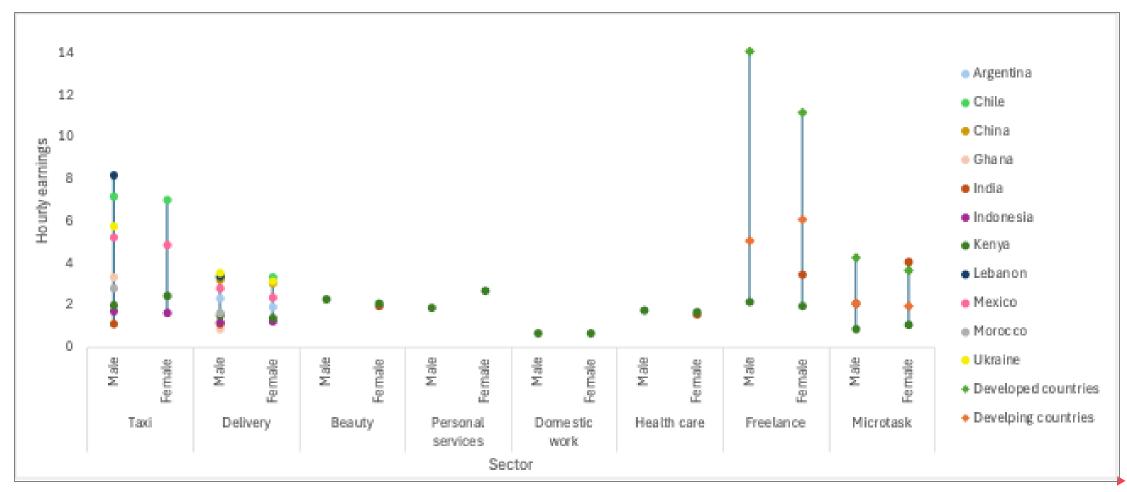
Educational disparities and Skill mismatch

Gender pay gap

Algorithmic management

- The "invisible boss" where work is managed by algorithms, not humans

- Rating trap, where ratings determine access to future work

- Women are penalized for "caregiving and household responsibilities" (cancelling a ride or not responding immediately)

  - If a female driver refuses a long trip because she needs to be back for her children, the algorithm sees this as "unreliable" and downgrades her.

- Lack of transparency, as workers often cannot appeal unfair ratings or arbitrary dismissals (temporary or permanent suspension or deactivation)

- Safety concerns are often ignored by the platform (eg., harassment in ride-hailing or domestic work)

Informalisation and intersectionality

▶ Platforms basically formalise transactions as they handle payments formally through different payment systems, while labour continues to be informal as they are often classified as "independent contractors"

▶ Issues around decent wages/incomes, labour and social protections

▶ Compounded burden of intersectionality – migrant, ethnic and class

   ▶ Specific plight of migrant workers such as, in Spain and South Africa, where platform work complicates residency permits due to lack of formal contracts

▶ High risk of gender-based violence in isolated workspaces (private homes/taxis) with little platform support

Towards a more equitable platform work…

➢ Digital transformations have so far not …
  ➢ Reduced the gender gaps in access, or pay but exacerbated them in certain cases
  ➢ Addressed underlying structural inequalities

➢ Old wine in a new bottle with more precarity through algorithmic management practices
  ➢ Classify workers correctly to ensure access to labour rights and social protection (minimum wage, sick leave).
  ➢ Strengthen the right to unionise and negotiate
  ➢ Ensure social security portable with the worker, regardless of the platform.
  ➢ To engage in social dialogue to ensure decent working conditions

What next, as we conclude

➢ Areas that require attention are…
  ➢ Design and development of platform algorithms merits particular attention as they are designed by humans and can exacerbate or reproduce some of the existing structural biases
  ➢ Valuation of work and ensuring that workers are paid for their waiting time
  ➢ What (national/regional/global) institutions and regulations are required in context of digital transformation, including regulation of digital labour platforms?
  ➢ What macro/sectoral/industrial policies are needed to create jobs and address structural inequalities?
  ➢ How can technology and data be deployed and utilised to bring about more favourable labour and employment outcomes for women?

The platformisation of home care:
Navigating EU regulatory frameworks for care and digitalisation

EU Policy Brief

Ilda Durri, Slavina Spasova, Danai Konstantinidou, Diana Dovgan

Outline

1. **Setting the scene: Challenges and particularities of platform-mediated care and domestic work**

 2. **The EU Care framework and digitalisation**

 3. **The EU Platform Work Directive's response to key challenges**

4. **Conclusions and policy recommendations**

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1.
Setting the scene: Challenges and particularities of platform-mediated care and domestic work

- Platform-mediated care and domestic work account for about **22% of all platform work**.

- Platform-based models enhance **flexibility, accessibility, and visibility** for domestic and care work.

- They replicate and intensify long-standing sectoral vulnerabilities, such as **working time insecurity, income instability and physical and psychosocial strain**.

- Algorithmic scheduling leads to **unpredictable hours, very short or long hours, unpaid stand-by time**, contributing to **unstable earnings and in-work poverty**, disproportionately affecting women.

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The **employment status insecurity is further exacerbated** as the majority of platforms establishes a self-employment model, which **deprives workers from statutory entitlements, such as minimum wage, working time, paid leave, health insurance and pensions schemes**.

Limited representation of workers and **low coverage of collective agreements** are more pronounced in the case of platform workers.

The platformisation of care brings forth a **combination of high vulnerability with algorithmic control**.

"Algorithmic management comes home" and with it, a **magnified control over workers**. The control is not always direct and can be **exercised indirectly**, notably through the **rating/ranking system.**

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Distinctive challenges from other forms of platform work

- The workplace is a private household, **limiting direct platform supervision** and **granting much discretion to clients (households)**.

- **Responsibility for working conditions is often shared or blurred between platforms and clients**, complicating the identification of the employer and appropriate employment classification.

- **Home care** introduces additional complexities due to its **emotional and relational nature**.

- These unique features of domestic platform work make the application of a **one-size fits-all solutions challenging**.

Platform Models

Platform model	Control over matching	Control over employment relationship	Description
Marketplace	No	No	The most widespread among platforms operating internationally, particularly common in domestic cleaning services.
Digital Agency	Yes	Yes	More common at national or local levels, mainly oriented toward care services.
On-Demand	Yes	No	An intermediate position: it centralises the matching process but does not handle contractual arrangements, either directly or indirectly.
Regulated Marketplace	No	Yes	A hybrid form: it maintains the typical structure of a marketplace while exercising more control over worker selection and the employment relationship

Implications for platform's legal liability and employment status of workers

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2.

The EU Care framework and digitalisation

EU framework for long-term care

- The **European Care Strategy** (European Commission, 2022) and the **Council Recommendation of 2022** provide the EU's social-policy compass for long-term care, organised around access/adequacy, workforce conditions, and coordinated governance.

- These frameworks articulate **LTC as a social right under Principle 18 of the European Pillar of Social Rights**, encompassing universal access, quality assurance, and fair working conditions.

- While **legally non-binding**, the package commits the **Commission to support implementation via guidance, indicators, peer learning and EU fundings**, with monitoring through the Social Protection Committee.

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Digitalisation and the EU care framework

Importantly for **platform-mediated care**, the **2022 Council Recommendation** explicitly mentions the **deployment of accessible digital solutions** to support autonomy and independent living.

The **European Care Strategy** **supports digital innovation** to improve access and coordination.

Different evaluations show that **without clearer enforcement pathways, stronger monitoring tools, and targeted EU funding**, the Care Strategy risks remaining a normative rather than transformative instrument for quality and fairness in both traditional and platform-mediated home care.

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3.
The EU Platform Work Directive's response to key challenges

❖ Employment status: the **rebuttable legal presumption of an employment relationship** (based on facts of direction and control).

❖ Algorithmic management (AM): **transparency, fairness and accountability** in AM (includes self-employed platform workers)

❖ Collective voice: **the right to collective bargaining** (Article 25) and the creation of **communication channels** between workers and their representatives (Article 20).

❖ Health and safety: **health and safety protections** extend only to platform workers who have an employment relationship.

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1. Employment status: Applicability of presumption

Business model	Marketplace	Digital Agency
Level of control	No control exerted	Control extends beyond simple matchmaking
Presumption of employment	Does not apply	Could apply
Relevant EU legal frameworks	2019 Council Recommendation on Access to Social Protection for Workers and Self-Employed 2019 P2B Regulation (partial relevance)	2008 Temporary Agency Work Directive (under certain conditions) Art 3 PWD (Intermediaries)
National examples	Italian Helpling case	Dutch Helpling case French *mandataire* model

2. Algorithmic management

❖ **Platform-based carers and domestic workers can gain clarity about essential aspect of their work,** e.g. how work is allocated, how rating affects them, and the rationale for their account **deactivation.** (Art.9)

❖ **Protection against termination from the platform** also includes a right to ask for explanation for unfair deactivation and to contest unfair decisions, if explanation is not satisfactory. (Art.11)

❖ **Platforms need to identify and mitigate algorithmic bias and discrimination**, particularly on grounds, such as gender, race, or age. (Art.10 (3))

This provision is particularly important for domestic platform workers, where women, migrants, and older workers are overrepresented.

❖ **Prohibition to process data related to certain characteristics**, e.g. migration background. (Art.7)

3. Collective voice

❖ Denmark's Hilfr model provides a practical illustration of how collective bargaining can be applicable – the example of **"Digital union clubs"-**anticipating Art. 20 PWD.

❖ The **establishment of effective communication channels** implies **for domestic platform workers to interact with each other and with the union, elect their own representatives** (including health and safety representatives and trade union delegates), **and collectively discuss their working conditions.**

❖ **Challenges to the representation of domestic platform workers by trade unions** have been identified, e.g. in Ireland and the Netherlands.

4. Health and safety (Art. 12)

❖ **Platforms should assess and mitigate physical and psychosocial risks**.

Member States shall ensure that **digital labour platforms take preventive measures,** including **effective reporting channels**, to ensure **protection from violence and harassment**.

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4.
Conclusions and policy recommendations

Conclusions

- **The PWD marks a significant step forward** toward addressing the structural challenges of platform-mediated domestic and care work**, however, it fails to capture the diversity and complexity of the sector.**

- The **diversity of business models demands nuanced application of the Directive's provisions** on employment status.

- **The EU Care Strategy acts as soft law**, guiding discourse and incremental convergence rather than prescribing binding rules.

- **The EU Care Strategy promotes a sustainable care model** based on universal access, gender equality and workforce recognition. However, **outcomes depend on Member States' political will and capacity**, leading to uneven implementation across the EU.

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Policy recommendations

1. **Reinforce the social dimension of the digital transition.**

Implement the Platform Work Directive with explicit attention to sectors where digital labour interacts with social care. The Directive's presumption of employment, algorithmic management provisions, and collective labour rights should be interpreted through a social lens that reflects the relational and gendered nature of care work.

2. **Strengthen the link between the Digital and Care Agendas.**

Ensure structured coordination between the European Care Strategy and the digital policy framework. Establish joint monitoring indicators to assess how digitalisation affects employment quality, working conditions, and access to care.

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3. Support national implementation through dialogue and capacity building.

Encourage Member States to integrate the digitalisation of care work into their National Long-Term Care Action Plans and to strengthen the capacity of labour inspectorates, social partners, and local authorities to enforce new digital labour rules. EU funding streams (such as ESF+ and the Digital Europe Programme) should support training and data infrastructure for fair platform governance.

4. Promote collective representation and social dialogue in platformised care.

Facilitate collective bargaining mechanism and the establishment of sectoral agreements covering care platforms, drawing inspiration from the Danish Hilfr model and other emerging examples.

5. Transpose platform cooperatives to the care sector.

Transposed to the care sector, platform cooperatives can empower care workers to become co-owners and co-decision-makers in their workplace. By reinvesting their profits into the cooperative, prioritizing fair contracts, decent pay, and work-life balance, platform cooperatives can directly respond to systemic issues in the care sector like burnout and high turnover.

6. Develop a European framework for quality and professionalization in digital care.

Complement the digital and labour dimensions with a common EU approach to the recognition of qualifications, training, and quality standards in home and care services. This would help reduce informality and strengthen worker mobility within the single market.

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Thank you very much for your attention!

Further questions: Ilda Durri (durri@ose.be)