



► **World Employment  
and Social Outlook**

The role of digital labour  
platforms in transforming  
the world of work

**2021**





The digital economy is transforming the world of work. Over the past decade, the expansion in broadband connectivity and cloud computing, along with innovations in information and communications technologies, have enabled economic transactions and the exchange of large amounts of data and information between individuals, businesses and devices. Data is increasingly a key asset driving the digital economy. Related to these transformations is the proliferation of digital platforms in several sectors of the economy. Since March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in remote-working arrangements, further reinforcing the growth and impact of the digital economy. While digital platforms provide a range of services and products, this report focuses on digital labour platforms, which mediate work and have rapidly penetrated a number of economic sectors as a result of innovations in digital technologies.

Digital labour platforms are a distinctive part of the digital economy. They allow individuals or business clients to arrange a ride, order food or find a freelancer to develop a website or translate a document, among many other activities and assignments. By connecting businesses and clients to workers, they are transforming labour processes, with major implications for the future

of work. Digital labour platforms can be classified into two broad categories: online web-based and location-based platforms. On **online web-based platforms**, tasks or work assignments are performed online or remotely by workers. These tasks may include carrying out translation, legal, financial and patent services, design and software development on freelance and contest-based platforms; solving complex programming or data analytics problems within a designated time on competitive programming platforms; or completing short-term tasks, such as annotating images, moderating content, or transcribing a video on microtask platforms. The tasks on **location-based platforms** are carried out in person in specified physical locations by workers, and include taxi, delivery and home services (such as a plumber or electrician), domestic work and care provision.

The development of digital labour platforms has the potential to provide workers, including women, people with disabilities, young people and migrant workers, with income-generating opportunities. In developing countries in particular, such platforms are regarded as a promising source of work opportunities, leading many governments to invest in digital infrastructure and skills. Businesses are also benefiting, as they can use these platforms

to access a global and local workforce to improve efficiency and enhance productivity, and enjoy wider market reach.

The opportunities provided by platforms are accompanied by some challenges. For workers, these relate in particular to regularity of work and income, working conditions, social protection, skills utilization, freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. Many of these challenges are quite pronounced for workers in informal and non-standard work arrangements and are increasingly affecting those engaged on digital labour platforms, who are a relatively fast-growing share of the workforce. The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are exposing the risks and inequalities for workers, particularly for those engaged on location-based platforms. For traditional businesses, the challenges include unfair competition from platforms, some of which are not subject to conventional taxation and other regulations, including those relating to their workforces. Additional challenges for traditional businesses include the amount of funding required to continuously adapt to digital transformation, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and the inadequate availability of reliable digital infrastructure, particularly in the global South.

This report seeks to enhance our understanding of how digital labour platforms are transforming the world of work, and the implications of that transformation for employers and workers. It draws on the findings of ILO surveys conducted among some 12,000 workers in 100 countries around the world working on freelance, contest-based, competitive programming and microtask platforms, and in the taxi and delivery sectors. It also draws on interviews conducted with representatives of 70 businesses of different types, 16 platform companies and 14 platform worker associations around the world in multiple sectors.

This work provides a pioneering and comprehensive international overview of the platform business model and business strategies, based on an analysis of the terms of service agreements of 31 major online web-based and location-based platforms, and on the experiences of workers

and clients on these platforms. It also explores regulatory gaps with regard to platform governance, and reviews multiple initiatives undertaken by governments and social partners to bridge these gaps. Finally, it suggests ways to leverage the opportunities and overcome the challenges emerging from the rise of digital labour platforms, to ensure sustainable enterprise development and decent work for all, and to advance achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

*The past decade has seen a fivefold increase in the number of digital labour platforms, which are concentrated in a few countries.*

The number of online web-based and location-based (taxi and delivery) platforms rose from 142 in 2010 to over 777 in 2020. The number of online web-based platforms tripled over this period, while the number of taxi and delivery platforms grew almost tenfold. A large proportion of these platforms are concentrated in just a few locations, including the United States of America (29 per cent), India (8 per cent) and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (5 per cent).

Digital labour platforms offer two types of work relationship: workers are either directly hired by a platform or their work is mediated through a platform. In the first case, they are categorized as employees with an employment relationship to their employer, while in the second case they are categorized as self-employed or independent contractors by the platforms. Those working under an employment relationship tend to be responsible for the functioning of the platform and comprise a relatively small fraction of the platform workforce. For instance, the freelance platform PeoplePerHour has about 50 employees, while it mediates work for 2.4 million skilled workers.

Estimating the actual size of the platform-mediated workforce is a challenge owing to non-disclosure of data on the part of the platforms. Surveys by researchers and statistical agencies in Europe and North America between 2015 and 2019 suggest that the proportion of the adult population that has performed platform work ranges between 0.3 and 22 per cent.

***On online web-based platforms, labour supply exceeds demand, placing downward pressure on earnings.***

Tracking labour supply and demand on major online web-based platforms since 2017, the Online Labour Observatory reveals that there has been an increase in both demand and supply for freelance and microtask work. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the labour supply on platforms has increased significantly, while the demand for work has decreased and shifted towards tasks related predominantly to software development and technology. The demand for work on the five major online web-based platforms largely originates from developed countries, while the labour supply originates predominantly from developing countries. The evidence indicates that on some digital labour platforms there is excess labour supply, which leads to greater competition among workers for task assignment and puts downward pressure on the price of the tasks to be performed.

***The global distributions of investment in digital labour platforms and platform revenues are geographically uneven.***

About 96 per cent of the investment in digital labour platforms is concentrated in Asia (US\$56 billion), North America (US\$46 billion) and Europe (US\$12 billion), compared to 4 per cent in Latin America, Africa and the Arab States (US\$4 billion). Platforms providing taxi services have received a much larger share of venture capital funds than delivery or online web-based platforms. Among taxi platforms, the distribution of funding is uneven, with 75 per cent of funds concentrated in only two platform companies.

Digital labour platforms globally generated revenue of at least US\$52 billion in 2019. About 70 per cent of the revenues generated were concentrated in just two countries, the United States (49 per cent) and China (23 per cent), while the share was much lower in Europe (11 per cent) and other regions (17 per cent). The seven largest technology companies globally had a cumulative revenue of over US\$1,010 billion in 2019, and most of these companies invest heavily in digital labour platforms as well.

***The business strategies adopted by digital labour platforms comprise four key elements.***

Four key elements enable platforms to establish a market base, leverage network effects and expand rapidly, while generating benefits for businesses and workers.

- ▶ ***Revenue strategy:*** The revenue strategies of digital labour platforms are based on offering subscription plans and charging various types of fees to platform workers and/or the businesses, clients or customers that use them. Online web-based platforms offer multiple subscription plans and customized services to clients, with free trials to attract subscribers. They also offer workers subscription plans with incremental benefits at extra cost, which tend to be essential for accessing more work. Digital labour platforms often charge a commission fee to workers and businesses; such fees tend to be higher for workers than clients on online web-based platforms. For instance, Upwork generated 62 per cent of its 2019 revenue from various types of fees charged to workers, while 38 per cent was generated through fees charged to clients. On location-based platforms, workers typically pay a commission fee on taxi platforms whereas on delivery platforms it is businesses and customers that generally do so.
- ▶ ***Recruitment and matching of workers with clients:*** Digital labour platforms use algorithms for the matching of tasks or clients with workers, which has been transforming a traditional human resource process that typically involved human interaction. While traditional human resource practices base recruitment selection largely on education levels and experience, algorithmic matching is often determined by indicators such as ratings, client or customer reviews, rates of cancellation or acceptance of work, and worker profiles. On online web-based platforms, this matching process may also take into consideration a worker's subscription plans and optional purchased packages. This practice risks excluding some workers from accessing tasks, particularly those from developing countries and those with lower incomes.

- ▶ **Work processes and performance management:** Algorithmic management of workers is central to the platform business model. Platforms provide a variety of software and hardware tools to facilitate the work process, monitor workers and enable communication between the client and the platform worker. These include monitoring of workers on location-based platforms using the Global Positioning System, and tools that automatically capture screen shots or keyboard strokes on online web-based platforms. Moreover, algorithms assess, evaluate and rate platform worker performance and behaviour using a number of metrics, such as client reviews and customer feedback.
- ▶ **Rules of platform governance:** Digital labour platforms tend to unilaterally shape the governance architecture within the platform through their terms of service agreements, which have to be accepted by workers, clients and businesses for them to be able to access the platform. Besides requiring the observance of the codes of conduct regarding the use of the platform, these agreements also cover aspects such as acceptance or rejection of work, deactivation of platform accounts and data usage. This form of governance allows platforms to exercise considerable control over platform workers' freedom to work, and can shape how and under what conditions clients or businesses engage with platform workers, through exclusivity clauses, for instance.

***Diverse types of businesses, from start-ups to Fortune 500 companies, are increasingly relying on online web-based platforms.***

Businesses use online web-based platforms for three broad reasons: to streamline recruitment processes; to reduce costs and improve efficiency; and to access knowledge and seek innovation. The organizational performance of many companies has improved through innovations facilitated by open source platforms, as well as through access to a global pool of workers with diverse skills via digital labour platforms.

***SMEs in particular have benefited from location-based platforms.***

Many traditional businesses, particularly SMEs, have started using location-based platforms, predominantly in the restaurant and retail sectors. Such businesses are increasingly relying on digital labour platforms as a way to cope with greater competition and the need to expand their customer base, to keep pace with a transforming marketplace and to respond to consumer preferences. Many restaurants are heavily dependent on delivery platforms, particularly since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, to enhance their visibility among consumers and expand their markets, as well as to improve productivity, efficiency and profitability.

***Digital labour platforms have also supported the growth of start-ups and the reorientation of some sectors.***

Many digital start-ups have emerged around the world, particularly in the field of artificial intelligence (AI), to meet the demands of automated work processes and analytics. As AI technology is still far from fully automating work, such start-ups rely heavily on digital labour platforms and the human intelligence of platform workers, who are dispersed globally, to complete tasks and train machine-learning algorithms through a "human-in-the-loop" process.

Digital labour platforms have also made it possible for some businesses to reorient their business strategies in certain sectors and access wider markets. The business process outsourcing (BPO) industry, for example, is experiencing a transformation wherein customer demands are now being met through digital means instead of the provision of voice-based services, and the customer journey from beginning to end is managed using digital tools. These include Facebook and WhatsApp messages, web chats or emails, and AI bots for providing real-time feedback.

BPO companies are also trying to sustain their business by relying on work from online web-based platforms, apart from directly working with clients. Many technology companies are outsourcing tasks, such as content review, transcription, annotation and image tagging, to workers in developing countries, often as part of their corporate social responsibility, with a view to providing employment opportunities to young graduates and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, for example. While it is often perceived that such tasks are done by AI, in practice they require human value judgement, which is provided by BPO workers mainly based in developing countries, or “invisible” workers on online web-based platforms.

***While businesses can benefit from platforms, challenges abound.***

Many businesses that depend on online web-based platforms struggle to strategically manage the various forms of work arrangements and risk losing internal human resource capacity. For businesses that depend on delivery platforms, high commission fees can reduce profits while poor digital infrastructure can have an impact on the smooth running of the business. Traditional businesses, particularly in the retail sector, are facing market disruptions from large e-commerce platform companies and are confronted with challenges such as competition issues, unfavourable contractual terms, non-transparency on the part of platforms (especially with regard to data, rankings and pricing), weak dispute resolution mechanisms and, more broadly, an uneven playing field.

***Survey findings indicate that a majority of workers on digital labour platforms are highly educated and male.***

The findings from the ILO surveys of workers on online web-based and location-based (taxi and delivery) platforms show that the majority of platform workers are below the age of 35 years and highly educated, in particular in developing countries. While women do find work on digital

labour platforms, they represent only four in ten workers on online web-based platforms and one in ten workers on location-based platforms. In some countries, app-based delivery platforms are an important source of work opportunities for migrants.

Gender-based occupational segregation of tasks is common on freelance platforms. Women are more likely than men to perform professional services (such as legal services, translation, writing and editing), and tasks related to business services or sales and marketing. Few women mentioned that they performed tasks related to technology and data analytics.

***Worker motivation to work on digital labour platforms varies across the different types of platforms and by gender.***

Complementing an existing income and the preference or need to work from home or for job flexibility are the two main motivating factors for platform workers on online web-based platforms. On freelance platforms, the preference or need to work from home or for job flexibility is the chief motivator, while on microtask platforms complementing pay from other income sources is the most important factor. In contrast, the main motivating factors for workers on competitive programming platforms are to improve skills and career opportunities. The preference or need to work from home or for job flexibility is particularly important for women in developing and developed countries alike. On location-based platforms, lack of alternative employment opportunities, job flexibility and better pay compared to other available jobs are the key motivating factors.

***Work on digital labour platforms is the main source of income for many workers...***

On location-based platforms, the overwhelming majority of workers indicated that this was the case. About one third of the workers on online web-based platforms stated that platform work was their main source of income; the proportions were higher in developing countries and for women.

***... but there are major differences between the earnings of workers on online web-based platforms in developed and developing countries.***

Average hourly earnings in a typical week for those engaged on online web-based platforms are US\$3.4, while half of the workers on these platforms earn less than US\$2.1 per hour. For workers on freelance platforms, average hourly earnings are US\$7.6, while on microtask platforms they amount to US\$3.3. Workers in developing countries tend to earn less than those in developed countries; on freelance platforms, for instance, they earn 60 per cent less, even after controlling for basic characteristics and types of tasks performed. Earnings on online web-based platforms are influenced by time spent on unpaid tasks (such as looking for work or building up a profile), competition due to excess labour supply, high commission fees, and non-payment due to rejection of work.

Evidence of the existence of a gender pay gap on freelance platforms is mixed. After controlling for basic characteristics, such as education level and work experience, at the global level there is no difference in hourly earnings, while at the country level there is a significant gender pay gap in some cases. A gender pay gap is also found on location-based platforms in some countries.

***In developing countries, earnings in the app-based taxi and delivery sectors tend to be higher than in the traditional sectors.***

Hourly earnings for app-based taxi drivers and delivery workers vary across the countries analysed in this report, and tend to be higher than in the traditional sectors. In the taxi sector in particular, platforms are able to provide services to customers at low cost, hence expanding the business. In addition, the bonuses and incentives provided to workers have attracted a large number of workers, thereby increasing the labour supply, which can exceed the expected demand and result in intense competition. This situation also has the potential to reduce income-generating opportunities for those in the traditional sectors. In some of the countries surveyed, over 70 per cent of the traditional taxi drivers reported that compared to when they started to work as taxi drivers, the number of trips in a typical day, and daily earnings, had decreased.

***Working hours vary across location-based platforms and online web-based platforms...***

Workers on online web-based platforms work 27 hours on average in a typical week, including both paid and unpaid work, with about one third of their time, or eight hours, spent on unpaid work. About half of them have other paid jobs, working 28 hours on average per week in these jobs in addition to their platform work, which can make for a long work week. Some workers on online web-based platforms face unpredictable work schedules and unsocial hours, particularly in developing countries, as clients are often based in developed countries. This may have negative implications for their work-life balance.

On location-based platforms, most workers in the taxi and delivery sectors work with high intensity and for long hours, on average 65 hours per week in the taxi sector and 59 hours per week in the delivery sector. On app-based taxi and delivery platforms, a high proportion of respondents (79 and 74 per cent respectively) mentioned that they had some degree of stress due to their work, often related to traffic congestion, insufficient pay, lack of orders or clients, long working hours, the risk of work-related injury and pressure to drive quickly.

***... but many workers on both types of platforms would like to do more work.***

Many workers on both online web-based and location-based platforms stated that they would like to do more work than they do. They are unable to do so mostly due to the unavailability of enough work or of well-paid tasks. Furthermore, platform design may also restrict workers from certain developing countries from accessing well-paid jobs on online web-based platforms.

***The relevance of skills and qualifications acquired through formal education varies on digital labour platforms.***

Platforms are redefining the relationship between formal education and access to work, as worker profiles, ratings and reputation are vital for accessing work. Varying degrees of vertical and horizontal skills mismatch can be observed on digital labour platforms. A high proportion

of workers on freelance and competitive programming platforms stated that their skills were a good match with their work, and many were undertaking tasks that were potentially related to their field of study. However, skills mismatch is quite prominent for those engaged on microtask platforms, where a highly educated workforce performs tasks that tend to require few or no specific skills. Similarly, a sizeable proportion of workers on platforms in the taxi and delivery sectors are highly educated.

***Working conditions on digital labour platforms are largely regulated by terms of service agreements.***

Terms of service agreements are contracts of adhesion and are unilaterally determined by the platforms. They define aspects related to working time, pay, customer service etiquette, applicable law and data ownership, among others. They tend to characterize the contractual relationship between the platform and the platform worker as other than employment, regardless of the actual nature of the relationship. As a result, platform workers cannot access many of the workplace protections and entitlements that apply to employees.

***Platform design and algorithmic management are defining the everyday experiences of workers on digital labour platforms.***

Platforms use algorithms to match workers with clients or customers, a process in which worker ratings are decisive. The ratings are themselves algorithmically determined, according to a number of metrics, which include acceptance and rejection rates. This in effect limits workers' ability and freedom to reject work. A considerable number of workers surveyed in the app-based taxi and delivery sectors indicated that they were unable to refuse or cancel work on account of the negative impact this would have on their ratings, which could lead to reduced access to work, lost bonuses, financial penalties and even account deactivation.

Rejection of work or low ratings are common on digital labour platforms, although many workers believe that the reasons for such rejections are not

always justifiable. Most platform workers are unaware of any formal process for filing a complaint or seeking help in such cases. On freelance platforms, when such a process is known and used by workers the outcomes are favourable to them in many cases. On location-based platforms, where workers sometimes face account deactivation, about half of the appeals against deactivation are successful.

***Platform workers are often unable to engage in collective bargaining.***

In many jurisdictions, competition law prohibits self-employed workers from engaging in collective bargaining, on the basis that they constitute a cartel. However, the ILO Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98), and the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), provide that freedom of association and collective bargaining shall be available to all workers. Some countries, such as Canada, Ireland, Japan and Spain, have introduced exceptions for certain categories of dependent self-employed workers, which allow them to engage in collective bargaining. Another challenge to the collective organization of digital labour platform workers is that they are geographically dispersed. Nevertheless, some workers based in different regions have been able to organize, including through digital means, while on location-based platforms in particular they have also undertaken strike action, initiated litigation and a drive towards unionization. Some workers have also established platform cooperatives.

***The majority of workers on digital labour platforms do not have social security coverage.***

There are large gaps with regard to health insurance and work-related injury provision, unemployment and disability insurance, and old-age pension or retirement benefits. While access to social protection is limited, workers in the app-based taxi and delivery sectors, particularly women, face various occupational safety and health risks. Not having social security coverage has created significant challenges for all platform workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially those on location-based platforms.

***A considerable number of workers on digital labour platforms have experienced or witnessed discrimination or harassment.***

Discrimination on online web-based platforms is associated with exclusion from work opportunities or low pay, on the basis of nationality and gender, which was mentioned particularly by women respondents and workers residing in developing countries. Workers on location-based platforms also indicated having faced or witnessed discrimination or harassment. App-based taxi drivers reported facing aggressive or rude behaviour, mainly by clients, traditional taxi drivers and police officers, in the course of their work. App-based delivery workers mentioned instances of discrimination based on the grounds of their occupation by customers, restaurants as well as the police.

***The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed many of the risks confronting workers on digital labour platforms.***

The ILO rapid-assessment survey in four countries captured the implications of the pandemic for workers on location-based platforms. The majority of the workers in both the taxi and delivery sectors indicated declining demand, which had reduced the earnings for nine out of ten taxi drivers and seven out of ten delivery workers. To compensate for the loss of income, some workers reported that they had started to engage in additional work activities, or provided taxi and delivery services outside the platforms through their private contacts; many had also reduced unnecessary expenditure, used savings, deferred payment of bills, or taken a loan.

Some workers on location-based platforms reported working throughout the crisis due to economic necessity, despite feeling anxiety about contracting COVID-19 while at work. Seven out of ten workers indicated not being able to take paid sick leave, or to receive compensation, in the event they were to test positive for the virus, thus risking the health of others in addition to their own health.

Some location-based platforms have undertaken specific measures to mitigate occupational safety and health risks among workers, including the provision of safety training and personal protective equipment (PPE). However, about half

the surveyed workers who were provided with PPE stated that the quantity or quality of PPE provided was inadequate. Moreover, eight out of ten workers had incurred additional financial expenditure as they had been obliged to purchase PPE themselves.

***Regulatory responses from many countries have started to address some of the issues related to working conditions on digital labour platforms.***

Countries have taken various approaches to extending labour protections to platform workers. These include:

- ▶ ***Occupational safety and health:*** Laws in Australia and New Zealand have adopted broader statutory language and extended occupational safety and health coverage to all workers. In Brazil, a judicial decision has extended existing safety and health legal standards to platform workers.
- ▶ ***Social security:*** Several countries have introduced innovations to extend social security to platform workers. These include requiring that platforms cover the accident insurance costs of self-employed workers (France); extending social security for self-employed workers (many Latin American countries); and providing work injury and death benefits to workers on particular platforms (Indonesia and Malaysia). In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, some countries have extended sickness benefits to all workers (Ireland) and unemployment benefits to uninsured self-employed workers (Finland and the United States).
- ▶ ***Employment relationship:*** Employee status remains important, as most labour and social protections are associated with it. Countries have adopted various approaches to the classification of platform workers, often arising from litigation, which fall along a spectrum between very broad and very narrow approaches to employment status. These include: (i) classifying them as employees, often based on the amount of control exercised by the platform; (ii) adopting an intermediate category in order to extend labour protection; (iii) creating a de facto intermediate category to ensure that

they obtain certain benefits; and (iv) classifying them as independent contractors, often based on the degree of their flexibility and autonomy.

- ▶ *Working time and remuneration:* Some new approaches to labour standards have been specifically adapted to digitally based work. For instance, French law provides that a platform's voluntary social charter should include the "right to disconnect" and methods of enabling self-employed platform workers to obtain a "decent price" for their work.
- ▶ *Dispute resolution:* Some platforms may restrict dispute resolution to a particular jurisdiction through arbitration clauses, which can be limiting for workers. This has been successfully challenged in some jurisdictions; the Supreme Court of Canada, for example, invalidated a platform's arbitration clause on the ground that it "makes the substantive rights given by the contract unenforceable".
- ▶ *Access to data and privacy:* Governments are increasingly adopting measures regarding data protection and privacy, including in Brazil, India, Nigeria and the European Union. In France, a recent amendment to the Labour Code gives self-employed platform workers in the transportation industry the right to access data related to their platform activities.

*With growing regulatory concerns, platform companies and worker organizations have also been addressing the issues raised.*

In Denmark, a collective bargaining agreement between a trade union and a cleaning platform has allowed some platform workers to transition to employee status. Platform companies have also been developing codes of conduct either unilaterally or in collaboration with other platforms to address some of the challenges confronting workers. Six digital labour platforms have signed the World Economic Forum Charter of Principles for Good Platform Work, which covers issues such as safety and well-being, flexibility, fair conditions, social protection, voice and participation, and data management.

*Given that digital labour platforms operate across multiple jurisdictions, there is a need for some form of international policy dialogue and coordination.*

Governments and non-state actors are in many cases regulating digital labour platforms, but these initiatives vary considerably. Countries face challenges in enforcing regulations, particularly with regard to online web-based platforms, where the platforms, clients and workers are located in different jurisdictions. In this regard, the ILO Maritime Labour Convention, 2006, sets an important precedent as it concerns an industry with multiple parties operating across different jurisdictions. Such an approach could also be considered for digital labour platforms. Another important point of departure is the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy, 2017, which provides guidance to multinational enterprises on social policy and inclusive, responsible and sustainable workplace practices.

International policy dialogue and coordination are also vital to ensure regulatory certainty and the applicability of universal labour standards, given the diversity of responses by countries and platform companies. It is important that the ILO fundamental principles and rights at work are implemented for all platform workers, irrespective of their status. In addition, principles rooted in other ILO Conventions, such as those related to fair payment systems, fair termination and access to dispute resolution, should also be extended to platform workers.

#### *A way forward...*

A way forward would be to engage in a process of global social dialogue aimed at ensuring that the opportunities arising from digital labour platforms are leveraged, and the challenges addressed, so that digital labour platforms are best positioned to provide decent work opportunities, foster the growth of sustainable enterprises and contribute towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The ILO's independent Global Commission on the Future of Work recommended the development of an international

governance system that sets certain minimum rights and protections and requires platforms and their clients to respect them. It also called for a “human-in-command” approach to algorithmic management, surveillance and control in order to ensure that “final decisions affecting work are taken by human beings”.

The ILO’s Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work calls for “policies and measures that ensure appropriate privacy and personal data protection, and respond to challenges and opportunities in the world of work relating to the digital transformation of work, including platform work” in order to promote inclusive and sustainable development, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

These objectives can best be achieved through social dialogue among the relevant stakeholders, most particularly the digital labour platforms, the platform workers, and their representatives and governments. A concerted effort across multiple international forums and organizations will be critical to ensuring that digital labour platforms develop further in a manner that strongly contributes to inclusive and sustainable development. Such a process of regulatory dialogue and coordination should have at its core an effort to ensure that domestic laws implementing the fundamental principles and rights at work as well as other key legal provisions, such as those in respect of occupational safety and health and social security, apply to all workers, including digital labour platform workers. With the right engagement and preparation, this process could lead over time to a clearer understanding and a more effective and consistent approach at the enterprise, national and international levels, with a view to:

- ▶ ensuring fair competition and creating an enabling environment for sustainable enterprises;
- ▶ requiring and promoting clear and transparent terms of engagement and contractual arrangements for workers and businesses, including as reflected in labour and consumer laws;
- ▶ ensuring that workers’ employment status is correctly classified and is in accordance with national classification systems;
- ▶ ensuring transparency in ratings or rankings of workers and businesses using digital platforms such as online web-based, location-based and e-commerce platforms;
- ▶ ensuring transparency and accountability of algorithms for workers and businesses;
- ▶ protecting workers’ personal and work data, as well as data relating to businesses and their activities on platforms;
- ▶ working towards ensuring that self-employed platform workers enjoy the right to bargain collectively, for example through greater harmonization of competition law with labour law;
- ▶ reaffirming that anti-discrimination and occupational safety and health laws apply to digital labour platforms and their workers;
- ▶ ensuring adequate social security benefits for all workers, including platform workers, by extending and adapting policy and legal frameworks where necessary;
- ▶ ensuring fair termination processes for platform workers;
- ▶ ensuring access to independent dispute resolution mechanisms;
- ▶ ensuring that platform workers are able to access the courts of the jurisdiction in which they are located if they so choose;
- ▶ providing for wage protection, fair payments and working time standards;
- ▶ allowing platform workers to move freely between platforms, including by facilitating portability of workers’ data, for example regarding ratings; and
- ▶ aiming at effectively taxing the digital economy, including platforms, clients and workers, as well as their transactions.



## Advancing social justice, promoting decent work

The International Labour Organization is the United Nations agency for the world of work. We bring together governments, employers and workers to drive a human-centred approach to the future of work through employment creation, rights at work, social protection and social dialogue.

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