



Handbook on Measuring Platform Employment and Work

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The Technical Expert Group

- An initiative started 2 years ago involving:
 - The EC: DG EMPL, Eurostat, JRC, Eurofound
 - ILO
 - OECD: SDD/WISE, ELS, STI
 - 14 NSOs
 - 2 Observers
- **2020:** Discussion of outline and content, work organised in groups, drafting
- **2021 Q2:** first 3 Chapters have been submitted, discussed and revised
- **2022 Q1:** Completion of the Handbook



Possible Content of the Handbook

- **Chapter 1 (OECD SDD/ELS; JRC/DG EMPL):** ‘Policy Motivations’: Why measuring platform work?
- **Chapter 2 (ILO):** ‘Conceptual Framework’: What is platform work? Definition, concepts and operational implications
- **Chapter 3 (OECD STI):** ‘Critical literature review’ by data source: LFS, LFS modules, specific surveys, admin data...
- **Chapter 4 (ESTAT, with many contributions from NSOs):** ‘Measurement recommendations’



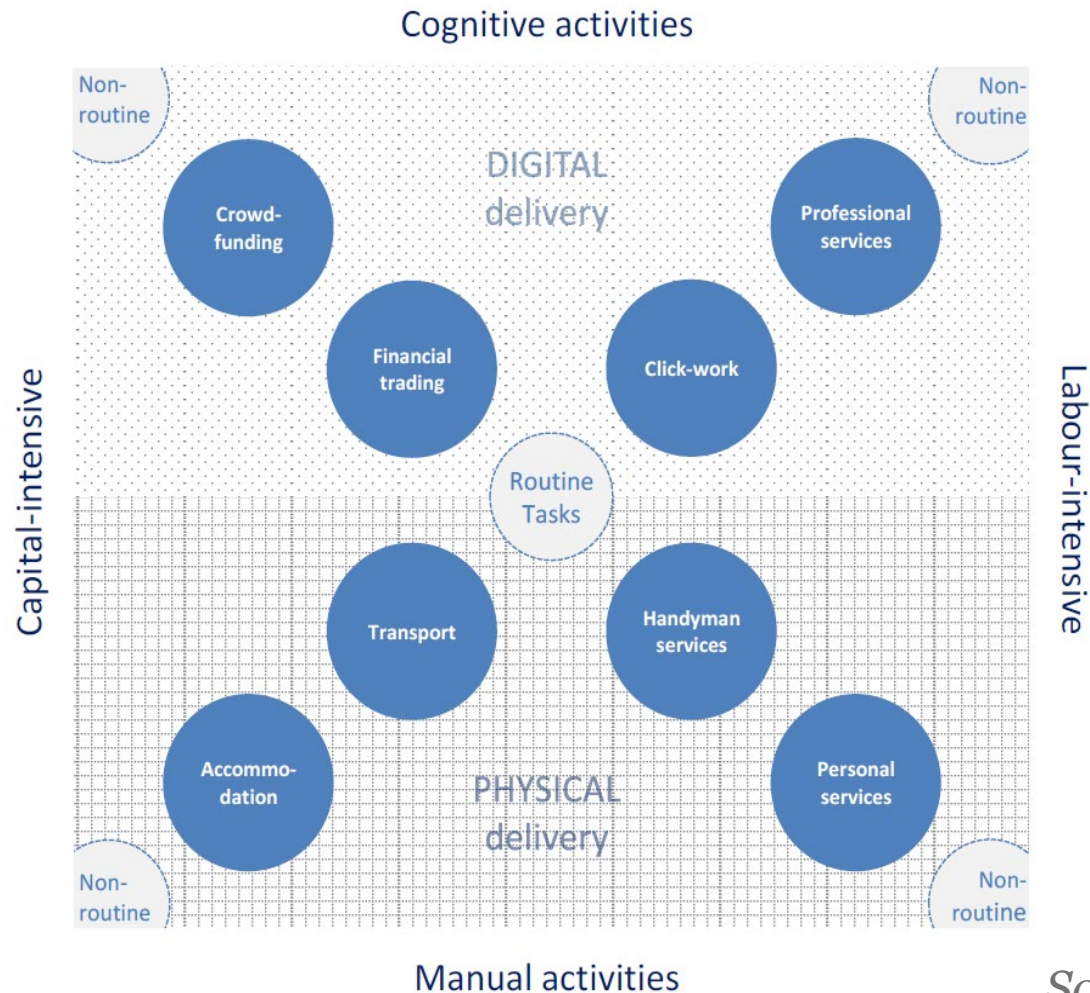
Defining platform employment and work

- In general, platform workers are individuals who i) use a platform offering integral services (i.e. customers can pay workers); ii) are matched with customers; iii) provide a service; iv) in return for money
- There are a lot of conceptual and practical challenges around that definition!



What is the scope of activities?

Where to draw the line between capital and labour use?





How to operationalise the underlying concept?

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



How to align survey practices?

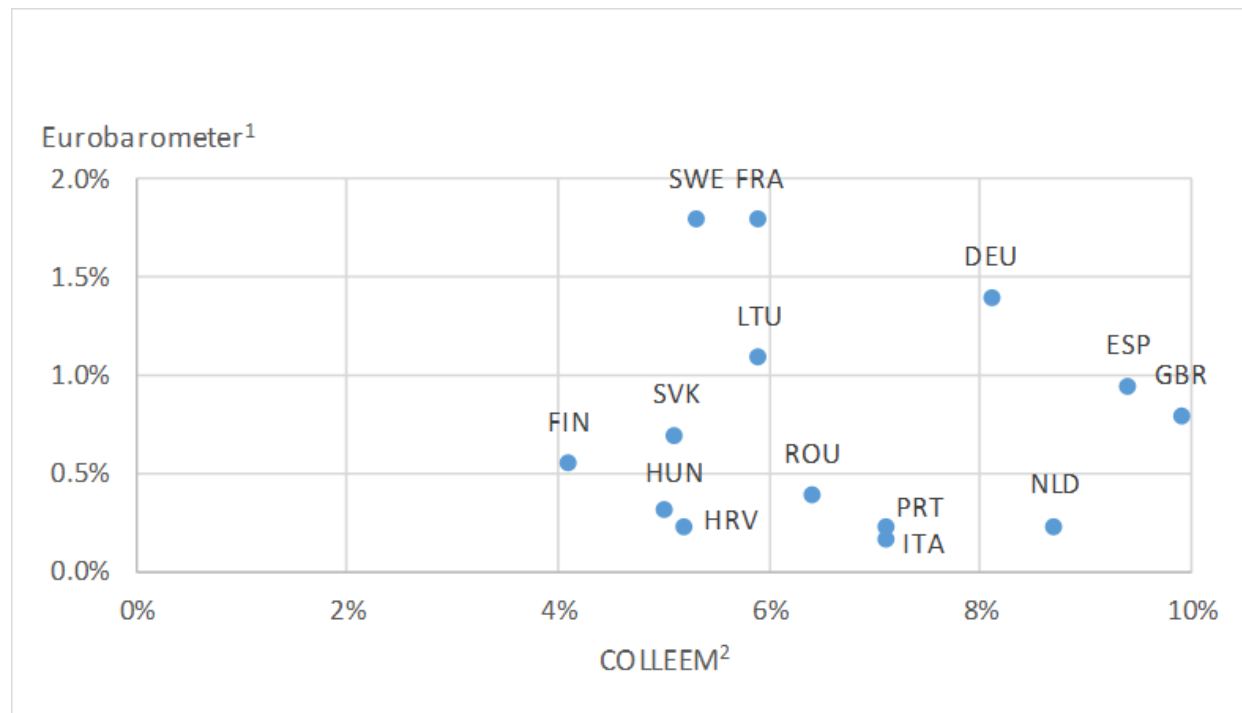
There are many differences across NSOs surveys:

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



How to foster international consistency?

There is little consistency across different estimates



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



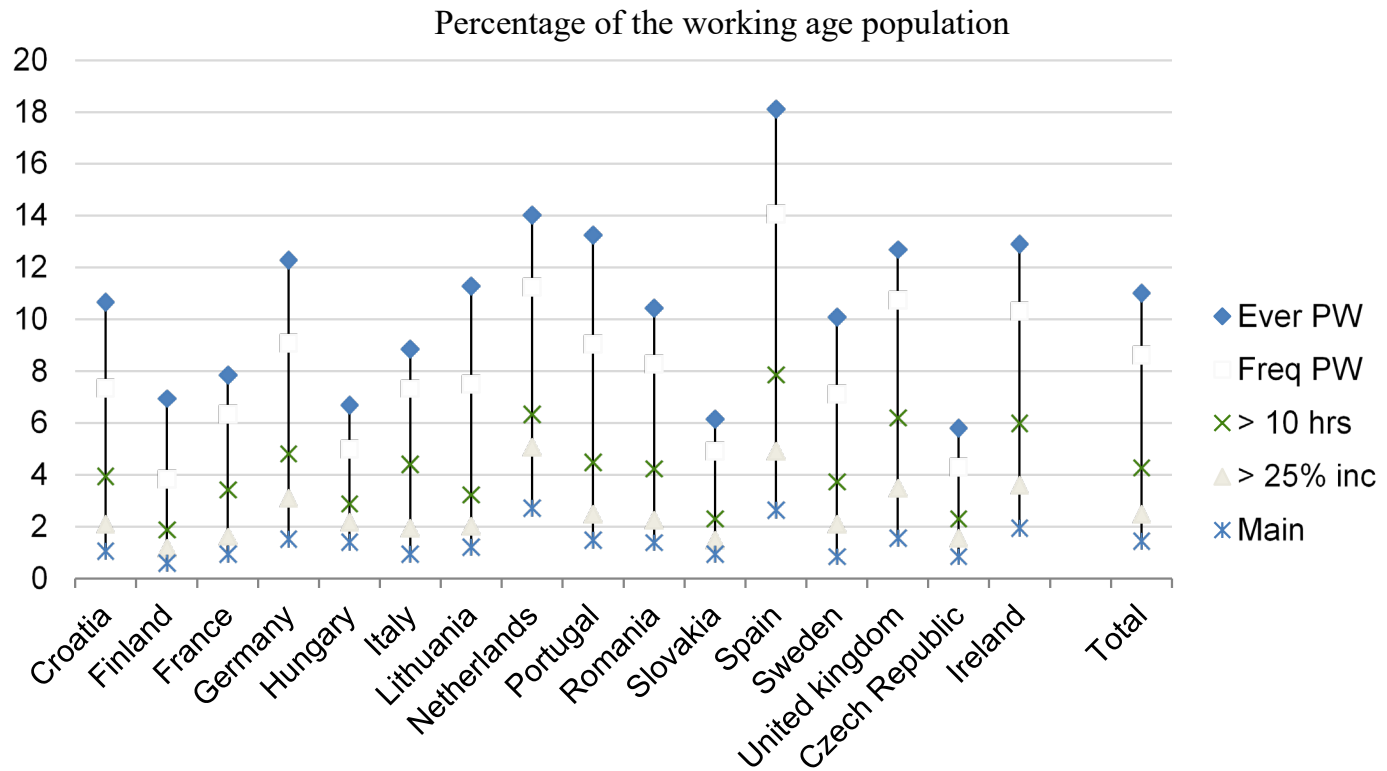
Chapter 1 – Policy motivation

1. Provides **descriptive statistics** on Digital Platform Work (DPW) drawing from COLLEEM and other sources:
 - Occurrence
 - Age, gender, nationality and education of Platform Workers (PW)
 - Type of tasks, working hours, median pay
2. List key **Policy Issues**:
 - collective bargaining rights
 - Fair pay
 - Working time
 - Dispute resolution
 - Occupational safety
 - Social responsibility of platforms
 - Algorithmic management
 - Training for job opportunities
 - Bringing PW into the tax and benefit systems
 - Cross-border issues
3. Motivate the **Statistical Agenda**



DPW in COLLEEM

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



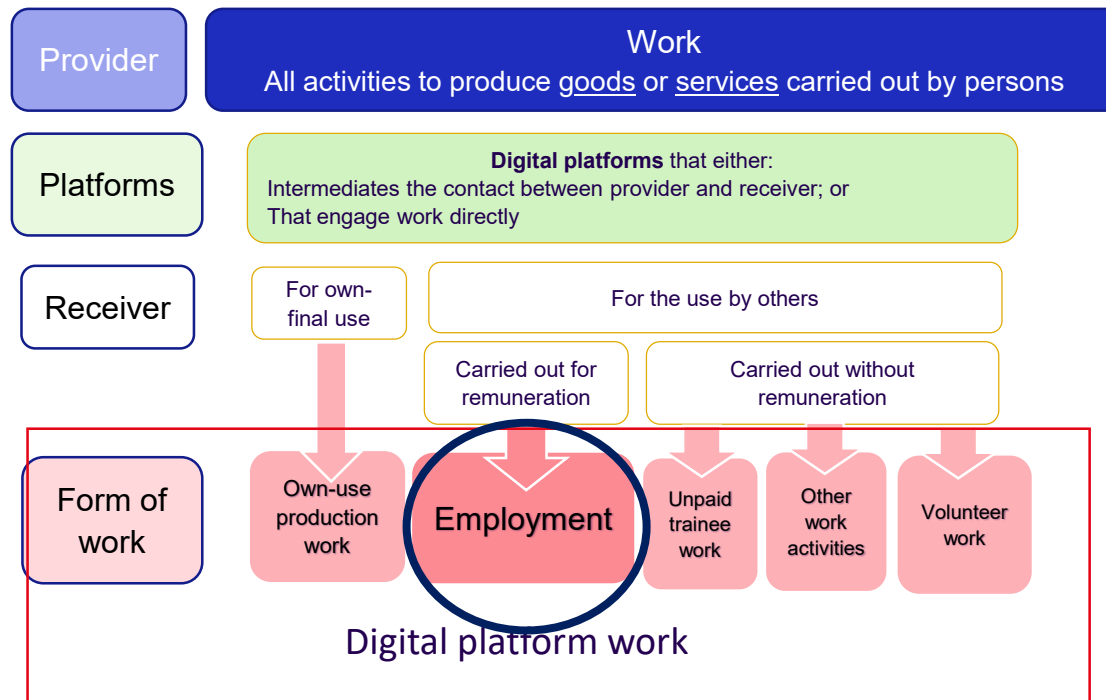
Source: 2018 JRC COLLEEM survey

Overview of chapter 2

Provide, in line with already existing standards on labour statistics :

- ▶ Conceptual framework for digital platform work with focus on employment
- ▶ Operational definitions of digital platforms and digital platform employment
- ▶ A typology of digital platforms
- ▶ Recommendations for how to deal with the special challenges that surrounds digital platform employment

Conceptual framework



▶ Proposed operational definition of digital platform employment

Any activity to produce goods or services for pay or profit carried out by persons through or on a digital platform or a phone app and:

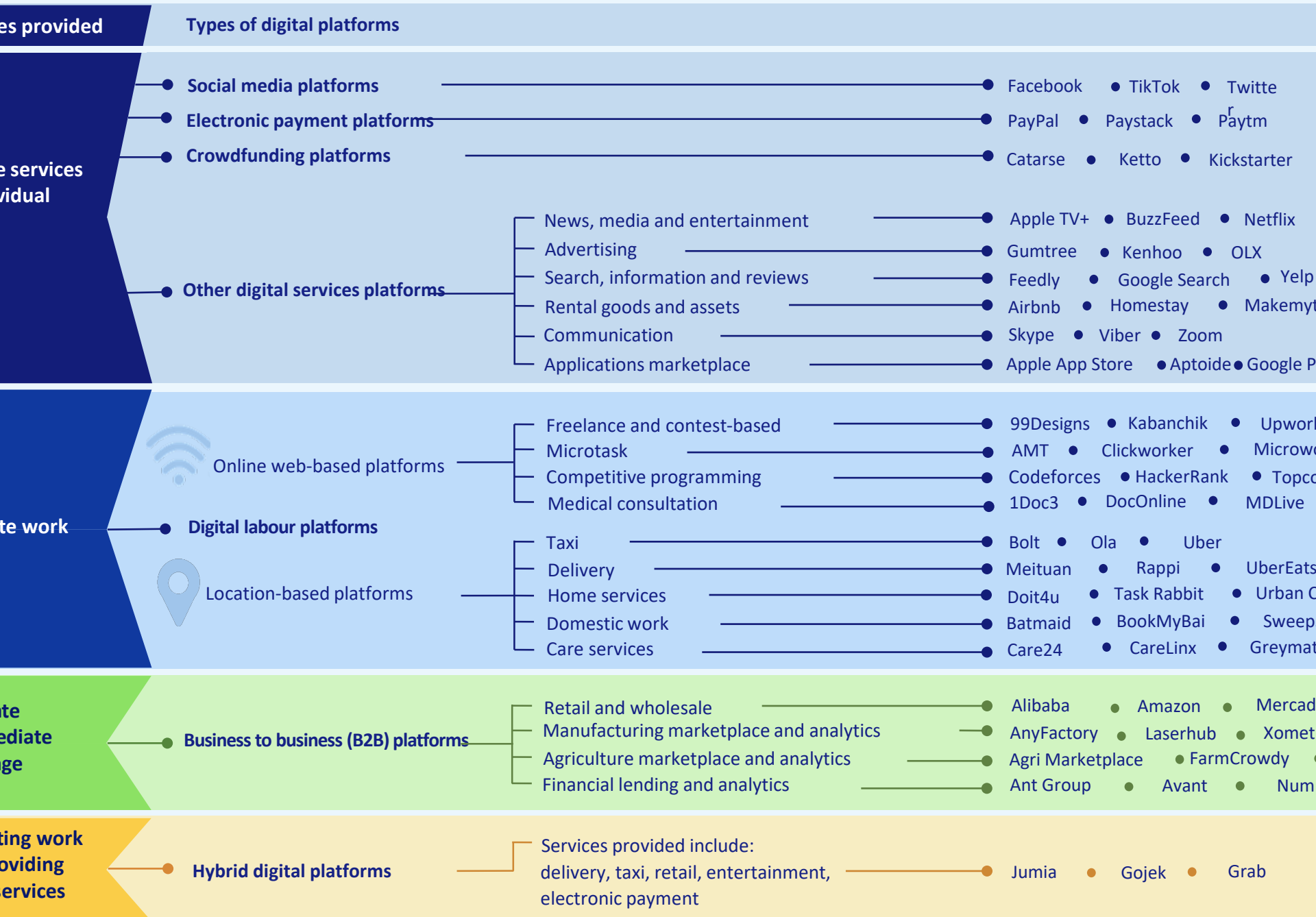
- *the digital platform or a phone app controls and/or organizes essential aspects of the activities, such as intermediating with the clients or providing the tools needed for conducting the work, facilitates payments and distributes and prioritize the work to be conducted; and*
- *the work is for at least one hour in the reference period.*

▶ Proposed operational definition of digital platforms

*Digital platform or a phone app is a digital service that **either** enables interactions between two or more distinct but interdependent sets of users (whether firms or individuals) who interact through the service via the internet OR that directly engages workers through the digital service for the purpose of obtaining services in exchange for remuneration.*

Digital platform can be viewed as a digital service that:

- enables the interaction between the provider and the receiver or
- that directly engages a worker to provide a service for the platform





Chapter 3: Critical Review of Literature

For instance for surveys:

Official statistical agencies:

Labour Force Surveys:

- Specific questions in CA, DK, FI, IT, SG, CH and the US;
- Results range from 0.3% to 3.6% of the workforce engaged in digital platform employment.

ICT Usage Surveys:

- Specific modules in CA, the US (and ESTAT);
- Results: 7.6%-8% of Internet users earned income through Internet.

Other surveys (various official sources):

- AU, CA, FR, IT and the US.

Private/non-official statistical agencies:

Ad-hoc surveys in various countries:

- DE, FR, NO, SE, the UK, the US, European countries (several covered in one study).



Summary of advantages and disadvantages

Method	Advantages	Disadvantages
Labour Force Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same sampling frame as general statistics on labour market → comparability with overall data on labour market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be unreliable in coverage of secondary jobs and self-employment • Small absolute number of digital platform workers may hinder further analysis of their characteristics • Past week as reference period not suitable to capture occasional digital platform workers • Difficulties in understanding the question may lead to unreliable results or overestimates • Small differences in question wording may have a large effect on estimates
ICT Usage Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same sampling frame as for statistics on ICT → comparability with other aspects of online activities and the digital economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small sample size, associated with small absolute number of platform workers, reduces reliability of findings • Difficulties in understanding the question may lead to unreliable results or overestimates
Ad-hoc Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher flexibility compared to official surveys, it could explore a wider spectrum of issues • Lower cost of online surveys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential selection and sampling biases • Potential measurement bias linked to survey method used • Monetary incentives given to respondents may bias the results • The above biases reduce comparability
Administrative data (tax data)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No issues related to sample size and techniques • Lower burden on data providers • Lower cost of data collection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential problems of timeliness, relevance and accuracy • Often no distinction of digital platform employment from broader non-standard work • Differences in administrative systems across countries • Potential underestimation due to blurred regulatory boundaries, cross-border nature of digital platforms, underreporting by workers and if source of income not identifiable
Big data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results not representative • No access to underlining (privately-owned) data
Web-scraping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real-time updates • Comparability across time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be difficult to extend to platforms in other languages • May provide trends but not absolute numbers • Ethical issues (data used for other purposes than those consent was given to)



Conclusions

- **Terminology and definitions not harmonized** across countries
- No optimal approach to capture all aspect of digital platform employment:
 - **Different methods suitable to measure different facets**, e.g. official surveys likely to be the best tool to estimate total number of digital platform workers, other methods may provide complementary insights;
 - **Choice of method depends on research objectives**, resources available, and trade-offs faced by statistical agencies or researchers.

Chapter 4 – Measurement Recommendations

- **Highlight:** This chapter builds on evidence drawn from the **different testing exercises** to build standard questionnaires and methodologies for various types of surveys or sources.
- **Main recommendation is the same:** Different source for different purposes
- **Reviews:**
 - 4.1. Labour force surveys
 - 4.2. ICT
 - 4.3. Business surveys
 - 4.4. Tax registers
 - 4.5. Social security data
 - 4.6. Big Data
 - 4.7. Ad Hoc Surveys (COLLEEM or similar)
 - 4.8. Recommendations

Structure

- **Each source is structured around:**

- **Methodology**

- Reference population
- Sample dimension
- Original purpose (quantitative or qualitative analysis)
- Implied operational definition
- Obtained goals and learned lessons

- **Indicators**

- Detailed list of derived indicators and their scope
- Wished indicators not covered by the exercise

Contributors

- **4.1. Labour force surveys:**
 - USA
 - Mexico
 - Finland
 - **Switzerland**
 - Italy
 - Eurostat
- **4.2. ICT:**
 - Canada
- **4.3. Business surveys:**
 - France (plus other administrative surveys)

Contributors

- 4.4. Tax registers:
 - Belgium
- 4.5. Social security data:
 - Italy
- 4.6. Big Data:
 - ?
- 4.7. Ad Hoc Surveys:
 - JRC
 - EUROFOUND
- 4.8. Recommendations:
 - EUROSTAT / OECD
 - Sweden
 - Turkey
 - *All other available*