FoW Global collaboration ILO/JRC
Platformisation of work in logistics and health

Some initial comments from the JRC team

The European Commission's science and knowledge service

Joint Research Centre

European Commission

Defining platformisation

- **Platform**: centralised digital networks that coordinate transactions in an algorithmic way. Two key elements:

    - A structured digital "space" where the transactions can take place.

    - A set of algorithms for coordinating those transactions in an automated way.

- *Digital labour platforms:* centralised digital networks that coordinate labour service transactions in an algorithmic way. They mediate (as markets) but also manage (as employers)

- **Platformisation of work:** use of platforms (apps, webs, devices) to coordinate work processes in any kind of organisation.

    - Can apply to any kind of organisation.

    - Key hypothesis: digitisation leads to platformisation. Also: platformisation blurs boundaries between internal and externals, and facilitates further subcontracting.

- *Algorithmic management:* use of computer-programmed procedures for the coordination of work in an organisation. Almost synonymous with platformisation, except for the structured digital "space".

    - Computer programmes assume some of the functions of management, but not all. (Algorithmically-assisted management?)

    - Some degree of automation in key managerial functions: direction, evaluation and discipline (Kellogg et al. 2020)

European Commission

Some related concepts

- **Digitisation**: use of sensors and rendering devices to translate parts of the physical production process into digital information (strings of bits), and vice versa

    - Precondition to platformisation and strongly linked, but not synonymous nor necessarily simultaneous.

    - Digitisation is about the collection, processing and storage of information. Platformisation is about the coordination of work.

- **Automation**: replacement of labour input by relatively autonomous machine input for the performance of some types of tasks in production and distribution processes.

    - Platformisation can involve the automation of some low and mid-level managerial functions.

    - Platformisation tends to standardise work processes (especially in services), which historically has preceded automation.

- The focus of this project will be <u>on platformisation, but not strictly</u>. In practice, platformisation tends to be so entangled with digitisation that their implications are difficult to differentiate. But analytically, we should try.

European Commission

Methodology and scope

- Research design: 2 case studies per country and sector; at least 7 qualitative interviews in each case, complemented with field visits and desk research.
    - Each case will be an establishment or workplace (local unit of a firm) in the sectors of logistics (ie, warehouse) and health (ie, hospital).
    - The cases should use platform technologies for coordinating work processes (level of implementation can vary).

- Why logistics and health?
    - Both work-intensive and requiring complex coordination. Both have long used complex sub-contracting processes, and both are experimenting with platforms for contracting and coordinating work.
    - Logistics: manual work with a lower education profile, increasingly digitised.
    - Health: social service work with a higher education profile, less digitised but used to complex work processes and subcontracting.

- Country selection: Italy and France in Europe; India and South Africa globally.

What information to be collected from the cases?

- First, mapping of the economic/production process and the use of technology.

- Then, a description of the division of labour and work organisation (and the effects of platformisation)
  - Occupational structure
  - Task contents and work organisation

- Job quality in the workplace (and how platformisation affected it)
  - Wages
  - Employment conditions (contracts, career, training)
  - Working time
  - Health and safety

- The role of industrial relations in the workplace (and in platformisation processes)

Thank you!

Enrique.FERNANDEZ-MACIAS@ec.europa.eu
Sara.BAIOCCO@ec.europa.eu
Santo.MILASI@ec.europa.eu
Cesira.URZI-BRANCATI@ec.europa.eu

European
Commission