

# **FROM CITIES TO EUROPE: INNOVATING LABOUR, WELFARE AND POLICIES IN THE PLATFORM ECONOMY**

*H2020 project PLUS Final Conference  
24 February, 7 and 14 March 2022  
Online*

Since the PLUS project started 3 years ago, the platform economy has grown constantly and inexorably all around the globe. The digitalization of labour and services is not any more presented simply as the future of work but has become an effective truth of our societies. Nowadays, more and more enterprises adopt the platform business model and the number of platform workers is rising up and including new sectors. Moreover, the features of platform labour are expanding beyond the platform business, transforming the patterns of several productive processes. The pandemic has not stopped this tendency, on the contrary it has accelerated the growth of platformization of labour and the infrastructural role of platforms.

Together with its expansion, the platform economy raises important challenges for our democracies. In these years many public debates developed about platforms' working conditions and regulation. Blurring the boundaries between the status of employee and independent contractor, platform labour became a fundamental issue for the definition of new forms of social and labour protections. Several local and national attempts to regulate these services have now left the floor to a more general European legislative initiative. Nevertheless, it appears clear that the pervasiveness and the complexity of the phenomenon require a multi-level approach capable of engaging all the different actors affected by the expansion of platforms.

In these years, the PLUS project worked pioneeringly on these issues contributing to the development of a critical approach to the platform economy. The urban level has been investigated as the terrain for platforms' effective expansion and, at the same time, for the experimentation of solutions towards a fairer market. The best practices as well as the limits in the action of local administrators have been mapped in the 7 investigated cities (Barcelona, Berlin, Bologna, Lisbon, London, Paris, Tallinn) that represent a variegated spectrum of the platform expansion in Europe. At the same time, the project investigated the transformations of labour occurring through the digitalization thanks to a large qualitative field research that targeted platform workers as its main goal. This investigation contributed not only to the formulation of principles for the improvement of working conditions and the platform business model but also to its testing thanks to the collaboration of important cooperatives and social enterprises. Finally, PLUS triggered the building of a European community of stakeholders – from managers to unionists – cooperating in the definition of policies for expanding social protections and regulative initiatives.

The project's final conference will be the opportunity to gather experts and social actors engaged in platform economy and to share with them an overall discussion on the phenomenon starting from PLUS results. During 3 online seminars, project researchers will dialogue with other scholars and policymakers around 3 main topics: patterns of platform labour, strategies of regulation, innovating social protections. Each topic will be explored in a 1-hour-and-half session where 2 internal and 1 external discussant will trigger a common debate.

### **Seminar 1: Platform Labour in European Cities**

24 February 2022, 3PM (CET)

<https://hu-berlin.zoom.us/j/63546117303>

The seminar will present some key findings from the qualitative research of the PLUS project: an overview of who works in the platform economy, motivations to join platforms, important risks for workers and insights on the regulation of companies. In a second step, the seminar will present learnings from the pilot studies with platform cooperatives on labour rights and the role of public policies in expanding and promoting such models.

#### Inputs:

Stefania Animento and Valentin Niebler (HU Berlin), Key results on platform labour  
Melissa Reanu Cano and Ricard Espelt (UOC Barcelona), Learnings from the platform co-op

#### Discussants:

Sarah Abdelnour (Université Paris Dauphine)  
Alexander Fischer (State Secretary for Labour and Social Services Berlin)

### **Seminar 2: Strategies and Practices to Regulate Platforms**

7 March 2022, 3PM (CET)

<https://unibo.zoom.us/j/97604769907>

The seminar will discuss two approaches towards the regulation of platform economy. First, we will present a general Charter elaborated by PLUS project for the improvement of platform working conditions. Secondly, we will map urban practices for the local governance of platforms, highlighting their limits and potentialities.

#### Inputs:

Annamaria Donini (University of Bologna), A Charter for Platform Workers  
Michelangelo Secchi (CES Coimbra), Best Practices of Platforms' Urban Governance

#### Discussant:

Inge Graef (Tilburg University)

### **Seminar 3: Social Protection for Platform Workers**

14 March 2022, 3PM (CET)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6694843652>

In this seminar, we will discuss first the social protection of platform workers across Europe, focusing on the current Proposal for a Directive of the European Commission and on some alternative welfare initiatives that may promote income security and welfare for all platform workers irrespectively of their employment status. Second, we will address two relevant questions: (a) how to tax global digital platforms in order to provide a return to local economies, which are negatively impacted by platforms as a result of the exploitation of territorial network economies and (b) how to finance innovative local welfare initiatives that respond to the needs of precarious digital workers. The seminar will focus on PLUS research insights and policy recommendations to be considered by European institutions and by local governments across Europe

#### Inputs:

Nelli Kambouri (University of Hertfordshire), Platform Workers' Social Protection in Europe  
Andrea Fumagalli (Basic Income Network - Italy), How to fund local welfare?

#### Discussant:

Veena Dubal (UC Hastings)