



GDPower – Recovering workers’ data to negotiate and monitor collective agreements in the platform economy

Country Report Poland

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Abstract

This report presents the findings of the Polish case study within the European research project GDPowerR – *Recovering workers' data to negotiate and monitor collective agreements in the platform economy*. It analyses platform work in the ride-hailing and food delivery sectors, focusing on three interconnected areas: the regulatory context and characteristics of platform work, collective bargaining dynamics, and the collection and use of workers' data by digital labour platforms. The research combines desk studies, focus groups with workers and trade unionists, interviews with activists, and an innovative data recovery and analysis exercise involving platform workers' personal data obtained via GDPR requests.

Platform work in Poland has grown significantly since 2014 but remains poorly regulated, largely operating through civil law or B2B contracts. Legislative measures, such as the "Lex Uber" law, have primarily addressed licensing and consumer safety rather than improving employment rights. The widespread use of intermediaries, especially fleet partners, further obscures employment relationships and limits platforms' accountability towards workers. Most platform workers, especially young people and migrants, experience precarious working conditions, low pay, informal employment, and minimal access to social protections. Although a small proportion of workers engage in platform work regularly, their structural vulnerability underscores the need for systemic regulatory reforms.

Despite Poland's constitutional protection of trade union rights, collective bargaining remains extremely limited in the platform economy. Legal frameworks are poorly suited to the realities of platform work, and the fragmented, transitional nature of the workforce inhibits unionisation efforts. Workers fear retaliation, such as account deactivation, and traditional trade unions often lack the strategies and resources to effectively organise platform workers. Although some grassroots initiatives have emerged — notably the successful unionisation at Pyszne.pl — formal collective agreements in the sector are absent.

The study also highlights critical concerns around the collection and use of worker data by platforms. Workers have limited awareness of how their data is collected, used, or impacts their job security and earnings. Opaque algorithmic management practices contribute to a broader sense of surveillance, disempowerment, and confusion among workers, reinforcing inequalities and limiting their ability to advocate for fairer conditions.

The report concludes that improving industrial relations and collective bargaining in the Polish platform economy requires ambitious regulatory reforms, especially regarding the role of intermediaries. It also calls for greater data transparency and empowering workers and unions to access, interpret, and use data to negotiate better working conditions. Without decisive action, Poland's platform economy risks entrenching precariousness and undermining fundamental labour rights.

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1. Introduction

The project Recovering Workers' Data to Negotiate and Monitor Collective Agreements in the Platform Economy – GDPowerR for short – was cofounded by the European Union and included research activities carried out by a consortium of seven research and social partner organisations in Austria, Belgium, France, Poland, and Spain. The research centred on two sectors, ride-hailing and food delivery and explored three areas:

- *The collection and use of worker data by digital labour platforms and their impact on worker well-being and their inclination to engage in collective actions.*
- *Strategies employed by social partners to negotiate and implement collective and company-level agreements in the platform economy. These agreements cover aspects like pay, working conditions, and the collection and use of worker data.*
- *The implementation, monitoring and enforcement of negotiated agreements.*

This report covers the findings on Poland's case. The research for all countries followed the same methodology outlined in the GDPowerR Research Design and its addendums (Geyer, Kayran, & Danaj, 2024; Geyer & Gillis, 2024; Geyer, 2024) and combined several different methods to collect data on collective action, industrial relations, and individual workers between January 2024 and May 2025.

In this project, we analysed what strategies are used by activists, trade unions and employer groups for negotiating and implementing agreements on platform workers' pay and working conditions, including the collection and use of personal data. However, in Poland, there are no collective agreements in the sector. Therefore, we analysed the reasons behind this, trying to map barriers to unionisation, and the main demands of workers in the sector. In countries where collective agreements exist, project partners explored if they are implemented correctly and what challenges social partners face in (trying to) negotiate and implement such agreements.

1.1 Methodology

To answer these questions, the research included desk research on the Polish platform economy and the collective bargaining system. In addition, focus groups and research interviews were conducted with worker activists and trade union representatives.

At the worker level, we explored what data digital labour platforms collect about workers, if workers are aware of what data is being collected about them and how platforms' data collection practices influence workers through a sequence of events and activities described in Figure 1 below, that was inspired by the work of Hestia.ai and others (Ausloos, 2019; Ausloos & Veale, 2020; Bowyer, Pidoux, Gursky, & Dehaye, 2022). First, data recovery workshops were organised to inform platform workers in the food delivery and ride-hailing industries how to receive ('recover') a copy of their personal data processed by platform companies through Data Access and/or Data Portability Requests under the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

In the Polish case, data recovery workshops were conducted individually through one-on-one online meetings. Each session lasted approximately 15 minutes. We reached out to workers via Facebook groups and trade union channels, sharing an advertisement with a link to schedule a meeting with a

researcher from the Institute for Structural Research. During these meetings, we explained the project's goals, the process of data retrieval, and the potential benefits of data donation for the participant.

In total, 18 meetings were booked, though four participants did not attend. Only one individual explicitly declined to request their data due to fears of retaliation. Of the 12 workers who initially agreed to request their data, we successfully retrieved datasets from nine. However, only three of them later participated in the Sense-making workshop. One worker received a dataset so limited that, despite being invited, he did not find it worthwhile to participate in the workshop. Other people who had committed to joining the workshop failed to attend.

Overall, the one-on-one format proved effective in encouraging data retrieval—two-thirds of participants proceeded with the request. However, this did not lead to higher participation in the Sense-making workshops. Additionally, a notable number of individuals did not attend their scheduled one-on-one meetings, highlighting the limitations of this approach.

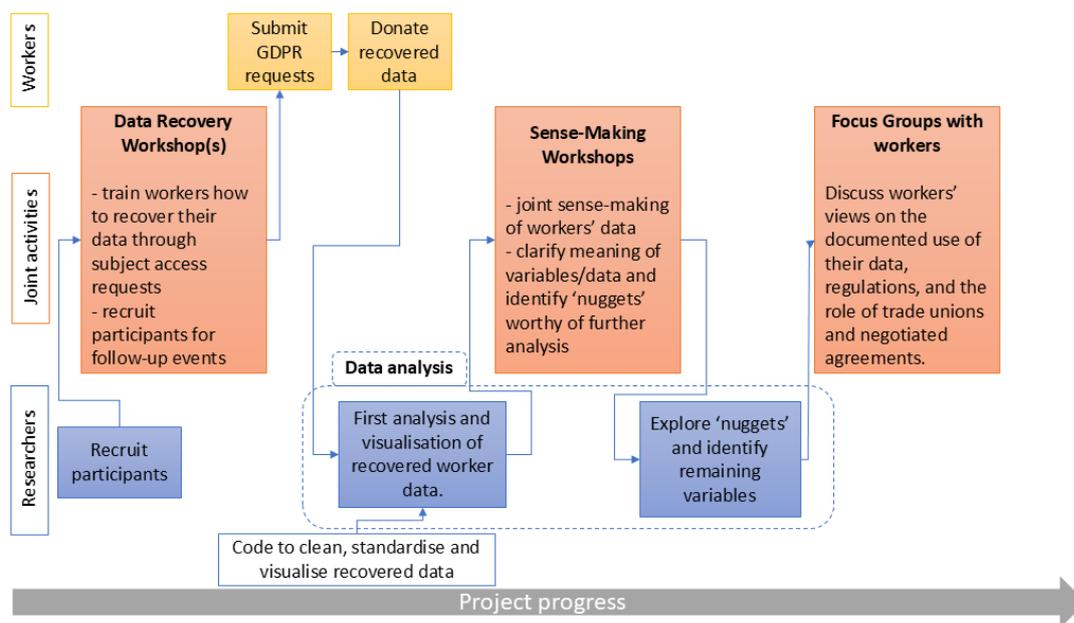
The donated data was then cleaned, analysed, and partially visualised using code developed for the project.¹ The results were presented to and discussed with the workers who had donated their data at a Sense-Making Workshop to jointly make sense of the meaning of the variables and explore data worthy of further analysis. In the Polish case, workers who donated their data were presented with an app that allows for visualising and analysing the data retrieved from Uber, Bolt, and Pyszne.pl². Thereafter, the same workers were interviewed in a focus group format about their views on the data collected about them, potential effects on their well-being, if they perceive a need for more regulations and what role they see for trade unions in this regard. In most cases, the Sense-Making Workshop and Focus Group were organised on the same day to facilitate participation by workers. In a few instances, they were organised on different days, which gave project researchers time to further explore data between the two events and to use the Focus Group to discuss any remaining uncertainties regarding the interpretation of specific variables and/or data with the workers. In the Polish case, the Sense-Making Workshop was conducted only with food-delivery workers, as no ride-hailing workers decided to donate their data. To enrich our dataset, we conducted a Focus Group with ride-hailing workers, even though they had not donated their personal data to the project.

The most effective method of engaging workers proved to be outreach through an established trade union, whose main operations are based in Warsaw. Unfortunately, as of May 2025, there is only one such trade union. While outreach via Facebook groups was relatively successful in scheduling one-on-one meetings, workers recruited through the union were significantly more likely to retrieve their data and return to the workshop with their datasets. We also used the outreach via two similar projects that the Institute for the Structural Research was engaged in at the moment: [Fairwork](#) project (in an email sent after the interview with workers, information about GDPoweR was included with contact information to the researcher – one person was recruited via this method), and [WeLaR](#) project (after completing the survey designed for platform workers, information about the Focus Group for drivers was included – three people were recruited via this method)

1 <https://github.com/nikkobilitza/GDPoweR-Data-Visualization>

2 <https://kurs-na-dane.shinyapps.io/start/>
<https://kurs-na-dane.shinyapps.io/bolt/>
<https://kurs-na-dane.shinyapps.io/uber/>
<https://kurs-na-dane.shinyapps.io/pyszne/>

Figure 1: Research design at the level of individual workers and worker data



Source: Figure adjusted from the GDPower Research Design (Geyer, Kayran, & Danaj, 2024)

Table 2: Summary of the research activities in the project

Research activity	Participants
Data recovery workshops	14 one-on-one online meetings, predominantly with couriers (13) and a driver (1)
Sense-making workshop + Focus group with couriers	3 couriers
Focus group with drivers	3 drivers
Focus group with trade unions	3 trade unionists/activists

2. The country's platform economy ecosystem

Platform work in Poland remains poorly regulated, largely due to its non-traditional employment structure based on civil law or B2B contracts, which limits workers' access to full labour rights. While some sector-specific legislative changes have been introduced, such as identity verification and licensing requirements for drivers, these measures have not significantly improved employment conditions or addressed systemic issues like intermediary companies and informal work. Despite the growing presence of platforms since Uber's entry in 2014, most platform workers, particularly young people and migrants, face low earnings, precarious conditions, and limited legal protections.

2.1 Legal context for platform workers in the country

The platform work sector in Poland remains poorly regulated, primarily because it typically operates outside standard employment frameworks, relying instead on civil law.³ or B2B contracts. This structural mismatch between platform work and traditional labour models hinders the extension of full employment rights and protections to platform workers.

Legislative changes in the platform work sector have primarily targeted the taxi industry, aiming to create a more level playing field between platform-based services and traditional taxi operators. However, there are still no legal changes that take into account the need to protect the labour rights of platform workers and regulate the form of their employment. The 2016 regulation within the taxi-hailing and food delivery platform sector introduced the rule that drivers working with such apps must have a registered business (Styczyński, 2024). The new regulations also made it compulsory for companies to verify drivers, confirm their identity, check their entitlements and not have a criminal record. Therefore, since 2016, platforms have only worked with other companies on a B2B basis, paving the way for the emergence of intermediaries in the sector. This has further complicated relationships within the sector. Most platform workers are either officially self-employed—a status held by only a minority, especially among migrants or younger workers—or employed through intermediary companies, sometimes just one-person operations. This arrangement leads to a lack of pay transparency, unclear accountability for workers' rights, and increased financial strain, as a portion of workers' earnings must be shared with intermediaries.

In 2020, the "Lex Uber" law came into effect, introducing regulations for ride-hailing drivers. Since then, drivers have been required to obtain a taxi license, use vehicles equipped with a taxi sign and taximeter, and maintain proper insurance. However, this legislation did not significantly alter the platform work landscape, as taxi licenses can now be issued to companies (the intermediaries, who often own the vehicles) rather than individual drivers (who are able to acquire "taxi license excerpts" at a significantly lower cost – see Mika and Polkowska, 2023). Additionally, no new formal requirements were imposed on platform drivers as part of this change. This law served as much to regulate the platform industry as to deregulate the taxi sector, making it significantly easier to obtain a taxi license by removing the requirement for a mandatory taxi driver exam.

³ In Poland, a "civil law contract" (umowa cywilnoprawna) refers to a contract governed by the Civil Code (Kodeks cywilny), as opposed to employment contracts, which are governed by the Labor Code (Kodeks pracy). These civil law contracts are widely used for freelance or short-term work and fall outside the more protective labour law framework. They offer fewer social protections, but there is more flexibility regarding work schedules, and there is no obligation to define a specific place or time of work.

What is "Lex Uber"?

The Polish "Lex Uber" law, officially an amendment to the Road Transport Act, came into force on 1 January 2020, with further updates in 2023 and 2024. Its primary aim is to regulate ride-hailing services like Uber and Bolt, aligning them with traditional taxi services. Below is a summary of its key provisions:

Area of Regulation	Requirements / Changes
Driver Licensing	All drivers must obtain a taxi driver's licence or operate under a fleet partner's licence.
Vehicle Markings	Vehicles must display a taxi roof sign and appropriate markings.
Equipment Requirements	Vehicles must be equipped with a taximeter and fiscal cash register, unless the mobile application used meets specific technical and legal standards.
Driver's Licence	From 17 June 2024, drivers must hold a Polish driver's licence.
Driver Verification	Platforms are required to verify drivers' identities before commencing cooperation and periodically thereafter (at least once every 50 rides).
Criminal Record Check	Drivers must provide a certificate confirming no criminal convictions for offences against life and health, sexual freedom and decency, or drug-related crimes.
Medical and Psychological Tests	Drivers must undergo medical and psychological examinations to confirm their fitness for the profession.
Intermediary Obligations	Ride-hailing companies must maintain electronic records of ride orders and a register of cooperating drivers, storing this data for five years.
Application Oversight	Drivers must present the mobile application upon request by authorised control bodies to verify compliance.
Penalties	Violations can result in fines up to PLN 1 million, depending on the nature of the infringement.

Box 1. Definition of "Lex Uber"

In response to several cases of sexual harassment by drivers who were unidentifiable due to shared accounts, new regulations were introduced in 2024. These rules require platforms to verify drivers' identities to prevent account sharing, with substantial fines for non-compliance. Additionally, drivers must hold a valid Polish driving license, which can be automatically granted to drivers from most countries, provided they have been in Poland for over six months.

Some expectations for the regulation of the status of platform workers are associated with Poland's announced implementation of the Platform Directive, which is intended to give them access to full workers' rights by introducing particular criteria to simplify their classification as contract workers. However, opinions on the directive are strongly divided among platform workers. While some are optimistic about it and see it as a needed regulation of the sector, others are concerned that the changes will happen at the expense of workers (e.g. by reducing their salaries) or will not be implemented effectively.

Unlike many other countries, the issue of whether platforms are bypassing employment regulations is not a prominent topic in Poland. Polish law generally permits the use of civil law contracts and B2B contracts in scenarios that closely resemble traditional employment relationships (Muszyński, 2019). This widespread acceptance leads to minimal efforts to reclassify workers.

This is reflected in the relatively limited actions taken by enforcement agencies. In 2019, after a journalistic investigation exposed questionable management practices among fleet partners and within Uber Eats (Szostak, 2019), the Polish Ombudsman asked the Labour Inspectorate to conduct inspections to assess compliance with Polish law. Though somewhat unclear, the Labour Inspectorate's report stated that Uber Eats employs only a few office staff in Poland, mainly overseeing the app's technical infrastructure used by couriers, fleet partners (intermediaries), restaurants, and customers. The arrangement was referred to as a new "form of employment," but the report did not explicitly say that these practices breached Polish law, though it noted the activities resembled "provision of services within entrepreneurial activity." No further consequences have been noted.

2.2 Platforms and workers on delivering and ride-hailing platforms

Data on the scale and characteristics of platform work in Poland are mainly provided by the academic literature. This sector is not monitored by state institutions, which raises problems in diagnosing it and suggests little awareness of the need for state institutions to be interested in the platform work sector. The data on this phenomenon sometimes vary due to the different methodologies and definitions of platform work used in research. Owczarek (2022) identifies the scale of platform work in a broad sense (platform work conducted at least once in the past) at 11%, and in a narrow sense (platform work conducted on a regular basis) at 4%. ETUI (2019) report suggests a much smaller scale of the platform work in Poland (and differentiates it from "internet work"), identifying it at the level of 1,9% in a broad sense and 0,8% in a narrow sense. Beręsewicz (2021) estimated the share of active app users at 0.5 – 2% of the working populations in the nine largest Polish cities, based on a novel methodology utilising smartphone data collected through programmatic systems.

Since Uber entered the Polish market in 2014, platforms have gained a significant share of the market. Food delivery platforms facilitate approximately 75% of all online food delivery orders⁴ and also dominate the ride-hailing market⁵.

4 Stava (2024) *Raport Stava o rynku dowozów jedzenia 2024*, p. 25.

5 Zespół Doradców Ekonomicznych TOR (2023) *Bezpieczeństwo przewozów taksówką na aplikację. Aktualny stan i konieczne zmiany*, available at: <https://zdgtor.pl/publikacje/bezpieczenstwo-przewozow-taksowka-na-aplikacje-aktualny-stan-i-konieczne-zmiany/>, p. 5-7

Table 2: Delivering and ride-hailing platforms operating in Poland (May 2025)

Platform	Category	Information
Bolt Bolt Food	Delivering and ride-hailing platforms	The Estonian company has been in Poland since 2017 and operates in 21 cities. Since 2020, it has also offered food delivery services such as Bolt Food.
Uber Uber Eats		American company, in Poland since 2014, available in the biggest cities. Since 2017, has also offered food delivery as Uber Eats.
iTaxi	Ride-hailing platforms	Polish taxi ordering app created in 2012. Over time, it has also bought up some of the local forms of transport in major cities to provide more than 3,000 rides a day now
FreeNow (acquired by Lyft in April 2025)		The world's first app to directly connect a passenger with a taxi driver available nearby, which allows mobile payment (via the app) for fares. FreeNow has been operating in Poland since 2012, currently in 25 cities.
Pyszne.pl	Delivering platforms	Former Polish company, bought by JustEat/Takeway.com based in the Netherlands.
Glovo		Spanish company offering food and groceries.
Wolt		Wolt – Finnish company offering food delivery in Poland since 2018
Lisek		Polish start-up that has been on the market since 2021. The platform offers delivery of goods to the customer in 10 minutes. Unlike other companies in the industry, Lisek employs couriers directly. Couriers are also provided with employee benefits, including fully employer-funded private medical care. In addition, the platform's employees pay no fees: they receive equipment and appropriate clothing from the company.
Stuart		Supply intermediary for companies to implement a delivery system for products from various sectors.
Żabka Jush		Platform owned by the Żabka group (a chain of shops), offering the possibility to order purchases via an app with guaranteed delivery of products to the customer within 15 minutes
Szama Express		Daas (Delivery as a Service) software is licensed to urban delivery operators. SzamaExpress offers an application for drivers, restaurants, as well as managers and dispatchers to enable deliveries with attention to quality, timeliness and profitability.

Source: Own elaboration

For most workers, platform work generates less than 50% of their income. More than 80% of workers have another source of income at the same time. However, the income generated by platform work may be underestimated in the literature due to workers' possible hesitancy in providing income that is not reported on their tax declaration (Piasna and Drahokoupil, 2019).

The main characteristic of platform workers in Poland emerging from the research is their generally younger age. Platform work in Poland was more popular among the youngest age groups: 22% in

the 18–24 age group, and 14% in the 25–34 age group (Owczarek 2022). This is also linked to the common combination of platform work with education, contributing to the higher education levels within this group. Another characteristic of platform workers in Poland is the gender difference - men do this work more often than women (Piasna and Drahoukoupil, 2019).

Platform work is especially popular among migrants. In 2021, it was estimated that in Poland native platform workers make up around 2/3 of all workers (Beręsewicz *et al.*, 2021), while the rest are foreign workers – mostly from Ukraine, Belarus and India. Other countries of origin include Turkey, Russia, Pakistan, Georgia, Bangladesh, Azerbaijan, Chile, Israel, Nepal, Romania, Uzbekistan, and Zambia (Kowalik *et al.*, 2024). There are visible differences between migrants and natives regarding salaries and working conditions. Migrants for whom platform work was the first job in Poland after their arrival earn work even 31% longer and earn 43% less than Poles. In general, migrants are also around three times more likely to be employed informally, and, as a result, face the negative consequences of informal work, such as lack of health insurance (Kowalik *et al.*, 2024).

Platform workers in Poland perceive their work as more precarious compared to traditional work. Research on job quality in platform work indicates that workers on offline labour platforms experience lower levels of subjective well-being, life satisfaction, happiness, and optimism compared to traditional workers. They are also more exposed to various forms of violence. At the same time, they are more likely to feel that they have an impact at their workplace, experience less time pressure, and report slightly higher levels of job satisfaction. (Stachura-Krzyształowicz and Barańska, 2022). Job satisfaction strictly correlates with the number of experienced hardships, such as low pay, informality, work-life conflict, and long working hours (Kowalik *et al.*, 2024).

3. The country's collective bargaining model: Actors and institutions

Trade union activity and collective agreements are regulated by the Trade Union Act (1991) and Section XI of the Labour Act (2024). In addition, freedom of association in trade unions and strikes is guaranteed by the Constitution (1997, art. 59). Despite the rich history and key role in systemic transformation, trade unions in Poland have become increasingly unpopular since the 1990s. Their fragmentation and workers' reluctance to unionise do not help their efficiency (Trappmann 2014).

Trade unions in Poland are organised mainly in company structures - only employees of a given enterprise can join a trade union. To establish a trade union, at least ten employees in one workplace are required⁶. However, in recent years, this has often been successfully bypassed by joining an intercompany (międzyzakładowy) trade union instead of forming a new one at a given employer. Historically, the right to unionise was denied to the self-employed and people working based on “civil law” contracts. This changed following a ruling by the Polish Constitutional Tribunal⁷, which extended union rights to these groups in alignment with international obligations, such as the ILO Convention on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise (Baran, 2018). However, platform workers working under rental contracts (13,1%)⁸ still do not have the right to organise.

6

7 The ruling from June 2nd, 2015 - <https://trybunal.gov.pl/postepowanie-i-orzeczenia/komunikaty-prasowe/komunikaty-po/art/8073-zasady-tworzenia-zwiazkow-zawodowych>

8 This is the data from the study on platform work conducted in 2021/2022 by the researchers from the Institute for Structural Research. As for 2024, the data on the prevalence of the use of rental contracts seems to be underestimated, as their popularity has grown in the whole sector.

It is difficult to determine the current level of unionisation in Poland due to the irregular nature of this type of research and the fact that it is conducted in parallel by Polish and foreign research centres. The latest available OECD (2019) data shows unionisation in Poland at 13.4%. In contrast, data from the Central Statistical Office from 2022 shows that more than 4.7% of Poland's total adult population (14.8% of employees) - belonged to trade unions at the time⁹ (Statistics Poland 2019). According to the CBOS (2021) data, the level of unionisation is 5.5%, which is roughly 10% of employed workers in Poland. The newest CBOS data shows that 3.9% of Poles are actively involved in trade unions. This figure, however, refers to participation in a union's work, not affiliation with a union (CBOS 2024a).

The unionised individuals mostly belong to unions that are part of large trade union organisations. The NSZZ Solidarność (4.1 %), OPZZ (3.1 %) and FZZ (1.7 %) have the largest number of employees. The majority of Poles do not have an opinion on the activities of the major trade unions. The functioning of NSZZ 'Solidarność' is assessed well by one-third of respondents, while more than one-quarter declare the opposite opinion. Almost a quarter of respondents have a positive opinion of the functioning of the OPZZ, while 21% criticise it. 17% of respondents have a positive opinion of the functioning of the FZZ, while 15% have a negative opinion. These data confirm the low social awareness of trade union activities, the low interest in participating in their work, and the extreme opinions about their activities (CBOS 2024b). Despite Poland's generally low level of unionisation, it reaches exceptionally high levels in some sectors affiliated with the public sector or former state-owned enterprises: teachers, steelworkers, pilots, nurses, rail workers, postal workers, and miners (CBOS 2024b).

Polish law now recognises two types of legally regulated arrangements governing working conditions: collective agreements (known as *układ zbiorowy pracy*) and other collective accords (*porozumienia*), both grounded in statutory provisions. Unlike collective agreements regulated by the Labour Code, these accords can only be made at the company level and pertain to specific legally defined situations, such as enterprise restructuring, crises, flexible working hours, telework arrangements, or responses to events like the COVID-19 pandemic (Hajn, 2022).

Collective agreements are becoming increasingly rare in Poland. The legal framework in Poland grants trade unions a monopoly on collective bargaining, but this has not translated into effective agreements. The agreements often merely reiterate existing laws, indicating a lack of depth and effectiveness in the bargaining process (Czarzasty, 2019). The significant fragmentation of the Polish trade unions is the reason for this, making it very difficult for them to operate and sometimes hindering their activities (Trappmann, 2014). Experts point out that the Polish labour law fails to fully realise the potential of collective labour agreements, largely due to poorly designed legislation, the absence of strong trade unions in many workplaces, and the opportunistic attitudes of social partners and representatives (Świątnicki, 2017). The limited development of collective bargaining, particularly at the industry level, has been offset by the activities of tripartite bodies, which to some extent mimic a corporatist model of industrial relations. More recently, industrial relations have begun to shift with the revival of tripartite and the rise of a right-wing government with strong state-centred policies (Czarzasty, 2019).

⁹ Partnerzy dialogu społecznego - związki zawodowe i organizacje pracodawców - wyniki wstępne w 2022, https://stat.gov.pl/download/gfx/portalinformacyjny/pl/defaultaktualnosci/5490/16/2/1/partnerzy_dialogu_spolecznego_-_organizacje_pracodawcow_i_zwiazki_zawodowe_w_2022_r..pdf, 31.05.2024.

Table 3: Poland's largest cross-sector trade unions

Trade Union	Information	Website
Ogólnopolskie Porozumienie Związków Zawodowych (OPZZ)	a representative trade union organisation established in 1984, striving to realise the fundamental principles in Poland: freedom, equality, social solidarity, democracy, tolerance, social justice, as well as the right to a decent life, decent work and pay, and a decent pension	https://www.opzz.org.pl/
Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy „Solidarność”	Poland's largest workers' organisation. It has been active since 1980, when workers took up the struggle for a dignified life, for the right to express their views for freedom during the People's Republic of Poland, when such activities were punishable by repression. „Solidarność” played an important role in overthrowing the communist regime and building a democratic Poland. The movement is not only a trade union, but also an important symbol of the struggle for freedom and democracy. Solidarity has complex territorial and branch structures throughout Poland	https://www.solidarnosc.org.pl/
Ogólnopolski Związek Zawodowy „Inicjatywa Pracownicza”	A grassroots, self-governing trade union, founded on the initiative of workers at the Cegielski factory in Poznań and local social movements. There are several committees within the IPU in various sectors (health care, trade, theatres, care and education) and provinces. The union aims 'to overcome the domination of bosses and owners over workers and to shape an equal and just society'.	https://www.ozzip.pl/
Forum Związków Zawodowych	founded in 2002, a nationwide umbrella trade union structure that includes a federation of sectoral trade unions from various sectors. The FZZ has nationwide coverage	https://fzz.org.pl/

Source: Own elaboration

Employer associations in Poland, known as "organizacje pracodawców," represent the interests of businesses across various sectors. Established in the early 1990s following the transition from communism, these associations emerged to advocate for market-oriented reforms and influence labour legislation. They engage in social dialogue, negotiate collective agreements, and provide resources and support to their members. While their role is significant in shaping economic policy and addressing labour market issues, there are ongoing discussions about the extent to which they represent the interests of all businesses, including small and medium-sized enterprises.

Table 4: Main subjects negotiating on behalf of employers in Poland

Institution	Category	Information	Website
Pracodawcy RP	Employer's associations	Formerly the Confederation of Polish Employers, since 2010 the Employers of the Republic of Poland. As a result of the enactment of the Act on the Social Dialogue Council and other social dialogue institutions of 24 July 2015, representatives of Employers of Poland were appointed as members of the Social Dialogue Council. The organisation is dedicated to representing Polish entrepreneurs' interests, supporting the economy's development, promoting innovation and	https://pracodawcyryp.pl/

		entrepreneurship, and building dialogue between business and public authorities.	
Business Center Club		Founded in 1991 and describes itself as a prestigious business club for entrepreneurs and the country's largest statutory organisation of individual employers. The Club's members employ over 400,000 employees, and its headquarters are located in nearly 250 cities across Poland. Members of the Business Club include representatives of all industries, multinational corporations, financial and insurance institutions, telecommunications companies, the largest Polish manufacturers, universities, publishing concerns and law firms.	https://www.bcc.org.pl/
Konfederacja Lewiatan		One of Poland's largest business organisations, supporting companies in influencing legislation, dialogue with the administration and business development. The Lewiatan Confederation actively represents its members in Poland and the European Union, with a representative office in Brussels and membership of BusinessEurope and Business at OECD. Lewiatan brings together more than 4100 companies, employing more than one million people.	https://lewiatan.org/
Chambers of commerce		Chambers of commerce are organisations of economic self-government which represent the interests of the entrepreneurs associated in it. They have the right to express opinions on draft solutions relating to the functioning of the economy and may participate in the preparation of draft legislation in this area. Some chambers of commerce are affiliated with the National Chamber of Commerce.	https://kig.pl/izby-gospodarcze/

Source: Own elaboration

In the Polish legal system, there are also specific entities to support dialogue and negotiations between workers and employers. The first such body after 1989 was the Tripartite Commission, which functioned in the 1990s. Its task was to support dialogue between employers, trade unions, and the government side. However, its work proved to have little effect due to the contentious debate between the sides (Trappmann, 2014). Another such body is the Social Dialogue Council (Rada Dialogu Społecznego), which has operated since 2015. It is a forum for tripartite cooperation between parties representing employees, employers, and the government. The Council has the right to express opinions and give opinions on legal acts. The main tasks of the Social Dialogue Council include conducting dialogue to ensure the conditions for social and economic development and to increase the competitiveness and social cohesion of the Polish economy; implementing participation and social solidarity in labour relations; improving the quality of formulation and implementation of social and economic policies and strategies and building social consensus around them; supporting social dialogue at all levels of local government (Act on the Social Dialogue Council and other social dialogue institutions, 2015, art. 1).

3.1. Collective bargaining in the platform economy: Actors' strategies and models of collective bargaining in the country

In Poland's rapidly evolving platform economy, delivery couriers and ride-hailing drivers—often students seeking side gigs or migrants drawn by low entry barriers—navigate a complex system designed to maximise platforms' profits while minimising their obligations to those who power their services.

Scattered across city streets, platform workers represent what some activists call "invisible dots"—disconnected individuals lacking common workplaces and a sense of community. This fragmentation is no accident but rather emerges from a carefully constructed business model that deliberately maintains worker dispersion and classification outside traditional employment frameworks.

3.1.1 Trade unions and activist groups: building solidarity among scattered workers

In 2022, a union under the umbrella of Konfederacja Pracy/OPZZ was formed at Pyszne.pl/Just Eat Takeaway, as well as at the temporary work agency, subcontracting workers to the platform. Establishing a trade union at Pyszne.pl, coordinated by the Konfederacja Pracy, was possible mainly because the platform's organisational model was more conducive to unionisation. It is managed more traditionally - couriers are employed directly by the platform rather than through intermediaries (although, majority of them is employed based on civil-law contracts). Additionally, there is a common hub for couriers, which reduces isolation between workers. Pyszne.pl/Just Eat Takeaway recognised the union and engaged in discussions with worker representatives, which received significant media attention. In 2024, Inicjatywa Pracownicza, a syndicalist trade union, formed a union to represent couriers in their dealings with platforms. However, as of now, no collective agreements have been signed within the platform economy. There are also more or less formalised networks of support targeted at platform workers, for instance, the international Zentrale network¹⁰.

Identification and Representation: Finding the "Invisible Dots"

Trade unions in Poland face a fundamental challenge when attempting to organise platform workers: how to reach people who work in isolation, often without ever meeting their colleagues. Activist groups like Zentrale couriers have developed innovative strategies, engaging workers directly on the streets—meeting them where they are. Rather than creating entirely new union structures, which would entail navigating complex legal and bureaucratic obstacles, these groups focus on connecting platform workers with existing networks.

"The second problem is the inability to communicate with those workers, (...) because the legislation is completely out of touch with reality. This issue is further exacerbated by the fact that people often work in dispersed locations. Union boards, which are granted by law, make even less sense here, even more so than in other sectors."

¹⁰ <https://zentrale.pl/>

Formulating Demands: Beyond "More Money"

When platform workers do come together, their primary concerns emerge with remarkable consistency. First and foremost is **pay**—not just higher rates, but **transparency** in how earnings are calculated. Workers frequently describe algorithm-determined compensation as a black box, with identical delivery routes yielding different payments without explanation.

Work stability represents another critical concern. Platform workers desire predictable hours and order flows, contrasting sharply with the reality of algorithm-managed assignments that can leave them without income for hours despite being logged in and available.

The third pillar of worker demands centres on communication, specifically, access to responsive human support rather than automated chatbots when problems arise.

Unions' Action Strategies: A Multi-Faceted Approach

Despite the barriers mentioned, trade unions and activist groups have developed a rich tapestry of strategies to improve platform workers' conditions, each addressing different aspects of the power imbalance in this emerging sector. At the foundation of these efforts lies **information dissemination**, with activists prioritising education to help couriers understand their place in a global context. By revealing the complex structures involving partners and platforms, they aim to empower workers with knowledge before they enter employment arrangements.

Despite significant limitations in Polish collective dispute resolution law, workers have successfully organised **several notable protest actions in recent years**. The Pyszne.pl couriers' strikes in 2022 and 2023 represent a particularly meaningful victory, as they successfully restored a universal winter bonus that had been unilaterally removed. Couriers of Glovo protested in Poznań in 2024, which resulted in forming a trade union as a part of Inicjatywa Pracownicza. More recently, in April 2025, the same union organised protests in Gdańsk. The same month, a Ukrainian TikTok influencer mobilised ride-hailing drivers in a protest demanding reduced commission rates and minimum fare guarantees, responding to declining platform rates amid rising living costs. However, some assess protests as fairly unsuccessful so far:

"Looking at the history of various protest actions, they usually didn't produce results. We had a fairly long-standing common practice of banning, meaning removing accounts in the app and preventing people suspected of participating in the strike from doing this work."

Courier-activist

Unions (like Konfederacja Pracy) also focus on building infrastructure for long-term organising by **providing assistance to workers establishing union cells**. This support proves particularly valuable within more traditional platform structures like Pyszne.pl, which employs couriers directly rather than through intermediaries. Simultaneously, union and activist campaigns work to **shape**

public opinion and advocate for stronger industry regulation, effectively leveraging media attention to highlight worker concerns and build pressure for systemic change.

Though difficult and time-consuming (typically taking 3–4 years in court), **strategic litigation** is seen by some trade union experts as a potentially useful tool—particularly in cases related to the protection of union activists or discrimination via assignment withdrawal. However, Polish law in this area remains problematic, especially when it comes to safeguarding activists working under civil law contracts. Moreover, large unions such as Solidarność have little experience with organising branches made up entirely of non-employees—a category that includes most platform workers. Their priorities tend to lie elsewhere, focusing pragmatically on sectors where they have stronger structures and are more likely to see tangible outcomes.

The union in Pyszne.pl have also ventured into **innovative outreach methods**, attempting to collaborate with platform worker influencers who share insights about their daily work on social media. While one notable collaboration failed due to suspected ties between the influencer and a fleet partner, union representatives recognise the enormous potential of platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels for future outreach efforts that could reach previously inaccessible workers.

Recognising that platform work challenges transcend national boundaries, organisations maintain **global contacts to learn from experiences in other countries**. This international cooperation provides valuable insights on successful organising strategies and regulatory approaches that might be adapted to the Polish context, creating a transnational knowledge base in the struggle for platform worker rights.

3.1.2 Platform companies: strategies to maintain control

Platform companies in Poland have developed a sophisticated arsenal of strategies to maintain their preferred business models while keeping workers atomised and dependent. Central to this approach is **the preservation of civil law contracts and the fleet partner system**, which effectively transfers traditional employer responsibilities to intermediaries. This structure optimises costs by minimising platforms' tax and social contribution payments while creating legal distance between platforms and workers that complicates organising efforts.

The deliberate cultivation of **information asymmetry** forms another pillar of platform power. Platforms refuse to disclose the algorithmic principles that determine assignments and earnings. When questioned about seemingly arbitrary variations in rates for identical routes, companies retreat behind claims of "the company's secrets," leaving workers fundamentally unable to verify or challenge compensation calculations. This opacity serves as both an operational shield and a strategic advantage.

Behind the scenes, these platforms deploy sophisticated psychological engineering that transforms precarious work into a gamified experience. Companies **employ calculated psychological tactics**—multipliers that suddenly appear during peak hours, bonuses with deliberately unclear criteria, and gamified incentives that trigger reward-seeking behaviours—all of which **obscure consistently low base rates** while creating an illusion of opportunity despite maintaining structural control.

The human element has been systematically removed from worker support systems, with platforms introducing **chatbots and automated services** that significantly diminish support quality while simultaneously increasing workloads for the few remaining human dispatchers. Meaningful human

interaction remains frustratingly elusive, with some exceptions, for most workers facing problems that require nuanced solutions beyond algorithmic responses.

Platforms maintain extensive **surveillance infrastructure**, including comprehensive monitoring of worker activities through precise location tracking that can potentially identify protest participants. Account deactivation has been identified as a particularly powerful disciplinary tool in this context, frequently justified with intentionally vague explanations like "customer complaints" or "aggressive behaviour" without providing transparent evidence or formal appeal processes. This creates a chilling effect on organising activities, as workers understand their digital livelihoods hang by a thread.

Communication strategies employed by these companies reveal a calculated approach to worker relations that oscillates between portraying a **false sense of "shared interest"** or "family" narrative when convenient, while maintaining rigid hierarchical distance in practice. In addition, platforms exhibit asymmetric approaches that clearly prioritise passengers over workers in both policy and practice.

On the policy front, platforms maintain **strategic representation in Poland's Social Dialogue Council (RDS)** through employer organisations while actively lobbying to preserve their current employment model against regulatory challenges. Some platforms, like Pyszne.pl, have pragmatically aligned with unions on supporting the platform directive due to their employment model, which has eased potential confrontations. However, even apparent concessions like the winter bonus deliberately remain, according to unions, informal goodwill gestures rather than formalised work regulations, preserving management discretion to withdraw them at any moment without recourse.

3.1.3 The state's role: regulation and enforcement

The Polish state plays a crucial role in regulating the platform economy, yet its effectiveness remains limited. In general, the Polish labour market is characterised by **fragmentation and widespread misuse of non-standard employment forms that violate regulations**. Moreover, a large segment of the workforce—especially those employed under non-standard contracts—remains effectively excluded from key labour code protections, as these safeguards often do not extend to atypical forms of employment. Unlike in many other countries, **the question of whether platforms bypass employment regulations is largely missing from public debate** in Poland. This is due to the broad acceptance within Polish law that civil law contracts and sole proprietorships can be legally used even in situations that closely resemble standard employment relationships. As a result, there is virtually no push to reclassify platform workers as employees (Fairwork, 2024). **State oversight bodies remain indifferent** to the situation in the platform economy. In 2019, after an investigative journalism piece exposed questionable managerial practices among fleet partners and within UberEats, the Polish Ombudsman called on the Labour Inspectorate to examine whether these arrangements complied with national labour laws. After the interrogation, the Inspectorate stated that UberEats directly employs only a small number of office staff in Poland and primarily operates as a technical intermediary—connecting couriers using the app, their fleet partners, restaurants, and customers. This setup was referred to as a new "form of employment" (Rzecznik Praw Obywatelskich, 2019). However, the Inspectorate stopped short of declaring any legal violations. It merely observed that the activities resembled "service provision within entrepreneurial activity," and no further legal action or follow-up has been reported.

Although the European Union has adopted a directive aimed at improving conditions for platform workers, its implementation in Poland is still uncertain. The Ministry of Labour has **shown little willingness to engage in public dialogue about how the directive might be enacted**, and

stakeholders hold divergent views on whether it will lead to improved worker protections or prompt platforms to exit the Polish market altogether. Compounding these uncertainties is the fact **that Polish law currently lacks appropriate frameworks for union activity in the platform sector and provides virtually no protection for activists**. Legislative efforts so far have focused primarily on **consumer-facing issues** like passenger safety, leaving workers exposed to retaliation without adequate legal recourse. As a result, many platform workers express **deep scepticism about the state's capacity—or willingness**—to bring about meaningful change in low-wage sectors. Their concerns are not unfounded: the path to regulatory reform is slow and heavily influenced by powerful industry lobbying, with examples from countries like Belgium and Spain showing that legal proceedings in this area can drag on for years.

3.2 Why collective agreements haven't emerged in Poland's platform economy

The lack of collective agreements in Poland's platform economy highlights a set of interlinked barriers that make traditional worker organising difficult. These obstacles reinforce one another and have so far prevented the development of formal collective bargaining, despite growing awareness of platform workers' issues.

Polish labour law remains fundamentally misaligned with platform work realities, creating a profound legal disconnect that hampers organising efforts from the outset. The existing legal framework presupposes standard employment relationships with clearly defined employers and employees, whereas platform workers primarily operate under civil law contracts or as self-employed individuals in deliberately ambiguous arrangements. While these workers technically possess unionisation rights under Polish law, **unions face severely limited authority when representing non-employees, undermining their bargaining position before negotiations even begin**.

"The rights of trade unions in relation to non-employees are limited. The things that are often cited as motivating people to join unions are missing, such as the fact that there is consultation before termination. This is something important for many people."

Courier-Trade unionist

Even when unions successfully form despite these obstacles, the collective bargaining infrastructure breaks down when confronted with the platform model's deliberately fragmented structure. **The fundamental limitations of Polish labour law and the legal status of platform workers** make it paradoxically easier to negotiate an informal agreement - a commitment by the employer to a specific action, as in the case of the winter bonus - than a formal collective agreement. The unions at Pyszne.pl are now betting on acting outside the framework of the Polish law on the resolution of collective disputes, because they believe it is more effective to use public pressure and the platforms' concern for their image than to take advantage of the hole in the law on trade unions.

The **fleet partner system** itself represents a structural barrier carefully designed to fragment the employer-employee relationship. Many platforms operate exclusively through these intermediaries, creating a deliberate mismatch with collective bargaining frameworks designed for direct employment relationships. If formed, unions would find themselves forced to negotiate with fleet partners who lack meaningful authority, while platforms retain the ability to simply cease assigning tasks to workers

associated with partners that engage in collective bargaining, essentially rendering any agreements worthless through algorithmic reassignment of work. This arrangement creates a kind of shell game, where the true power holder remains legally untouchable through union mechanisms.

Polish law compounds these difficulties by **requiring at least ten employees from the same employer to form a union**. For platform workers, this threshold means establishing unions at the fleet partner level rather than platform-wide, again, effectively excluding platforms from legal obligations under union protection laws. While intercompany trade unions theoretically offer a potential workaround by organising across multiple fleet partners, workers justifiably fear retaliation from platforms that remain legally unbound by these arrangements and can simply deactivate accounts without consequence.

The **demographic composition and employment patterns** of platform workers further complicate organising efforts. Platform work in Poland frequently serves as temporary or supplementary income, particularly attracting students seeking flexible side gigs and recent migrants drawn by minimal entry barriers requiring neither Polish language proficiency nor advanced qualifications. This inherently transient workforce demonstrates understandably less long-term engagement with improving systemic working conditions, focusing instead on short-term maximisation of earnings. The diversity of platforms operating in Poland, each with unique rules and payment systems, further fragments potential solidarity by complicating efforts to organise around common interests and demands.

Many workers have adapted to this fragmented landscape by engaging in "multi-apping"—working simultaneously across multiple platforms to maximise income when orders are slow on any single app. While economically rational for individual workers, this practice creates fundamental confusion about which organisation would be appropriate for unionisation, while diluting any sense of collective identity tied to a particular platform. The inherently individualistic nature of platform work, with couriers and drivers rarely interacting in shared physical spaces, prevents the spontaneous formation of workplace communities essential for traditional organising approaches.

The algorithmic black box at the heart of platform operations creates yet another barrier to collective bargaining. Platforms' systematic refusal to disclose algorithms that assign tasks and calculate pay establishes fundamental obstacles to formulating specific, unified demands that could form the basis of meaningful negotiations. Without understanding the basic mechanisms determining their compensation, workers struggle to articulate concrete proposals beyond general demands for "more money," making substantive bargaining nearly impossible even if formal structures existed.

There is also some proof that platforms in the past actively **countered organisation efforts through surveillance and disciplinary measures** that create a pervasive climate of fear. Location tracking capabilities can readily identify protest participants, while account deactivations serve as powerful deterrents against organizing, frequently implemented without transparent procedures or meaningful appeal mechanisms.

The combination of legal vulnerability and economic precarity makes workers justifiably reluctant to risk their immediate livelihoods through organising activities that could trigger swift platform retaliation, particularly when legal remedies remain distant theoretical possibilities rather than practical protections. This rational risk calculation undermines the collective action necessary to establish bargaining relationships, completing a self-reinforcing cycle that has thus far prevented collective agreements from emerging in Poland's platform economy.

4. The collection and use of workers' data by digital labour platforms

The participants approached five platforms: Uber Eats, Bolt Food, Glovo, Pyszne, and Wolt. Useful data was provided by **Uber Eats**, **Bolt Food**, and **Pyszne**. **Glovo** provided incomplete data, while **Wolt** failed to respond. Overall, the process was the most straightforward for platforms that offered dedicated data request forms.

For **Uber Eats**, the data access procedure was the simplest among all platforms. Users could access their data in two ways: through a "view-only" mode offering instant access, or by submitting a data request form, which generated a downloadable link to the files within approximately 24 hours. The data was provided in CSV format, and the entire process was smooth and appeared highly automated on the company's side.

In the case of **Bolt Food**, users were required to fill out a request form available on the Bolt website. However, the form had a character limit, which made the process slightly inconvenient. The courier received their data nearly a month after submitting the request, but the data was provided in a clear and comprehensible CSV format.

For **Wolt**, no dedicated data request form was available. Participants had to send an email to privacy@wolt.com, using a GDPR request template provided by the Austrian team. Unfortunately, the participant who attempted this did not receive any response or data from Wolt.

Glovo offered a form on their website, but it was also limited by a character count. The participant who submitted a request received a single CSV file containing very limited information—only their name, surname, ID number, and address.

Finally, **Just Eat/Takeaway (Pyszne.pl)** provided a dedicated form on their website. Participants used a GDPR request template supplied by the Austrian team. All participants successfully received their data in a clear format, and the data files were accompanied by a "read-me" text file offering additional guidance.

4.1 What data is being collected by digital labour platforms on workers?

Finally, we analysed data from three companies: Pyszne.pl, Uber (Eats), and Bolt (Food). The following table contains information about the data retrieved from platforms

Table 5 Retrieved data provided by platforms

Platform	Pyszne	Uber	Bolt
Employment status	Agency-employed or non-agency-employed (contract type specified)	Under intermediary agency (if applicable)	Not specified
Personal and contractual information	First and last name, Courier ID, Contract wage (minimum wage compliance), Date of	First and last name, Courier ID (Referral code), Phone number, Email, Date of recruitment	n/a*

	recruitment, Courier coordinator		
Working times	Shift details (start and end times)	Not specified	Detailed times of pick up and deliveries
Breaks	Records of pauses	Not specified	Not specified
Delivery/drive data	Longitude and latitude for courier, restaurant, and client; Timestamps for order receipt, pick-up, and delivery; Records of late pick-ups, absences, and disciplinary entries	Payment records (driver fares, commissions), Limited "Analytic Event Type" (digital use tracking: device model, app version)	Longitude and latitude for courier, restaurant, and client; Payments (detailed); Vehicle type; Timestamps for receipt, pick-up, and delivery
Payment data	Not specified	Payment records with source details	Payment records with source details
GPS data	Longitude/latitude for courier, restaurant, and client	Only regarding to Analytic Event Type (hard to interpret)	Precise pick-up/drop-off locations
Performance data	Late pick-ups, absences, disciplinary entries	Not specified	Acceptance rate, Status of delivered orders (rejected, non-responding, delivered), Review classification (thumb up/down)
Communication data	Not specified	Driver-customer communications, Opt-in/out for contact, Personal documents	Partner agency communications, Review classification (thumbs up and down)
App data	Logins and logouts	Device model, IP address, carrier, "Analytic Event Type" tracking (custom, lifecycle, impression, tap)	Not specified

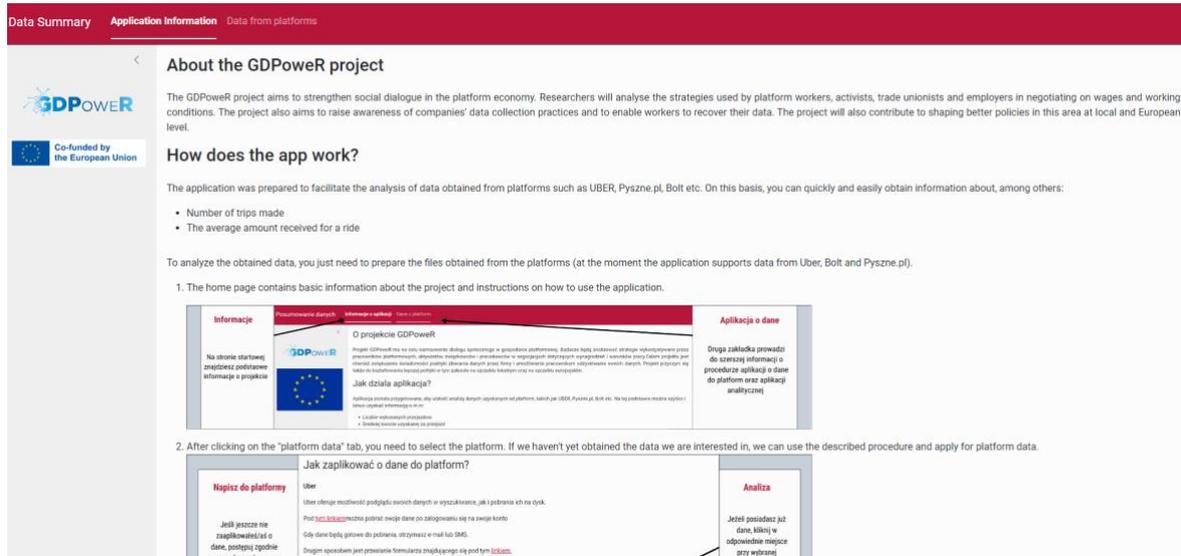
Note: Bolt courier did not send us the file with his personal data (removed it manually).

4.2 Visualisation tool - how we presented workers' data

As a part of the Sense-Making Workshop, we presented to the couriers a data visualisation tool developed specifically for the project. The platform is currently available in Polish only; the screenshots below show how the interface appears when translated using the browser's built-in automatic translation feature.

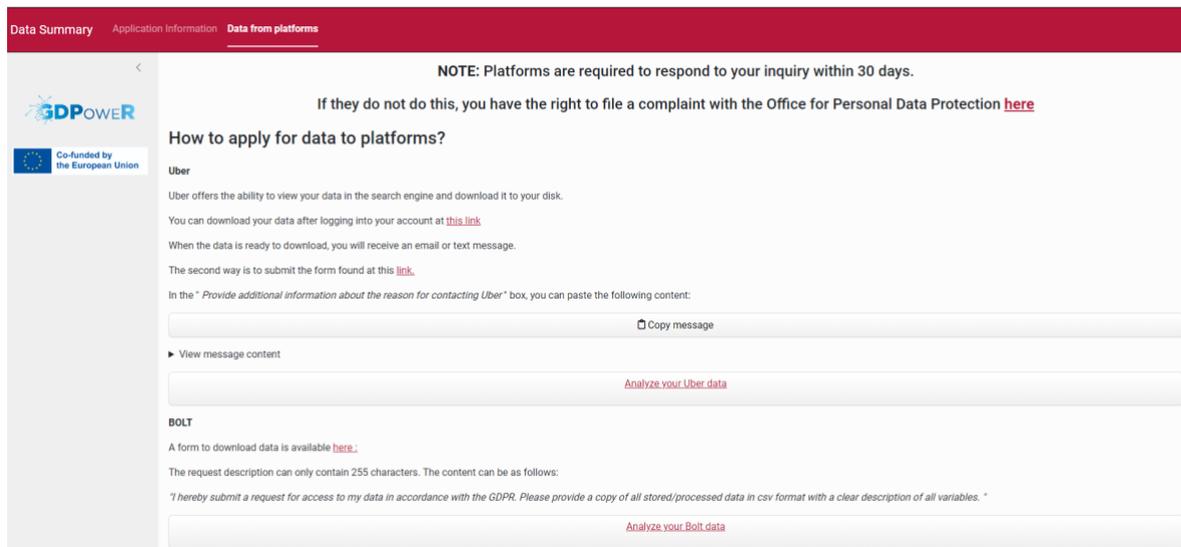
The landing page introduces the GDPowerR project, outlines the tool's functionalities, and provides step-by-step instructions on how to request personal data. Figure 2 shows the initial landing view, while Figure 3 displays the section explaining the data request process, including the exact message users should submit via the chat window.

Figure 2 Information about the project and website's functionalities



Source: <https://kurs-na-dane.shinyapps.io/start/>

Figure 3 Information on how to apply for data



Source: <https://kurs-na-dane.shinyapps.io/start/>

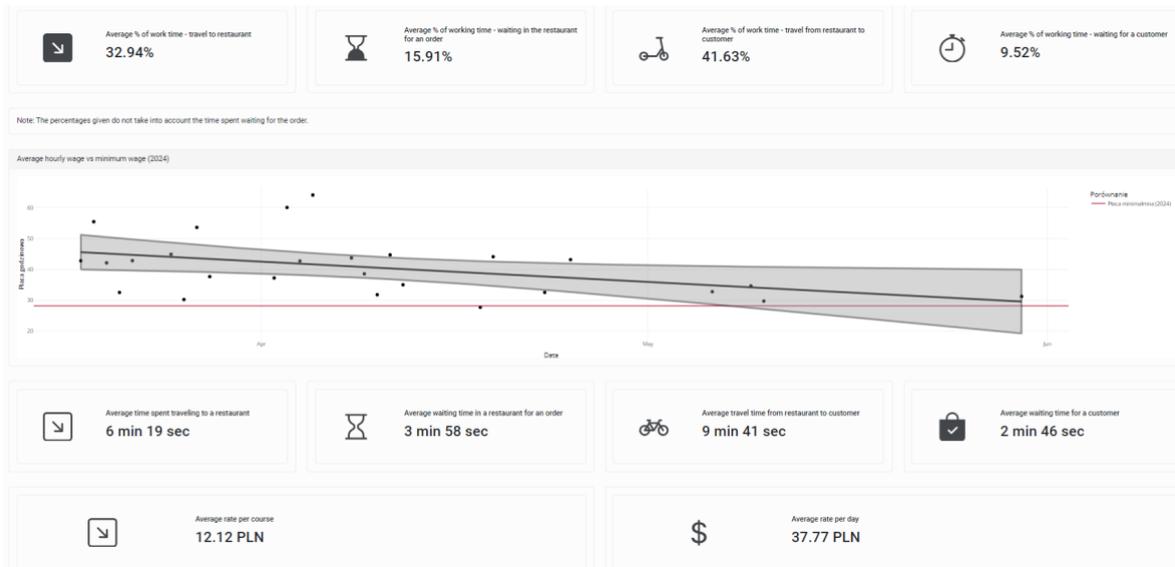
In the following steps of the workshop, workers were shown how to upload their retrieved data in CSV format. The app supports different types of visualisations depending on the platform, as each platform provides distinct data sets to workers. The tool's specific functionalities were further refined in collaboration with couriers, based on their feedback after the workshop.

The **Bolt** section of the tool analyses both total working time and its distribution across key stages of a delivery: time spent reaching the restaurant, waiting at the restaurant, commuting to the customer, and waiting for the customer. Additionally, it displays average hourly earnings compared to the 2024 minimum wage, along with the average rate per delivery and per day.

The **Uber** section provides insights into earnings and activity levels. It visualises the distribution of payment amounts per ride, revenue by hour, total income, total tips, and the share of tips in overall earnings. It also shows average income per day, month, and year, total number of trips, average number of trips per month and per week, and total and average earnings by month and by day.

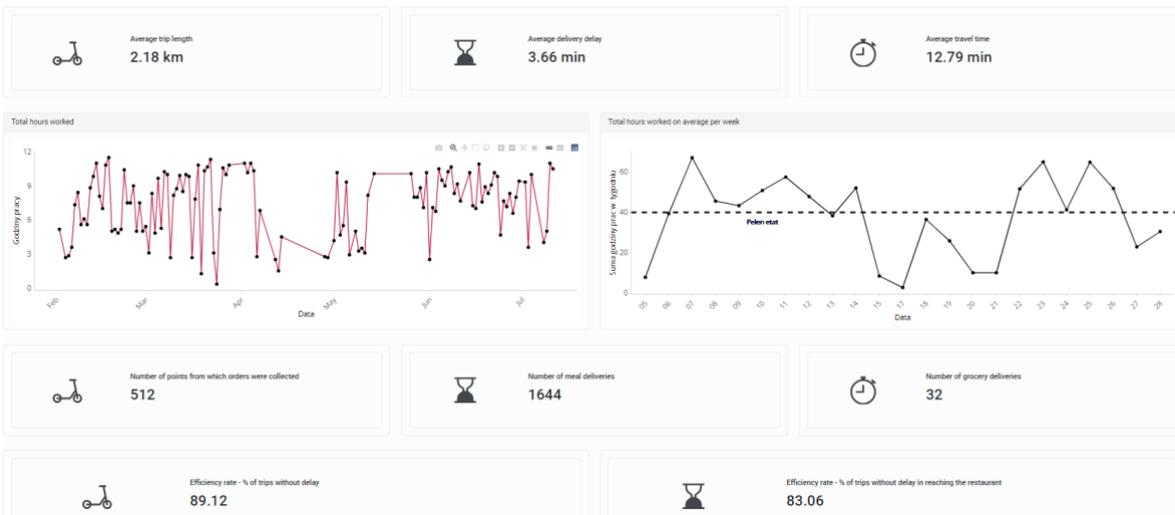
The **Pyszne (Just Eat/Takeaway)** section analyses delivery metrics such as average travel distance, delivery delays, and average delivery time. It also includes total hours worked, average weekly working hours, number of pick-up points, number of food and grocery deliveries, the share of deliveries completed without delay, and the share of trips where couriers reached the restaurant on time. These last two indicators were inspired by the SLA (Service Level Agreement) metrics referenced in the “read-me” file attached to the Pyszne.pl data set.

Figure 4 Visualisation of workers' data - Bolt app



Source: <https://kurs-na-dane.shinyapps.io/bolt/>

Figure 5 Visualisation of workers' data – Pyszne.pl app



Source: <https://kurs-na-dane.shinyapps.io/pyszne/>

Figure 6 Visualisation of workers' data – Uber app



Source: <https://kurs-na-dane.shinyapps.io/uber/>

4.3 Are workers aware of what data is collected on them?

Platform workers operate in a digital ecosystem where data collection is pervasive yet largely opaque. Despite platforms amassing substantial information about couriers and drivers, workers' **awareness of these practices remains limited.**

"I don't think about it while I'm working. So I guess I just don't really care. Basically, we do this job for the money. And we probably take all the baggage that comes with it a bit thoughtlessly,"

Driver 1

The quote captures a sentiment shared by many platform workers. They tend to accept monitoring **as an inherent part of the job**, often clicking through terms and conditions without reading them and **prioritising immediate income over data privacy concerns.**

Workers generally understand that platforms collect data and suspect that they monitor "all kinds" of information about them. In one striking example, a driver mentioned hearing a piece of news shared by another driver, suggesting that platforms may even record audio from inside taxis during rides, though he was uncertain whether this was true. The idea of constant surveillance was described as "terrible," yet drivers simultaneously acknowledged their **tendency to accept terms without scrutiny.**

When couriers and drivers were given access to their personal data as part of this research project, many expressed genuine surprise at the volume and granularity of information collected. One courier was particularly shocked at how thoroughly their movements and activities were tracked. Research participants pointed out that despite legal obligations to provide comprehensive data, platforms shared only **"a fraction of this data"** in response to requests—a practice they noted was legally non-compliant. For instance, some platforms – like Uber – did not share geolocation data, which they

have to gather for the platform to work. Other, like Glovo, shared “personal data” in the very narrow sense, namely name, address, and the details of personal ID.

The awareness issue is complicated by deliberate opacity from the platforms themselves. The data provided to workers upon request was described as **“highly illegible and difficult to understand”** for the average person, even those with basic spreadsheet skills. Files lacked clear descriptions of what specific columns, files or indicators meant. One courier observed that platforms only alert workers to errors when their own statistics do not match up, suggesting selective transparency driven by company interests rather than worker empowerment.

This opacity extends to crucial operational aspects that directly affect workers' livelihoods. Particularly troubling is the **lack of transparency around algorithmic decision-making, including price setting**. Drivers and couriers repeatedly expressed frustration about not understanding how orders are assigned or how their performance is evaluated. Most couriers working for Pyszne.pl were surprised by the mention of four indicators measuring their performance in the read-me file attached to the retrieved data. One courier only learned about these indicators in response to a formal letter that he had sent to the company. This was related to the allocation of shifts and his inquiry into whether these indicators are taken into account in that process, and it turned out they are.

Furthermore, other couriers reported asking coordinators about their performance statistics and being told that the company did not collect such data. They were surprised to discover such a wealth of information on the matter and perceived it as a dishonest deception by the company. It was also mentioned that a colleague from the trade union had requested access to these indicators but was told such a thing was a lie.

Another controversy regarding hidden performance measures concerns **the acceptance rate in the Bolt app**. Workers learnt about the measure's importance through the media scandal, which the intermediary agency accidentally started by leaking some information from Bolt. The main data file containing information on workers' personal details indeed included the acceptance rate measure, which suggests its importance.

Location tracking generates similar concerns. Drivers report feeling **“very exposed”** compared to passengers, with some suspecting that the app might continue recording their location even when logged out, though they have no way to verify this. The asymmetry of information - where platforms know everything about workers while workers know very little about how platforms operate - creates **a profound sense of powerlessness**.

Perhaps most troubling are the instances where workers believe **they have been deliberately misled**. During collective negotiations, Pyszne.pl representatives claimed they couldn't calculate compensation based on the full delivery journey (including distance to restaurants) due to “technical difficulties.” However, when couriers later examined their own data, they discovered the platform had been tracking precisely this information all along, measuring both the distance to restaurants and from restaurants to customers (even in straight lines). The data also contained numerous detailed, even “excessive” information that workers didn't fully understand, such as various estimated pickup times and app interactions. *“It turns out that the platform collects this data and does not tell us the truth,”* one courier concluded, reflecting the erosion of trust that occurs when such discrepancies come to light.

Workers also struggled to understand the basis for calculating their compensation. Despite having access to data, calculating average earnings per hour or kilometre proved complicated due to numerous variables, including waiting time between orders. This lack of clarity about payment structures further contributes to workers' sense of operating in an information vacuum.

The research also revealed significant **inconsistencies between platforms**. Each company structures and presents data differently, creating additional confusion for workers who use multiple apps simultaneously (a common practice known as “multiapping”). Knowledge gained about one

platform's monitoring practices rarely transfers to others, requiring workers to navigate multiple opaque systems simultaneously.

Despite these concerns, it is important to note that many platform workers **exhibit limited interest in data collection practices**. Those who treat this work as temporary or supplemental income often dismiss these concerns entirely, stating they "don't care about it." When information about performance metrics was shared in worker groups, many simply "shrugged their shoulders," **more focused on immediate earnings than data transparency**. This indifference stems partly from resignation. Over time, many workers have accepted the lack of transparency as unchangeable, adopting a pragmatic attitude focused on maximising earnings within the system rather than challenging its foundations. We conclude that only providing pre-analysed data in an accessible format or tools to help workers interpret their own data might generate more interest in these important issues.

Table 6 Specific problems related to awareness of data collection.

Problem	Explanation
Vagueness of data	Many couriers do not understand what specific files or columns of data mean, making analysis difficult for them. Even those with Excel experience find it difficult to interpret.
Lack of transparency	Platforms often do not provide employees with clear information about what data is collected and how it is used. Some companies hide performance indicators and others provide incomplete or unclear descriptions of the data. Some drivers perceive data collection as an obvious "byproduct" of using the app.
Differences between platforms	The structure and presentation of data vary significantly between companies. For drivers and couriers who use multiple apps ('multiapping'), this lack of consistency creates additional complexity and confusion. Even if they are familiar with how one platform collects and displays their data, that knowledge often doesn't transfer to other platforms.
Lack of knowledge of performance indicators	In case of Pyszne.pl, couriers were often not informed about the performance indicators that are used to evaluate their work. Some coordinators from the platform's side even deny that such indicators are used. They were also not straightforwardly calculated in the obtained file, which suggests that some data concerning couriers was not shared with them.

4.4 How do platforms' data collection practices influence workers?

The extensive data collection practices of platforms have profound implications for platform workers that extend well beyond mere information gathering. These practices shape workers' daily experiences, influence their economic outcomes, and fundamentally alter the power dynamics between platforms and those who provide services through them.

Platform workers operate in an environment where data collection directly affects their livelihood in tangible ways. The algorithmic management systems, fed by the constant stream of worker data, determine crucial aspects of their working conditions without providing clarity on how decisions are made. This opacity creates **a troubling dynamic** where workers' performance is continuously evaluated **against metrics they may not fully understand or even know exist**.

One of the most significant impacts of data collection is how it shapes workers' earnings and work opportunities. Algorithms determine order allocation, effectively controlling access to income. Without transparency about how these systems operate, workers are left to **speculate** about what behaviours will maximise their earnings. Some discover critical information by chance, such as the abovementioned Bolt's practice of giving priority to couriers with acceptance rates above 80%, or learn about efficiency indicators at Pyszne.pl only after formal inquiries. This information asymmetry places workers at a significant disadvantage, forcing them to navigate an economic landscape where the rules remain largely hidden.

The psychological impact of pervasive data collection should not be underestimated. Workers describe **feelings of being constantly monitored, creating a surveillance environment that extends beyond working hours**. One driver succinctly captured this sensation: *"It's like being under constant surveillance."* Platforms actively reinforce this feeling by contacting workers when they appear inactive or deviate from expected patterns, as one courier noted:

"Sure (I feel monitored), because they even call me when I haven't read the order yet... after a few minutes, when I didn't move from the spot."

Over time, this continuous observation fosters resignation and acceptance of powerlessness among many workers, who come to **view surveillance as an unavoidable aspect of platform work**. Some have simply resigned themselves to this reality, as expressed by one driver who admitted: *"And after 10 years, I have kind of accepted this feeling of powerlessness."* When faced with confusing data formats, some **workers react with frustration**: *"I was not surprised, but it still made me angry that this data is so poorly readable. It really frustrated me, knowing that it is still happening despite the GDPR act and European Legislation."*

Platform workers also face meaningful consequences for their autonomy and security. The data collected can be weaponised against them in troubling ways. Some platforms reportedly monitor and block workers who participate in collective actions like strikes, sometimes disguising these decisions behind vague justifications like "customer complaints." The ability of platforms to suddenly deactivate accounts based on data-driven assessments creates **persistent job insecurity**. Workers operate under the knowledge that their livelihoods can be terminated without warning or clear recourse, a reality that profoundly shapes their relationship with the platforms.

The impact of data collection on worker representation presents additional challenges. Union representatives describe encountering "walls" when attempting to access aggregate data that would strengthen their ability to advocate for workers. As one unionised courier explained: *"Data that companies collect about us, when we apply for it, is often explained in a highly complex way, even if we apply as a union, it is also a wall behind which there is no discussion."* Some platforms even request that information not be shared with union members, undermining collective representation.

"They also ask us, if they present something to us, not to present it anywhere else. But how is a union supposed to operate if it does not share information with its members?"

Unionised courier

This practice of information control extends beyond individual workers to impact broader labour organising efforts, effectively limiting workers' collective bargaining power.

Data practices also affect **workers' ability to verify how the price for the trip is calculated**. In some platforms (e.g., Uber), there is a lack of transparency regarding how fares are calculated.

Drivers notice that the fare for the same route with the same person can vary, which leads them to speculate about random pricing or advanced algorithmic price profiling. Uber does not pay for the time or distance required to reach the restaurant or customer before picking up the food or passenger, even though the platform has data on this route and may include it in its internal statistics. The platforms' privileged position—possessing complete data while sharing only fragments—creates **an environment where workers cannot effectively challenge compensation issues**. This asymmetry is particularly evident in cases where platforms claim "technical difficulties" prevent certain calculations, only for workers to later discover the necessary data was being collected all along.

The personalized nature of platform communications adds another dimension to how data collection influences workers. Platforms send targeted notifications about bonuses, increased demand, and login reminders based on individual worker data. While ostensibly helpful, workers often experience these communications **as intrusive, particularly when they arrive during off-hours**. This practice blurs the boundaries between work and personal time, creating pressure to remain constantly available.

For marginalised workers, including immigrants with limited language skills or technical literacy, the impacts of data collection practices are amplified. One courier highlighted this issue: *"I can't think of any foreigners, for instance from Ukraine with barely any knowledge of English and lack of access to Excel, could analyse the data properly."* Without the ability to understand complex data files or navigate sophisticated privacy settings, these workers face even greater challenges in asserting control over their information or understanding how platforms evaluate their performance. **The data literacy gap** creates **an additional layer of vulnerability** for those already operating from positions of economic precarity.

Data collection practices themselves are not typically a primary motivator for workers to join unions or engage in collective organisation. As our research indicates, the main reasons workers consider unionising relate more directly to pay, working conditions, lack of support and poor treatment by platforms. However, when workers discover deception related to data collection, such as platforms denying they track certain metrics only to later reveal they do, this can spark feelings of betrayal that might contribute to organising sentiment. As one courier (unionised) expressed:

"I asked the coordinators about the statistics and they said that we don't keep them, and now I see that there is so much of it. It's not nice that they cheated."

For some platform workers, **past experiences with collective action have led to disillusionment with unions** and organised resistance. One driver recounted how previous taxi driver protests not only failed but potentially backfired: *"You could say that they had the opposite effect to what was intended, that certain (unfavourable) things that were not there before were legalised."* Another driver described how quickly political intervention could neutralise worker protests: *"Then, it only took one letter from Ambassador Mosbacher to the Prime Minister to put an end to it."* This **sense of futility** contributes to the resignation many workers feel about challenging platform practices, including data collection.

Yet, there remains a tension between this resignation and the recognition that inaction perpetuates poor conditions. As one driver asserted:

"As long as drivers agree to drive for peanuts, nothing will change."

More engaged workers, particularly those already involved with unions, recognise the strategic importance of data transparency for effective worker representation. They advocate for platforms to provide *"dedicated dashboards with detailed explanations of our data"* and demand that *"the whole process of using algorithms to be more transparent."* These workers understand that data access is a crucial component of power in the platform economy, even if it is not their primary organising concern.

The influence of data collection on platform workers ultimately manifests as a profound power imbalance. Platforms possess extensive information about workers' movements, behaviours, and performance, while workers receive limited insights into how this data shapes their working conditions. This asymmetry reinforces platforms' ability to unilaterally set terms, adjust algorithms, and implement changes without meaningful worker input. Without greater transparency and access to understandable data, platform workers remain at a significant disadvantage in an increasingly data-driven work environment, **their autonomy and economic security continuously shaped by forces they cannot fully comprehend or influence.**

Table 7 Specific aspects of the impact of data collection on workers

Issue	Explanation
Impact on job evaluation and performance	Platforms collect data that is used to evaluate the performance of couriers . Couriers are often not informed about the performance indicators that are taken into account for evaluation. The lack of clear information about the evaluation criteria makes it difficult for couriers to know what to improve in their work.
Disillusionment and disappointment	Disillusionment and disappointment are expressed at the fact that the platform gathers efficiency indicators.
Monitoring and lack of privacy	Platforms monitor couriers' location and working hours, which creates a feeling of being constantly watched . Some apps can track users' activities even when they log out of the app. Couriers have concerns that this data can be used to monitor their union activities.
Acceptance and powerlessness	Drivers do not explicitly cite limited awareness of data practices as a primary source of frustration or dissatisfaction with platform work. <i>Acceptance</i> of the current status (including feelings of powerlessness) is the most cited feeling/sentiment in this regard.
Influence of algorithms on pay decisions	Platform algorithms determine order allocation, and couriers do not fully understand how these algorithms work. Order allocation systems can affect couriers' income. Some platforms, such as Wolt, make the number of orders received dependent on the type of vehicle the courier drives, which in turn affects earnings.
Concerns and uncertainty	Couriers are concerned about the stability of their work and how platforms may use the data collected. Some are afraid to claim their data because they do not know how the data will be used. Platforms are reluctant to share data, building a 'wall' in front of trade unions.

5. Conclusions

Platform work in Poland has expanded rapidly since 2014 but remains poorly regulated, operating largely outside traditional employment frameworks through civil law or B2B contracts. While some legislative measures have been introduced, such as identity verification and licensing requirements for drivers, they have not substantially improved employment conditions or addressed systemic

problems like the dominance of intermediaries. Most platform workers, particularly young people and migrants, face precarious work, low pay, and limited access to social protections. Legal reforms, including the "Lex Uber" law and more recent identity verification rules, have primarily targeted consumer safety rather than workers' rights. Moreover, the widespread acceptance of civil contracts in Polish law, combined with weak enforcement, means that the problematic employment structures of the platform economy have remained largely unchallenged.

Data on the sector suggests that platform work is performed regularly by around 4% of the Polish working population, with a higher prevalence among young workers and migrants. Platforms such as Uber, Bolt, Glovo, and Pyszne.pl dominate the ride-hailing and food delivery markets. Migrant workers, in particular, face more precarious conditions, earning significantly less and working longer hours compared to native workers, while often being employed informally. Although platform work can offer some sense of autonomy and slightly higher job satisfaction for certain groups, it is generally associated with lower well-being, job insecurity, and exposure to various risks, reinforcing the need for comprehensive regulation and improved protections.

Trade union activity in Poland is legally grounded in the Trade Union Act, the Labour Code, and the Constitution, but in practice, trade unions have a weak influence, especially in the private sector. Unionisation rates are low, with estimates ranging from 5% to 15% of workers, and union structures remain fragmented and company-specific, despite legal changes allowing self-employed and civil law contractors to organise. Collective bargaining, while formally protected, is rare and often ineffective, with agreements largely replicating existing laws rather than improving conditions. Efforts to engage in broader social dialogue are partly channelled through the Social Dialogue Council, but structural weaknesses and fragmented union representation continue to hinder the development of strong collective labour relations.

The absence of collective agreements in Poland's platform economy stems from a combination of structural, legal, and cultural barriers. Platform work is typically seen as temporary and transitional, with workers dispersed geographically, making traditional union organising methods ineffective. Polish labour law remains poorly adapted to the realities of platform work, offering limited union rights to those employed under civil law contracts or vehicle rental agreements. The widespread use of intermediaries, such as fleet partners, further fragments employment relationships, complicating direct negotiations with platforms. Workers also fear retaliation, including account deactivations ("bans"), for union activity, while the legal protections for union activists on civil contracts are weak or non-existent. Broader challenges include the inefficiency and fragmentation of traditional trade unions, the prioritisation of immediate earnings over long-term organising, low overall unionisation rates in Poland, and a general distrust that state interventions or EU regulations will meaningfully improve conditions. Although grassroots initiatives have emerged, and the Pyszne.pl couriers' union has achieved some success due to that platform's more traditional employment model, the overall landscape remains one where formal collective agreements are absent and difficult to achieve.

The collection and use of workers' data by digital labour platforms in Poland reveal serious issues around transparency, access, and control. While some platforms like Uber Eats and Pyszne.pl provided relatively accessible and well-structured data, others like Glovo and Wolt either offered incomplete information or did not respond at all. Platforms collect a broad range of data, including location tracking, work performance metrics, and communications, yet workers often have limited awareness of what data is collected or how it is used. Data transparency is inconsistent across platforms, with many couriers struggling to understand the information they receive. Workers also reported that key performance indicators, such as acceptance rates, were hidden or poorly explained, further exacerbating confusion and distrust towards platforms.

Workers' experiences show that opaque data practices contribute to a broader sense of powerlessness, surveillance, and dissatisfaction. Many couriers feel constantly monitored but lack the tools to understand or challenge the algorithms that shape their pay and work allocation. Despite the critical role data plays in job evaluation and income stability, most workers are unaware of how they are assessed, and platforms rarely provide clear explanations. There is an urgent need for improved transparency, better access to understandable data, and educational initiatives to empower workers. Greater transparency is also essential for trade unions to effectively represent platform

workers, who currently face significant obstacles in challenging unfair practices and negotiating improved conditions.

The most important finding of this report is that Poland's platform economy operates within a deeply fragmented and poorly regulated system, where the dominance of intermediaries, weak collective bargaining structures, and opaque data practices leave platform workers—especially migrants and young people—in a state of persistent precarity and vulnerability. To reverse these dynamics, platforms must commit to greater transparency around working conditions, wage calculations, and algorithmic management, ensuring workers have clear, accessible information about how their data is used and how their performance is evaluated. At the same time, social partners must intensify efforts to organise platform workers across intermediary structures, push for enforceable collective agreements, and advocate for the full implementation of the EU Platform Work Directive with a strong focus on addressing (preferably, limiting) subcontracting practices. Without decisive action, the platform economy risks further entrenching a model of employment that undermines both labour rights and social cohesion in Poland.

Recommendations for public policies include ensuring that the transposition of the Platform Work Directive into Polish law establishes a presumption of employment, creates enforceable mechanisms for holding platforms jointly liable for violations by intermediaries, and imposes limits on the number of subcontracting layers permissible. Labour inspectorates must be empowered and resourced to enforce these new obligations effectively.

For social partners, building inter-company and cross-platform unions could be a way to overcome the fragmentation caused by the intermediary structure. Strategic litigation—especially targeting platforms' liability for their intermediaries' actions—could also serve as an important tool to push for systemic change.

Activists and worker networks should focus on increasing workers' awareness about their rights, their data, and the hidden structures that shape their working conditions. Campaigns aimed at exposing intermediaries' practices and demanding wage transparency, protection against unfair deactivations, and direct contractual relations with platforms will be crucial.

Beyond that, there is a need to address the problematic data practices of digital labour platforms. Platforms should be required to provide workers with clear, easily interpretable access to the data collected about them, including detailed explanations of how performance indicators and algorithms impact their pay and workflow. Public authorities and social partners should promote the development of independent, worker-friendly digital tools that help platform workers interpret their own data and monitor platform compliance with labour standards. In parallel, trade unions and worker organisations must be granted stronger rights to access aggregated, anonymised platform data to support collective bargaining and advocacy efforts. Without systemic improvements in data transparency and accessibility, workers will remain at a severe informational disadvantage, unable to meaningfully negotiate better conditions or defend against unfair algorithmic management.

In sum, the Polish platform economy currently relies on a model that externalises responsibility onto workers and intermediaries. If left unchecked, this model threatens to erode fundamental labour standards. Thus, regulation of intermediaries must be central to any effort to build fairer industrial relations and collective bargaining structures in the platform economy.

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