



Meeting Minutes Work Stream 2, Roundtable 1 September 23, 2020

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The roundtable discussion opened with a policy update. The EU is currently crafting the agenda for 2021. In the new year they will be hosting formal public consultations as well as conduct impact assessments, on that basis of which parliamentary recommendations will be based. Right now the EU is enlisting the help of outside experts to set the direction of 2021's agenda and flag the most relevant opportunities/ challenges and key topics. This report could serve a vital input herein.

Policy updates:

- European Commission is conducting a series of consultations with relevant stakeholders: academics, SMEs, unions, etc.
- Platform economy remains at the top of the agenda (the pandemic has increased the pressure for both social protection and skills development).
- 2021 – formal public consultations & impact assessment

Topic 1: Topic 1: Access to up- and reskilling opportunities – ensuring social fairness

In addressing the topic of access to -up and reskilling opportunities, we touched upon a variety of topics ranging from: the degree of responsibility platform should take and who benefits (see Table 1), as well urgent problems regarding the feasibility, validity and reach (actual adoption amongst workers) of training programs (see Table 2). Whilst important insights regarding efforts from the perspective of the platform were clearly articulated, questions regarding the role EU/ national governments should play herein, are yet to be addressed.

Table 1: What role should platforms play in providing new skills?

Main point	Opportunities	Complexities	Regulatory barriers	Possible solutions
<p>Depending on how workers are classified (i.e. independent contractors) vs. temp workers, has a large bearing on how platforms can contribute voluntarily, versus be obliged to contribute legally.</p> <p>Secondly, the benefits from upskilling workers goes both ways: both employees and platforms benefit from incentivizing workers to develop themselves.</p> <p>Thirdly, platforms should not take on the challenge alone and work on cross-sector partnerships to develop legitimate training programs that are recognised</p>	<p>Many participants have pointed that it is in the best interest of the platforms to offer re/up skilling to strengthen worker-platform relationships, attract more workers and assist them in doing a better job (which increases the overall quality of services rendered)</p> <p>For example, Glovo mentioned that training employees in "ecosystem learning" also improves the quality of services. Much learning happens on the job and by posting various employment opportunities within a platform and educating them with the necessary skills to be able to perform these jobs successfully can be seen as "win-win" (e.g. see Glovo's job board for couriers).</p> <p>As Adecco puts it: "if we can't find the right skill, we train them"</p>	<p>1) So long as workers maintain their independent status what a platform can and should do is contingent on the legal relationship between the worker and the platform.</p> <p>If the platform is the employer, there are some requirements regarding re/up skilling. If the platform is an 'intermediary' than the requirements are much more lenient.</p> <p>2) How can workers access these skills? There should be a formal institution that guides workers through options available to them. This is also partly the responsibility of public employment services or private employment services, who play an additional supporting role for public employment services.</p> <p>3) Credibility of the training. There is a dearth of initiatives out there that don't enjoy the same seal of approval as "traditional training programs"; we need to make sure certificates or recognitions are transferable as workers move across jobs or regions.</p>	<p>There is a high level of fragmentation in the EU. Platforms don't collaborate with one-another and we know that workers multihome.</p> <p>Portability of skills from one platform to the next is questioned.</p> <p>Sense of urgency - often workers will train themselves to become better at their immediate jobs, yet they often lack the time and resources to enter in and complete programs to re-educate themselves.</p> <p>Immigrant workers are especially at risk.</p>	<p>1) Roll out training initiatives across countries and between sectors. Fewer programs with more visibility result in better validation.</p> <p>2) Collaborate with outside knowledge partners. For example, Deliveroo partnered up with 'Openclassrooms', and now offers its riders free access to over 700 online courses, related to CV building, project management, IT skills, entrepreneurship and so on.</p> <p>3) Set up micro-credentials – programs that workers can easily go through but that equip them with needed skills. Formal education could then be taken over by universities and other credible institutions.</p>

Table 2: What are the challenges associated with re/up skilling workers?

Main point	Complexities	Opportunities	Regulatory barriers	Possible solutions
<p>The re-up skilling of workers, consist of both practical skills that improve the services provided by the platform as well as more theoretical skills that improve their future work prospects over time.</p> <p>Practical skills are relatively simple to implement. Challenges related to theoretical/ higher-level skills are more stringent and require new ways of incentivization.</p> <p>Setting up collaborations with credible "third parties" such as the Open university and "Open classrooms" can aid in making tailor-made training programs that are feasible to obtain, yet enjoy the credibility that workers need to deploy these skills elsewhere. Finally, the success is also contingent on better communications and higher adoption rates.</p>	<p>There are 4 central challenges associated with upskilling workers beyond improving on "low skilled work".</p> <p>1) Time/ economic constraints. Workers don't have the luxury of taking multiple hours a week to get reskilled.</p> <p>2) Portability of skills: how can we assure that skills acquired on one platform are also recognized as such by another platform? Many micro-skilled training initiatives are not recognized outside of the platform</p> <p>3) General knowledge assembly. Platform workers are often not aware of the upskilling opportunities. For example, Smartcoop offers</p>	<p>60% of workers engage in some form of skill development, however typically these relate to "low hanging fruits".</p> <p>1) Training could be updated to include online courses that provide tangible results quickly (e.g. through micro-credentials/ badges that encourage prolonged participation).</p> <p>2) Platforms could work with existing partners such as the 'Open university' to retailor new programs that fit their new target audience and have sufficient credibility.</p> <p>Both Uber and Deliveroo collaborate with "Open classrooms" and "Job ready" a CV aiding platform</p> <p>3) Platforms could make 'career guidance' a core feature of their service provision.</p>	<p>It is difficult for platforms to set up trans-national training initiatives because many initiatives are tailored on the basis of country specific needs that are flagged by workers on the ground locally.</p> <p>Issue that needs addressing: are workers in more developed countries more vocal because they are better informed? Or because the platform is better represented in larger countries where there are more resources?</p>	<p>1) Irrespective of local needs/ platform representation, platforms could set up a minimum unified training agenda that spans countries.</p> <p>2) Platforms can collaborate with knowledgeable outside parties to both tailor training towards the needs of their target group, as well as create an industry wide standard that is also recognized by outside parties. Setting up certified skills programs, with credible outside parties, should also help platforms with rolling out initiatives across member states.</p> <p>3) Platforms could work on an awareness campaign, that directly communicates training programs, to ensure a wider reach (higher adoption rates)</p> <p>Still left unanswered: what role should governments/ the EU play herein?</p>

38 different training programs to its 20,000 employees. Yet to date only 2% signed up (demonstrating low re-up skilling uptake).

4) Big discrepancies across countries also within an individual platform. Common policy is lacking; it is country specific.

Topic 2: Financing skills development

The second topic that we addressed related to financing of 'skills development'. Important issues were raised pertaining to the myopic view that splitting the costs consist of only two stakeholders (the government and the platform). In reality workers are active on multiple platforms and therefore financing skill development requires a sector-wide approach. Secondly, the debate should take a more longitudinal approach that questions not only who should pay, but also whether the financial resources that are poured into financing skills are currently well spent?

Table 3: How should we finance skills development?

Main point	Opportunities	Complexities	Regulatory barriers	Possible solutions
1. When platforms act in the capacity of "intermediaries" they have no legal responsibilities to pay for re/up skilling of their workers. On the other hand, contract and temporary work is on the rise, hence we must discuss		<p>Only when a platform 'de facto' or even legally becomes an employer, can we speak of an obligation to provide training.</p> <p>Solving financing questions from an EU perspective is very tricky, since we lack EU consensus regarding the important of re-up skilling work. It is</p>	<p>Platforms who act as 'intermediaries' could fund "training" by increasing the minimum tariff/ tax they collect from wages, to reinvest in training. However, without an industry wide standards, clients are likely to opt for the "cheaper" option irrespective of fairness .</p>	<p>1) Platforms can finance access to online training opportunities (e.g. micro-credentials) and national governments can step in to finance formal and longer-term education programs (For example in Belgium most training programs are subsidized or financed by the government).</p> <p>2) Platforms can collaborate with</p>

who takes up this responsibility.

very country specific.

governments to step in and re-skill workers who are in-between jobs.

3) There needs to be formal authority that provides transparency in regards to financing of skills development and opportunities available. Such institution should also conduct research to assess the efficacy of various training programs and brings forth recommendation on what new training formulas resonate.

2) The debate is more complex than one of proportionality of pay divided between the platform/ the government. In reality workers are active on more than one platform and therefore the bill should be split amongst platforms also.

New ways of accounting for costs, such that they won't be deducted from the wage of employees.

In this governments and platforms could play a complementary role.

In practice workers typically work for multiple platforms. Therefore, there should be an accounting system that includes the government as well as the various platforms on which workers are active.

Is there a system in place that tracks whether the resources that go into providing workers with up-reskilling initiatives reach/ resonate with their target audience. If not we are wasting resources on workers' needs that could be better spent elsewhere.

3) The efficacy of training programs requires more public scrutiny

Stakeholders can collaborate together to create a sectorial approach, in which they experiment and learn.

Ensuring that workers have access to skill development is not only a financial question but also a question related to program effectiveness.