

Rebalancing Power in Platform Work: The EU Directive 2024/2831 and its Implications for Algorithmic Management and Transparency in Comparative Perspective

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Abstract

This paper examines Directive (EU) 2024/2831—the Platform Work Directive—and its potential to reshape the governance of platform labor in Europe. Using the Rulemaker–Intermediary–Ruletaker (RIT) framework, the study analyzes three core dimensions introduced by the Directive: the presumption of employment, safeguards for algorithmic management, and obligations on transparency. Through a comparative analysis of Nordic countries, Germany, Spain, France, the Netherlands, and the Visegrád states, the paper highlights how different institutional traditions influence the effectiveness of these reforms. Findings indicate that while the Directive sets an ambitious baseline, its impact will depend on national enforcement capacities and the ability to prevent avoidance strategies by platforms. Nordic countries are better positioned to integrate the Directive within established social dialogue systems, whereas weaker institutional contexts risk partial or formalistic implementation. The paper contributes to debates on digital labor by linking EU-level regulation to national industrial relations and identifying conditions under which platform governance reforms can be more effective.

CCS Concepts

- **Artificial intelligence;** • **Law, social and behavioral sciences;**
- **Employment issues;**

Keywords

Platform work, algorithmic management, EU Directive 2024/2831, transparency, labor law, social dialogue, comparative regulation

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1 Introduction

The transformation of the European labor market through digital technologies has brought forth both unprecedented opportunities and serious regulatory challenges. Platform work—a model of labor mediated through digital platforms like Uber, Deliveroo, Bolt, Wolt, and Just Eat—has grown substantially across the European Union (EU). By 2023, over 28 million individuals were engaged in platform-based tasks, a number projected to exceed 43 million by the end of 2025, which urges to establish coherent labor standards for this burgeoning workforce [4].

Platform labor is characterized by its flexibility, autonomy, and digital interface, which allows service providers to access fragmented work opportunities on-demand. However, this structure often results in precarious employment status, minimal access to collective bargaining, opaque algorithmic management practices, and inconsistent levels of transparency regarding work expectations and compensation. [8] These asymmetries of power and information place workers at a disadvantage, with many classified as self-employed and thus denied standard labor protections such as minimum wage guarantees, social security, or workplace health and safety standards.

In response to this widening regulatory gap, the European Commission proposed, and the European Parliament adopted, the Directive (EU) 2024/2831 [16], commonly referred to as the EU Platform Work Directive. To put it in a nutshell, this legislative initiative seeks to regulate three core dimensions of platform labor: employability, algorithmic management, and transparency. Employability encompasses the presumption of employment, shifting the legal burden onto platforms to prove self-employment. Algorithmic management provisions target the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) and data-driven systems in assigning tasks, evaluating performance, and applying disciplinary actions. Lastly, transparency obligations aim to ensure that workers receive comprehensible, timely information on job terms, earnings, and algorithmic logic.

Therefore, this paper timely provides a critical analysis of Directive (EU) 2024/2831 by evaluating its impact on the structure and governance of platform work in Europe. Special focus is given to the experiences of Nordic countries, particularly Denmark and Sweden, which have adopted forward-looking strategies combining voluntary industrial relations with legislative safeguards. Their experience offers valuable insights into the operationalization of

the Directive, especially in the context of balancing regulatory authority (rulemakers), intermediaries in implementation (platforms), and the compliance dynamics of workers and labor institutions (ruletakers).

The analytical lens applied in this paper is the Rulemaker–Intermediary–Ruletaker (RIT) framework. This model emphasizes the triangular relationship among policymakers who create the rules (EU and national public bodies), platforms that act as intermediaries translating policy into operational practices, and workers, unions, and labor inspectors who must interpret and enforce the compliance with the Directive. The RIT framework facilitates comparative analysis across diverse EU member states with varying traditions of labor law, union density, and digital governance capacity.

Against this situation, the article seeks to answer three central research questions: How does the Directive impact platform workers’ employability? What are the regulatory challenges and opportunities inherent in algorithmic management? And in what ways does the Directive promote transparency, particularly in comparison to Nordic best practices? Addressing these questions not only helps assess the Directive’s strengths and limitations but also identifies key conditions for its successful implementation across the EU-27

2 Literature Review

Platform work has emerged as a distinctive form of non-standard labor mediated by digital platforms. The EU policy papers define platform work as the offer of services organized through online platforms that connect workers with clients, typically involving short-term, and task-based assignments. This model introduces triangular relationships, irregular working patterns, and legal ambiguities around employment status, situating workers somewhere in between traditional employment and self-employment. [4]

Algorithmic transparency remains a key concern in this context. Some scholars [1], [2] argue for “transparency-washing,” where platforms disclose selectively to avoid genuine accountability. These critiques have alimented few calls for independent audits, human oversight in algorithmic decision-making, and enhanced worker access to data, especially within labor law frameworks.

European scholars have increasingly examined regulatory responses to platform work. For instance, Ilsoe and Söderqvist (2023) analyze the Nordic model’s adaptation, showing how voluntary agreements and social dialogue can complement statutory interventions. Others [5] further documented the rise of collective bargaining initiatives, new worker mobilizations, and emerging enforcement practices across the Member States.

Importantly, the legal studies have highlighted the limitations of existing labor law frameworks in addressing platform-mediated work. Here some authors [6], [7] argue that the directives on part-time, fixed-term, and temporary agency work (such as Directive 97/81/EC, Directive 1999/70/EC, and Directive 2008/104/EC) were designed mainly for traditional forms of employment and are struggling to capture the emerging dynamics of platform labor. Scholars therefore call for reforms, such as introducing hybrid worker categories, updating employment tests, or establishing presumptions of employment to reverse the burden of proof.

In this line, algorithmic management (AM) and data-driven control mechanisms have been central to recent research. For example, some authors [10], [11] showcase how platforms allocate tasks, monitor performance, and coordinate the workers with minimal human involvement. While these systems enhance efficiency, they also introduce new risks, such as surveillance, bias, and opaque decision-making—issues now explicitly addressed by recent EU legislative action.

Early literature positioned platform work as part of a broader shift toward labor flexibilization and the gig economy [8], [9]. These works describe the erosion of standard employment relationships and the rise of “dependent self-employment,” a concept that captures the precarity of workers caught between employment and autonomy. [3]

Against this background, the European Union has sought to close the regulatory gaps with the adoption of Directive (EU)2024/2831 on Platform Work. This Directive aims to enhance the working conditions and the protection of personal data in platform work across the European Union. It introduces measures to ensure accurate determination of employment status, promotes transparency, fairness, and accountability in algorithmic management, and seeks to improve clarity around platform work, including in cross-border situations. The Directive establishes minimum rights for individuals performing platform work who are, or may be deemed to be, in an employment relationship as defined by national laws, collective agreements, or established practices, with consideration of relevant EU case law. It also sets out data protection provisions related to algorithmic management that apply to all platform workers, regardless of their employment status. The Directive applies to all digital labour platforms operating within the Union, irrespective of their legal establishment or applicable jurisdiction. [10] Additionally, the Directive introduces a legal presumption of employment when platforms exert control over key aspects of work, shifting the burden of proof onto the platform. It also establishes safeguards around algorithmic management, including human oversight of automated decisions and bans on purely automated dismissal. Moreover, the Directive strengthens data access rights and facilitates collective representation, marking a significant legislative development that responds directly to the issues identified in earlier scholarships.

Not surprisingly, the rise of platform work has therefore triggered extensive interdisciplinary interest across labor law, industrial relations, digital sociology, and algorithmic governance. Contemporary debates now focus not only on classification and regulatory gaps, but also on the implications of the new EU framework, which may redefine the balance between innovation, flexibility, and worker protection in the platform economy.

3 METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary methodology to analyze the implications of Directive(EU)2024/2831 for platform work in Europe. Given that platform work operates at the intersection of labor law, digital governance, and industrial relations, the research combines comparative legal analysis, policy evaluation, and empirical case studies. The goal is to assess both the formal provisions of the Directive and its practical implementation by institutions, platform firms, and labor market actors. Legal texts,

collective agreements, case law, and regulatory initiatives form the core data sources, complemented by documents from the European Commission, Eurofound surveys, trade union reports, and peer-reviewed scholarship.

The analysis uses the Rulemaker–Intermediary–Ruletaker (RIT) framework, which conceptualizes the interaction between EU and national policymakers as rulemakers, platform companies as intermediaries who translate legal rules into managerial and algorithmic practices, and workers, trade unions, and inspectorates as ruletakers responsible for enforcing, contesting, or adapting these rules. This triadic perspective allows for a nuanced understanding of how legal norms evolve and are applied in the platform economy.

The comparative design focuses on a set of countries chosen for their relevance in existing scholarship. Denmark and Sweden represent Nordic economies with strong social dialogue, high union density, and a tradition of collective agreements. These features have produced innovative approaches to platform work, such as the Just Eat collective agreement with HK in Denmark and Foodora’s negotiations with Swedish unions. Germany serves as an example of a coordinated market economy where platform work has become a subject of significant legal disputes and statutory debate, reflecting limited protections for self-employed workers. The Visegrád countries—Poland, Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia—illustrate how transitional economies, with weaker industrial relations institutions, are grappling with rapid platform expansion and fragmented regulatory responses. Spain’s Riders’ Law, France’s hybrid regulatory approach, and the Netherlands’ liberal framework. [10]

A content analysis of legal and policy documents was conducted to identify recurring themes such as the presumption of employment, algorithmic management, and transparency. Findings were compared across jurisdictions to explore how Directive2024/2831 interacts with diverse institutional contexts. While the analysis is limited by the evolving nature of platform work and differences in national data availability, triangulation of sources and the structured comparative framework provide a robust basis for evaluating the Directive and its likely impact on platform work in Europe.

4 Legal Analysis

Directive (EU)2024 / 2831 represents a significant legal provision of the European Union in trying to shape the employment relationships, rights, and obligations in the platform economy. Specifically, the Directive has three key pillars: a presumption of employment, governance of algorithmic management, and transparency obligations. These provisions aim to reduce misclassification of workers, ensure accountability of digital platforms, and guarantee greater fairness in data-driven management systems.

The first pillar, the presumption of employment shifts the burden of proof onto platforms where there is evidence of control over work. Member States are required to transpose this presumption into their legal systems, applying it when at least two indicators of control are present, such as determining pay levels, restricting the ability of workers to organize tasks, imposing rules on appearance or conduct, or supervising performance. This mechanism directly challenges the widespread classification of platform workers as independent contractors, aligning with academic arguments that have been criticizing this legal grey area for a long time. [14]

The second pillar focuses on algorithmic management. Here the Directive introduces safeguards against automated decision-making, against human oversight in key processes such as performance evaluation, allocation of work, and termination decisions. It explicitly prohibits the full automated use of certain categories of sensitive data, such as biometric or emotional profiling, in algorithmic systems. These provisions align with principles developed under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and tailor them specifically to the employment context.

The third pillar, transparency, requires platforms to disclose how algorithmic systems influence work allocation, compensation, and disciplinary measures. Platforms must provide workers with clear explanations of the logic of decision-making systems and allow access to their data. These measures aim to prevent “transparency-washing” and to improve the ability of workers and trade unions to negotiate on a basis.

Altogether, these legal innovations create a new normative environment for platform work, but their practical effects will depend heavily on how Member States transpose the Directive and how national labor courts and inspectorates enforce these obligations.

5 Methodo Thematic Analysis: EU Directive And Nordic Experiences

The experience of the Nordic countries provides a valuable thematic lens through which to understand the implications of Directive2024 / 2831. These countries demonstrate how strong social dialogue institutions, and a tradition of collective bargaining can influence the way EU rules are applied in the platform economy.

For example, in Denmark, the case of Just Eat illustrates how a voluntary collective agreement with the HK Trade Union created the minimum standards on pay, schedules, and dispute resolutions for platform couriers. These arrangements, reached without statutory intervention, anticipated many of the Directive’s provisions on employment conditions and transparency. Similarly, in Sweden, union-led campaigns and public debates around platform fairness have pushed Foodora and other companies to engage in structured negotiations with social partners.

These two examples show that, in contexts where trust-based labor market institutions are strong, the Directive2024/2831 is likely to reinforce the existing collaborative approaches rather than introduce radical new mechanisms. The Directive may thus serve as a supportive framework that legitimizes and reinforces existing national models, while simultaneously establishing a baseline standard for Member States that are less advanced in this area.

6 Comparative Findings

The comparative analysis highlights significant variation in how European countries approach the regulation of platform work. These differences reflect institutional legacies, the strength of collective bargaining systems, and national policy preferences based on the RIT framework.

For example, Nordic countries such as Denmark and Sweden exemplify a social dialogue model where strong collective bargaining institutions and inclusive labor market policies have enabled negotiated solutions to platform work. The collective agreement signed in Denmark between Just Eat and the HK Trade Union is one of the

earliest examples of a voluntary agreement in the platform economy, while in Sweden, sustained union mobilization has pushed companies like Foodora toward collective negotiations. These developments illustrate how voluntary frameworks can complement the objectives of Directive2024/2831 by establishing protections ahead of formal transposition.

Similarly, Spain exemplifies a statutory approach with the Riders' Law, which establishes a presumption of employment for delivery workers and mandates algorithmic transparency. Although this legislation was adopted prior to the Directive, it offers valuable insights into how national law can operate similar principles, particularly in contexts where collective bargaining institutions are less robust than those in Nordic countries.

Germany combines elements of both negotiated solutions and legal interventions. Courts have been central to clarifying employment status, but collective bargaining coverage remains limited in the platform economy. Nevertheless, Germany's legal tradition has significantly shaped European-level debates, particularly in relation to worker classification criteria and the regulation of algorithmic management.

In contrast, the Visegrád countries (Poland, Czechia, Hungary, and Slovakia) are characterized by relatively liberalized labor markets and limited institutional capacity for enforcement. These states are experiencing rapid platform growth, yet they exhibit low union density and fragmented regulatory responses. Emerging research indicates that platform companies exploit these institutional gaps [4] to sustain more flexible and opaquer management practices, thereby posing particular challenges for the effective implementation of the Directive in this region.

By contrast, France and the Netherlands occupy intermediate positions. France has experimented with hybrid approaches, including charter-like agreements and advisory bodies, while the Netherlands has relied more on judicial decisions and social dialogue mechanisms, though with less formal coverage than in the Nordic states.

Taken together, these cases demonstrate that the impact of Directive2024/2831 will depend on the capacity of national institutions to integrate its provisions with their own industrial relations traditions, and to balance flexibility with worker protection.

7 Stakeholder Perspective

The perspectives of key stakeholders reveal the contested nature of platform work regulation and underline the central tensions that Directive2024 / 2831 seeks to address.

Trade unions across Europe broadly welcome the Directive as a long-awaited step toward reducing misclassification and regulating algorithmic management. They highlight that the presumption of employment and transparency obligations provide a basis for improved collective bargaining and legal enforcement. In the Nordic countries, unions see the Directive as complementary to their strategies of negotiation, while in Central and Eastern Europe it is viewed as an opportunity to build stronger protections in less institutionalized labor markets. As Ludovic Voet, Confederal Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), emphasized, the Directive represents a "major victory" for platform workers and

unions, particularly in ensuring minimum wages, sick pay, and social protections. [12].

Workers' perspectives focus on the issues of security [17], fair pay, and data transparency. Surveys and qualitative studies by Eurofound indicate that platform workers often value the flexibility offered by platform labor but express frustration with opaque pay structures, sudden deactivation decisions made by algorithms, and the lack of a clear appeals process. The Directive's promise of more accessible data and human oversight in automated decisions is viewed as a crucial advance.

Platform companies, by contrast, voice concerns that the Directive could reduce flexibility and impose new compliance costs. They argue that a presumption of employment may discourage innovation and hinder the development of new service models. Companies also question how the Directive will be applied in multi-jurisdictional contexts, warning of regulatory fragmentation and increased litigation.

Regulators and policymakers highlight capacity constraints and the complexity of enforcing platform-specific rules in diverse national legal systems. Labor inspectorates in some Member States, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, lack the resources and digital expertise needed to monitor compliance with algorithmic transparency obligations.

These contrasting perspectives indicate that while Directive2024/2831 has broad support as a framework, its implementation will involve negotiation and adaptation to reconcile the interests of these actors. (Table 1). [13]

a Elaborated by the authors

8 Implementation Challenges

The implementation of Directive2024/2831 faces significant challenges that may limit its impact if not addressed carefully by Member States and EU institutions.

First, the presumption of employment will require clear national legal frameworks and efficient mechanisms for dispute resolution. In countries with under-resourced labor inspectorates or slow judicial systems, there is a risk that platforms will continue to misclassify workers while litigation drags on. This challenge is particularly acute in Member States with weaker enforcement traditions, such as parts of Central and Eastern Europe.

Second, platform strategies of avoidance and adaptation threaten to undermine the spirit of the Directive. Some companies may restructure contractual relationships, redefine algorithms, or externalize parts of their services to avoid being classified as employers. These forms of regulatory arbitrage have been observed in Spain after the adoption of the Riders' Law and could re-emerge under the new EU framework.

Third, algorithmic transparency, although strengthened by the Directive, may face the risk of "transparency-washing," [15] where platforms technically disclose information but in ways that are overly complex or not meaningful for workers. Ensuring that transparency is actionable will require active oversight by regulators and a willingness to impose sanctions when disclosures are insufficient.

Fourth, the diversity of national industrial relations systems may produce uneven implementation. While Nordic countries are likely to integrate the Directive smoothly into their systems

Table 1: Role of Approaches to platform work regulation (Directive 2024/2831): Selected cross country comparison

Country / country group model	Presumption of Employment	Regulation of Algorithmic Management (AM)	Transparency Requirements	Enforcement Capacity of RIT
Nordic country group (Denmark & Sweden)	Voluntary agreements anticipate presumption; unions actively negotiate protections	Human oversight negotiated; limited need for statutory measures	Collective agreements already require basic disclosure	Very strong: high union density, well-resourced inspectorates
Germany	Court-led clarifications; no statutory presumption yet	Debate on algorithmic oversight; case law evolving	GDPR-based rights; no specific platform obligations	Medium: strong courts, but collective bargaining coverage is low
Spain	Riders’ Law introduces presumption for delivery workers	Statutory ban on purely automated dismissals	Algorithmic transparency legally mandated	Medium: statutory framework strong but enforcement uneven
France	Hybrid system: advisory bodies and charters	Oversight panels rather than binding rules	Some disclosure required; limited sanctions	Medium: intermediate between statute and voluntary
Netherlands	Courts increasingly reclassify workers as employees	Algorithmic rules interpreted via general labour law	Transparency via GDPR and collective agreements	Medium-strong: judiciary active, social dialogue moderate
Visegrad 4 countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland & Slovakia)	No presumption; workers mainly classified as self-employed	Very limited regulation of algorithmic systems	Minimal transparency obligations	Weak: low union density, fragmented enforcement capacity

of collective bargaining, other countries may experience greater friction, resulting in patchy application across the EU.

Finally, building the necessary institutional capacity, particularly in terms of digital expertise for labor inspectorates, will be essential for the Directive to be more than a formal legal instrument. Without sufficient technical knowledge, authorities may struggle to monitor and enforce rules on algorithmic management effectively.

These challenges underline that the Directive is a starting point rather than a complete solution. Its success depends on strong enforcement structures, the ability to prevent avoidance strategies, and the meaningful participation of social partners in shaping how its provisions are applied on the ground

9 Implementation CHALLENGES, FUTURE Research Directions, And Policy Recommendations

Looking a head, the long-term impact of Directive2024/2831 will depend on a combination of legal innovation, institutional learning, and continuous monitoring. Future research and policymaking will need to focus on three priorities.

First, there is a need to diminish the existing knowledge asymmetry within the EU-27. For example, the New Member States are lacking the systematic empirical evidences on platform work. Therefore the implementation of EU Directives may in “precautionary regulation/principle”. In other word, making rules with insufficient empirical data results an “epistemic gap”.

Second, there is a need to develop robust monitoring frameworks to track how platforms adapt to the new rules. Regular audits of algorithmic management, combined with improved access to platform data for regulators and researchers, will be essential to ensure that transparency obligations translate into meaningful oversight.

Third, social dialogue and capacity building should be strengthened, particularly in countries with weaker labor institutions. The Directive creates opportunities for unions, inspectorates, and governments to collaborate in designing sectoral agreements and guidelines that move beyond formal compliance.

Finally, at the European level, policymakers should prepare for possible revisions of the Directive once national implementation reveals gaps or unintended effects. Key areas to watch include cross-border platform operations, the protection of migrant workers, and the interaction between platform regulation and broader digital governance initiatives such as the AI Act.

By combining legal enforcement with institutional innovation, the Directive can become a catalyst for rebalancing power between platforms and workers while promoting fair and transparent forms of digital labor.

10 Conclusions

Directive (EU) 2024 / 2831 marks a turning point in regulating platform work, setting out a presumption of employment, rules for algorithmic management, and new transparency obligations. This paper demonstrates that while these provisions create a stronger

legal baseline, their effectiveness will depend on how national institutions integrate and enforce them.

Comparative analysis reveals that Nordic countries are well placed to embed the Directive's requirements into their collective bargaining traditions, whereas Member States with weaker labour market institutions—particularly in Central and Eastern Europe—face risks of fragmented or symbolic implementation. The Directive also exposes tensions: workers and unions see it as an opportunity for fairness, while platforms warn of rising compliance costs and reduced flexibility.

Our analysis contributes by applying the RIT framework to explain these dynamics and by identifying key conditions for success: strong enforcement capacity, meaningful algorithmic transparency, and the active role of social dialogue. Future research should examine how platforms adapt to these rules, whether algorithmic management practices evolve toward greater accountability, and how the Directive interacts with broader EU digital policies such as the AI Act. Ultimately, Directive 2024/2831 opens a new phase in governing digital labour: one in which fairness, transparency, and innovation must be balanced through adaptive, institutionally sensitive strategies.

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