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INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN THE AGE OF COLLABORATIVE ECONOMY (IRSDACE)

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Central European Labour Studies Institute (CELSI)

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Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue in the Age of Collaborative Economy (IRSDACE)

The IRSDACE project - Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue in the Age of Collaborative Economy -, funded by DG EMPL of the European Commission, aims to identify how traditional players in the labour market, e.g. trade unions, employers' associations, member states and the EU, experience and respond to the collaborative economy.

IRSDACE had five main tasks: i) conceptualisation of platform work, its place in the labour market, employment policy and industrial relations; ii) analysis of discourse on platform economy among established industrial relations actors; iii) assessment of the implications of workers' experience with the platform economy for industrial relations and social dialogue; iv) comparative analysis of national experiences; and v) analysis of how EU-level employment policy and the industrial relations agenda should respond to the emergence of work in the platforms economy.

One of the projects initial struggles and finding relates directly to the name collaborative. It has become clear to the research partners that this new reality encompasses many situations where no collaboration (nor sharing) takes place. Hence, the partners have opted for the use of the neutral term platform economy. Nevertheless, when contacting platform workers or national stakeholders, the researchers were faced with the need to use the corresponding local language terms of collaborative or sharing economy as these are the names known to the general public. We therefore recommend that these terms are treated as synonyms in what concerns the IRSDACE results.

Seven country case studies have been produced in this project covering Belgium, France, Germany, Slovakia, Hungary, Spain and Denmark. The country case studies were prepared based on literature reviews, interviews and country focus groups. The methods used as well as the results for each country are described in each individual report. The reports show both the perspectives of industrial relations actors at the national level and the experiences of platform workers. A final project output brings the national case study results together in a comparative study.

The project started in January 2017, finishing in December 2018. CEPS is the project coordinator in a partnership with IZA (DE), FAOS at the University of Copenhagen (DK), Fundación Alternativas (ES) and CELSI (SK).

1. Introduction

In this report you find the country case study for Slovakia within the IRSDACE project. Following the methodology of the IRSDACE project, this report first provides an overview of the platform work in Slovakia, its place in the Slovak labour market and in industrial relations in Slovakia. Second, it analyses discourse on platform economy among established industrial relations actors in three sectors: accommodation, personal transportation and microwork. Third, it provides a unique empirical evidence of discourse among platform owners and platform workers in three sectors. Fourth, it analyses implications of workers' experience with the platform economy for industrial relations and social dialogue in Slovakia. The terms "platform economy" and "collaborative economy" are used interchangeably and describe the same thing throughout the report. People who use platforms for their work are called "platform workers" in this report.

The report combines the desk research, including analysis of relevant literature, legal regulations applicable in the platform economy, news articles and social media with the empirical evidence from interviews gathered during the duration of the IRSDACE project. The interviews were semi-structured and followed the questionnaire developed by the IRSDACE research team. Overall, nine interviews with the social partners were conducted, including interviews with the platform owners, and twelve interviews with platform workers, of which six respondents participated in a focus group exercise organized in November 2017. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each interview has a code indicating the sector (ACC- accommodation, TRA – transport, MIC – microwork) and the number of interview (see Table 5, Table 6 and Table 7). Results of the focus group exercise have interview code starting with FOC- focus group, interviews with experts starting with EXP and national level representatives starting with NAT.

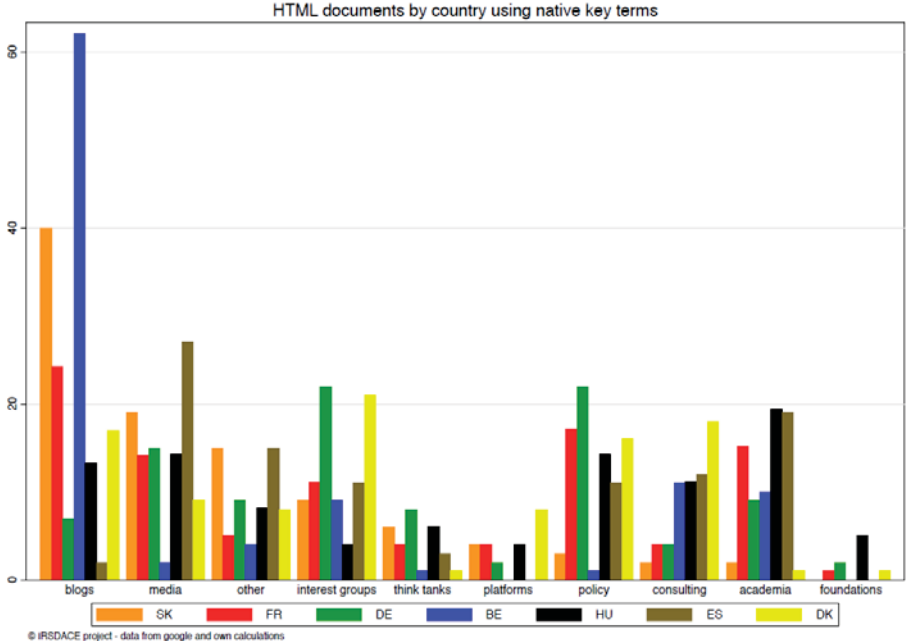
The limitations of this qualitative approach are twofold. First, this report presents only the views of those actors that agreed to be interviewed (positive selection bias), which may have omitted other important actors and important issues related to the platform economy. Similarly, platform workers were not randomly selected, but identified and approached via social networks or friends and family (non-random sample). Second, where the interviews were not possible to conduct, an alternative source was presented, such as media article, outcome of the conference, or other public statements. This, however, is not equal information compared to that gathered via semi-structured interviews.

In addition, web data (bag of most commonly used words¹) on platform work were gathered and analysed within the project. As can be seen from four figures presented below, which graphically represent where the discussions on platform economy are present in Slovakia,

¹ Bag of words used in the English language: crowdsourcing, sharing economy, collaborative economy, collaborative consumption, share economy, crowdworking, on demand economy, crowdworker, platform work, crowd work, platform economy, gig work, platform labour. Bag of words used in the Slovak language: zdieľaná ekonomika, kolaboraívna ekonomika, platformová ekonomika, digitálna ekonomika, gig ekonomika, ekonomika na požiadanie, online platformy, kolaboratívne hospodárstvo, mikropráca.

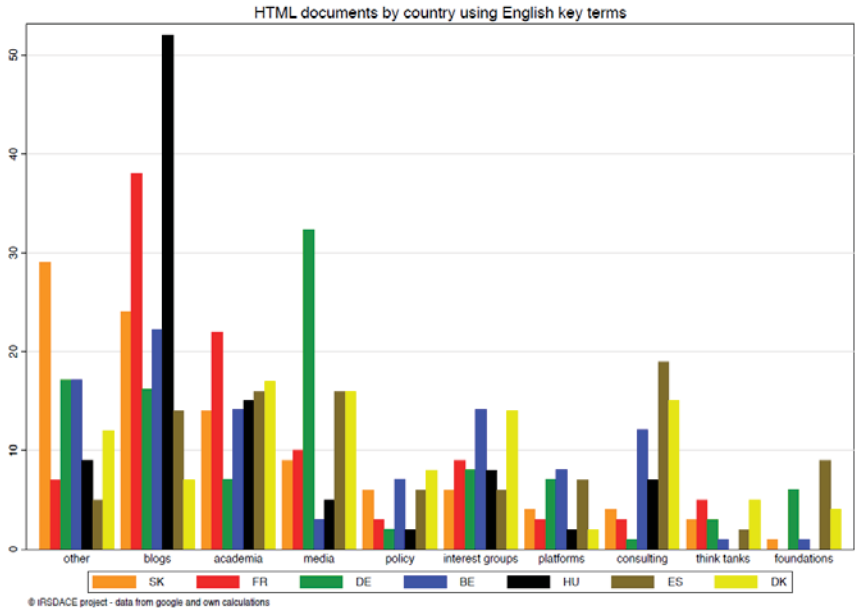
majority of web links (HTML resources) in both English and Slovak languages are classified as blogs or other. This corresponds to the lack of legal regulations of the platform economy in Slovakia, where majority of discussion is happening on unofficial fora, such as blogs. The situation changes with the PDF documents in Slovak and majority of them is published by the policy makers. English PDF files are mostly published by the academia (see figure 1-4).

Figure 1. Classification of web data: HTML documents by country using native key terms



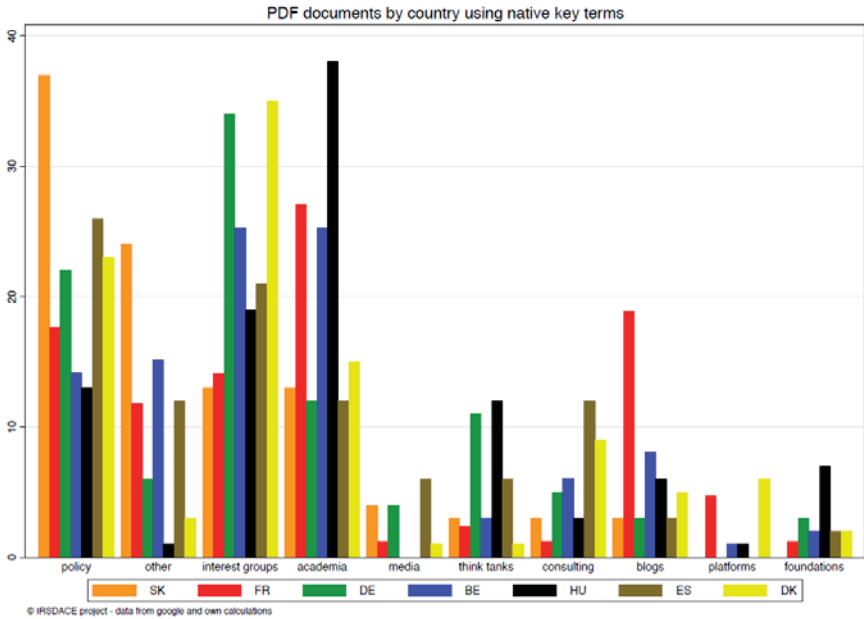
Source: Web data collected during IRSDACE project.

Figure 2. Classification of web data: HTML documents by country using English key terms



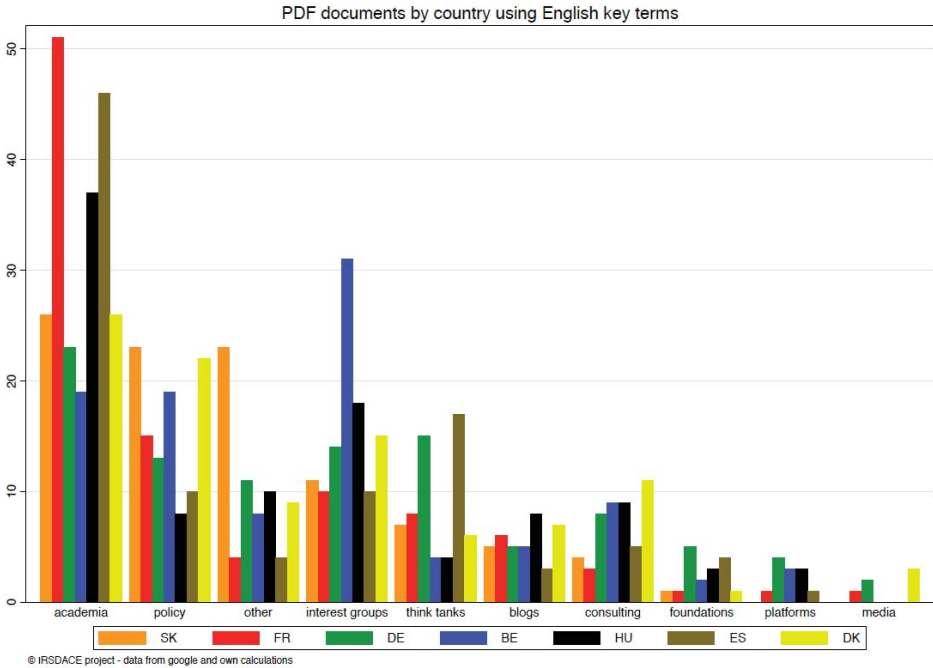
Source: Web data collected during IRSDACE project.

Figure 3. Classification of web data: PDF documents by country using native key terms



Source: Web data collected during IRSDACE project.

Figure 4. Classification of web data: PDF documents by country using English key terms



Source: Web data collected during IRSDACE project.

The report is structured into several chapters. After an introduction, the second chapter provides an overview of platform work in Slovakia. Third chapter focuses on discourse, perceptions and experiences of work on the platform economy among established industrial relations actors and fourth chapter focuses on the discourse among platform owners and their workers. Fifth chapter provides comparisons and chapter six concludes this report.

2. Work in the platform economy

Work in the platform economy, if we understand it as all work provided via online platforms, remains fairly unregulated in Slovakia. That is, however, not to say that there are no legal regulations applicable to the platform providers and platform workers. On the contrary, all legal provisions applicable to the proxy sectors (accommodation, transportation) are also valid for the new type of work, as described later in this chapter.

This chapter provides an overview of work in the platform economy, including all legal and regulatory framework applicable to platform work in Slovakia, working conditions in the sector and a room for industrial relation actors and social dialogue to frame the debate and conditions in the platform work.

The chapter is divided into three sub-chapters. It starts with an overview of a current state of play on work in the platform economy (2.1) where it first describes the legal status of platform workers in three sectors (2.1.1.), the legal, regulatory and policy framework in the platform economy (2.1.2.) and third, it provides an overview of major online platforms in three sectors – accommodation (*Airbnb*), personal transport (*Uber*, *Taxify*, *Hopin*) and microwork (*Jaspravim*, *Domelia*) (2.1.3). The second sub-chapter moves further from the description itself and analyses major challenges and impacts for workers (2.2.). The chapter concludes with the third part which focuses on the role of industrial relations and social dialogue in platform economy work (2.3).

2.1 The current state of play on work in the platform economy

This sub-chapter first answers whether those who work in the collaborative economy in Slovakia require a new status, or they simply fall into one of the existing categories: employees, employer, or self-employed persons. Second, it provides the background and underlying framework for platform work in three sectors. Third, major online platforms operating in Slovakia are introduced and briefly described.

2.1.1 Legal status of platform workers

Platform workers in Slovakia do not require a new status and there is no legal category unique for the platform workers. Of the three categories – employees, employers, and self-employed, people providing services within the collaborative economy in Slovakia are typically working as self-employed persons. This holds for the whole collaborative economy, including the three sectors analysed in this report, personal transport, accommodation and microwork. However, the vast majority of workers in collaborative economy use platforms as a source of their additional income, thus in reality, any combination of employment status is possible. As presented later in this report, for the majority of workers interviewed within this project, platform work is not their primary job activity. While self-employment remains the most common status for platform work itself, as a civil person, it is also possible to work on the basis of employment contract outside an employment relationship (“contract for work”,

zmluva o dielo) for small, irregular work (such as microwork), and if the remuneration does not exceed 500 EUR, it is also tax-free.

In general, no specific legal status for the platform workers stems from the fact that in Slovakia, collaborative economy is not yet regulated by the domestic law. Since there is no specific regulation, authorities claim that the legal provisions valid in a given sector (“proxy sector”) apply to everyone, including workers in collaborative economy. For example, if someone provides personal transport services, the existing law defines his activities as a taxi service and thus, his status should be the same as in any other taxi service cases.

Zooming in on the sectors, in *personal transport*, drivers most commonly work as self-employed persons. Some innovative practices have, however, been identified within the sector. In capital Bratislava, at least one company has been established that hires drivers as their employees, who then worked for the company Uber. However, they were not paid by the platform Uber based on the real work, but based on an hourly rate agreed with their employer (company). The exact arrangement of how this innovative practice was working and how the company bypassed the Uber rules is unknown to the author.

There is no specific legal status for providers of *accommodation* within the platform economy. There is a somewhat grey zone between the natural persons registered within Airbnb offering short-term rentals and those providers that operate within the realms of private accommodation, which is defined and regulated by the law. In general, any natural or legal person can provide accommodation services and can have any legal status: employee, unemployed, self-employed, private company, etcetera. However, Airbnb falls into the grey category between the short-term rentals from which only tax is paid, and providing “accommodation services” which include additional services beyond renting an apartment, such as cleaning, to which the Trade Licensing Act applies and a special license is required.

Microwork in Slovakia is not as prominent in a sense of visibility as accommodation and personal transport services. Most commonly, microwork is performed in other domains than cleaning and care for consumers, such as graphic design, translation services, online marketing, copywriting, and similar. As the name itself suggests, small jobs can be performed by anyone and workers may have any legal status, starting from an unemployed person to employee, student, and self-employed person.

2.1.2 Legal, regulatory and policy framework in the platform economy

2.1.2.1 Regulatory framework for personal transport

According to the Act No. 56/2012 Coll. on Road Transport, which distinguishes the operation of passenger transport to either a bus service or a taxi service, passenger transport by vehicles with a maximum capacity of nine persons including the driver is considered taxi service. Therefore, any shared services, including those operating within the platform economy such as Uber or Taxify, are immediately considered taxi services and shall thus also comply with

the requirements valid for the taxi drivers. Other relevant legal documents valid for all providers of road passenger transport (including platform providers) are the ministerial decree on implementation of Act 56/2012 Coll. and the Act No. 18/1996 Coll. on prices.²

Among the most important requirements stipulated for taxi services is possession of a valid taxi driver license. To obtain this, taxi drivers must have a certificate of professional competence for providing taxi services which includes psychological tests and regular health examinations. In addition, there are several technical requirements for a taxi vehicle, the most relevant in relation to the platform economy is to be visibly marked as TAXI and to provide a valid receipt for passengers (i.e. with a stamp from the Ministry of Finance) (Act No. 56/2012 Coll.). For a detailed description of all requirements see for instance Chovanculiak et.al 2016a and Chovanculiak 2018.

Depending on the platform provider, some companies claim to adhere to the requirements specified for the taxi drivers (e.g. Liftago and Taxify (Kosno 2017a)). However, in reality, the drivers working for platforms usually do not fulfil these requirements, which naturally causes great dissatisfaction between the two groups. An Uber representative in Slovakia claims that their drivers adhere to the EU directive and are legally registered tax payers. In addition, in comparison with the taxi drivers, Uber drivers cannot benefit from any privileges that taxi driver enjoy (TASR 2017).

Thus, platforms active in personal transport operate in a shadow zone, where the most salient issue is a problem of control. Two entities can control taxi providers: the town/municipality and the police. However, the spokesperson of Bratislava capital stated that controlling Uber does not fall into competencies of the capital city (SME 2017). The city police, on the other hand, can control only cars that are properly visually marked as taxi service. In that case, police can check whether taxi drivers fulfil all requirements specified for providers of road passenger transport (ibid.). Since the police cannot check cars without any visible taxi sign, the initiative was undertaken by the Slovak Trade Inspection. In April 2016, it controlled twelve Uber drivers after which Uber Company blocked their access to Uber services. The drivers didn't possess taximeters and were unable to provide receipts from electronic cash register. The fine can be up to 66,400 EUR, but the decision was still pending in 2017 (RTVS 2016).

Taxi drivers complain about the unfair conditions, especially about the regulations that are not applicable to Uber drivers. They claim that in 2016, their profit declined by 15-20 per cent. As a response, they established a Facebook fun page "Stop Uber in Slovakia" through which they coordinate their activities. Several news portals reported in 2016 that taxi drivers declared war on Uber drivers. Numerous protest actions have been organized, among the most pronounced one is from March 2017, when several taxi drivers attacked Uber drivers verbally and attached stickers on their cars with "stop illegal transport". Cases of taxi drivers blocking Uber cars have also been reported, including violent attacks (Dennik N 2017).

² Source: Union of Taxi Drivers in Bratislava, http://www.oz-utb.sk/?page_id=47

Taxi drivers do not agree with a relaxation of conditions for taxi drivers as a way to solve the situation (as some political parties suggest³); on the contrary, they see strict regulations as an advantage for taxi passengers, mostly in terms of their safety. They claim that everyone shall adhere to the already existing valid law (not necessarily call for a new regulation of platform economy).

2.1.2.2 *Regulatory framework in private accommodation*

As already stated, accommodation provided within the realms of collaborative economy falls into a grey zone between rental and accommodation services. Legally, if the accommodation via Airbnb includes other services such as cleaning, changing the laundry, food delivery, etc., the law defines that as “accommodation services” (business, regulated via law) and not a short-term rental from which only municipal accommodation tax plus tax from renting for natural persons, or a business tax for self-employed, is paid. Then, according to the law, providers of accommodation are self-employed natural or legal person and shall adhere to relevant provisions of Trade Licensing Act (Act No. 455/1991 Coll.).

The Ministerial Decree No. 277/2008 Coll. classifies accommodation facilities to categories and classes, and one of the categories is accommodation in private, which according to some experts is a direct competition to Airbnb (Chovanculiak 2016b). Profit earned by the short-term lease is subjected to taxation and persons are required to register at the tax office until one month from the start of the Airbnb service. However, a few providers claim that although they should, they do not pay taxes at all.

2.1.2.3 *Regulatory framework for microwork (cleaning/care for consumers)*

Microwork is not only the least common type of platform economy, but also the least discussed in Slovakia. The Slovak Labour Code does not recognize special contractual type for microwork. In principle, microwork is limited to an income of 500 EUR (no taxation) and shall not bear signs of business activity. Any earning beyond that is subject to taxation.

Because of the nature of the work, microwork can be often times undeclared. In Slovakia, only about 2.1 to 3.3 per cent of employees work without any type of contract but a large share of employees reports undeclared income and/or under-reported income (Kahanec and Sedláková 2016).

2.1.2.4 *Taxation of platform providers*

Since January 2018, online platforms and providers have an obligation to pay a tax from their income in Slovakia. The Amendment to the Income Tax Act prepared by the Ministry of Finance introduced an obligation for digital platforms to register so-called ‘permanent

³ Such as the party SAS (Freedom and Solidarity), that suggests to abolish all the valid requirements except the requirement to have a taximeter in a car and information on price per kilometer. In addition, a new type of self-employment (contractual irregular transport) shall be established (Kosno 2017b).

establishment⁴ in the territory of Slovakia if they provide their services in the transport and accommodation sector. Consequently, the income of such establishments will be taxed in a form of an income tax. If a non-residing service provider fails to register permanent establishment in Slovakia, then the obligation to pay an income tax falls on workers in the platform economy. In other words, in the case of transport services, a particular driver has to pay the tax. In case of accommodation services, a specific accommodation using services of foreign portals has to pay the tax (i.e. every individual owner/host) (Pravda 2018). This, however, is heavily criticized by the platform workers. Given the problems of identification of platform workers in Slovakia and a lack of data on platform work in general, the enforcement is not clear. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Finance claims to use “*all instruments, including tax controls and the international exchange of information*” (probably on users of platforms) in order to enforce the law (Euractiv 2018).

2.1.3 Overview of major online platforms in three sectors

The most well-known and popular online platforms in Slovakia, based on their presence in the media, are Airbnb, Uber and Taxify. The lack of statistical data on platform work complicates any meaningful comparisons and it is hard to establish how many people work in collaborative economy, or how many customers have been served via online platforms. The only available data are from the online platforms themselves, in a form and a scope they want to make public. This report works with the data reported by online platforms, either in various media outlets and/or during interviews, but reminds to readers their limitations.

Table 1 lists examples of major platforms in personal transportation, accommodation and microwork in Slovakia. The report however focuses only on the most prominent platforms in each sector: in personal transportation it is *Uber, Taxify and Hopin*; in accommodation it is *Airbnb* and in microwork services it is *Jaspravim* and *Domelia*⁵. For a full picture, all major platforms offering small jobs (microwork) are listed.

Table 1. Examples of platforms in three researched sectors operating in Slovakia

Sector	Platforms
Personal transport	Uber*, Taxify, Hopin, Liftago, BlaBlaCar
Accommodation	Airbnb
Microwork	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning/care for customers 	Domelia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other microwork 	Jaspravim, yuVe, Rukie, Mikropraca.eu, Microjob.sk

Source: own table

Notes: * suspended in March 2018, but present in Slovakia, and expected to be active after amendments to the law. Personal transportation – Uber, Taxify, Hopin

⁴ According to the law, place of work activity is considered permanent if used continuously or repeatedly to perform the activity (NRSR 2017).

⁵ These examples also represent the most popular platforms across the whole economy in Slovakia.

Uber

Uber, an American company providing “on-demand transportation technology that connect driver-partners and riders” (Uber webpage 2018), was providing its services in the capital city of Bratislava until early 2018. In March 2018, Uber was forced to suspend its services after the ruling of the district Bratislava Court I responding to a lawsuit filed by the taxi drivers and their representatives and is currently not operating in Slovakia.

The number of active Uber drivers in 2017 varied according to different sources and the company itself does not publish statistics on the number of drivers. Nevertheless, in June 2017 an Uber representative estimated around 550 active drivers in Bratislava (TREND 2017). A little higher number was confirmed by an Uber representative in June 2018, according to whom there were 650 active drivers in Bratislava with more than 50,000 active riders (customers) from over 113 nationalities (Andrijanic 2018) and the same number is reported by Chovanculiak (2018) (see Table 2).

Table 2. Uber drivers in Slovakia

Number of active Uber drivers	650
Average rating	4.83 (of 5)
Average length of drive	6.36 km
Average hourly gross wage 2016	7.5 EUR
Average hourly gross wage 2017	8.9 EUR

Source: Uber company data in Chovanculiak, R. (2018). Vplyv zdieľanej ekonomiky v oblasti prepravy na Slovensku.

Taxify

Taxify, an Estonian company, is active in two Slovak cities, since December 2016 in the capital Bratislava and in the second biggest city Košice, where Taxify started its services in April 2018. Taxify reports more than 850 drivers over the period of one year, with approximately 150,000 customers served (Startitup 2017). According to its representative, on average, one driver spends twelve hours working for the platform per week and approximately 80 per cent of the drivers use Taxify as a source of additional income (TRA 4).

Hopin

Hopin is the only Slovak platform active in personal transportation services and also the only platform that claims to hire licensed Taxi drivers. Hopin operates in nine cities, of which four are in Slovakia: Bratislava, Košice, Michalovce, Poprad, Humenné, Prague, Ljubljana, Ostrava and Kiev. According to its website, Hopin started its services in 2012 and since then its application has been downloaded more than 600,000 times. It has more than 500 Taxi drivers and serves more than 100,000 customers per month (Hopintaxi.com 2018).

2.1.3.1 Accommodation - Airbnb

The share of accommodation offered via platforms such as Airbnb is considered marginal in Slovakia (ACC 3), nevertheless, the number of properties offered through the Airbnb platform

is ever growing (see Figure 5). While Fabo et al. (2017) counted 803 Airbnb rentals in the whole Slovakia in their paper from October 2015, in summer 2018 the data provided by the private company AirDNA⁶ show almost 1,000 listings only for the capital city of Bratislava (see Table 3). A similar number, around 950 listings in Bratislava, was reported during the focus group with workers in the platform economy (FOC 2; FOC 6). Overall, the number of all listings in Slovakia is much higher and according to the daily SME, there were around 2,500 Airbnb listings in the whole Slovakia in summer 2017 (The Slovak Spectator 2017).

Table 3. Overview of Airbnb data for the capital city Bratislava

Number of active rentals (7/4/2018)	983
Type of rental	
• entire home	77% (758)
• private room	20% (199)
• shared	3% (26)
Average rental size	1.3 bedrooms
Average number of guests	3.9 guests
Number of active hosts	619
of which	
• superhosts	32% (196)
• multi-listing hosts	21% (132)
• single-listing hosts	79% (487)
Rental activity	39 % available full time
Average daily rate	48 EUR
Occupancy rate	70%
Revenue	855 EUR

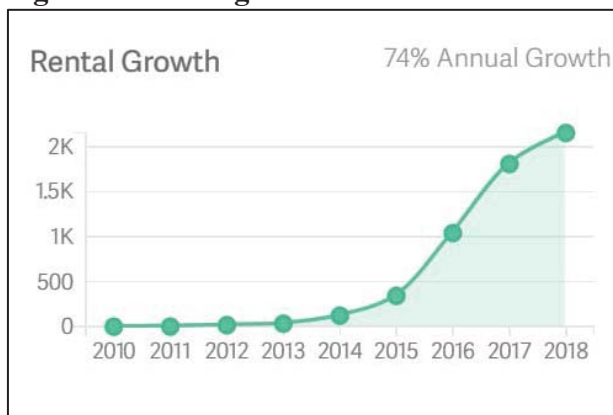
*Notes: Average daily rate: average booked nightly rate + cleaning fees for all booked days in the last month
Occupancy rate: the number of booked days divided by the total number of days available for rent in the last month. Properties with no reservations are excluded.*

Revenue: The total nightly rate + cleaning fees earned in the last month. Does not include taxes, service fees or additional guests' fees.

Source: AirDNA 2018.

⁶ AirDNA collects data on AirBNB listings in several locations. It claims to track more than 10 million listings on Airbnb and HomeAway in 80,000 markets and uses that vacation rental data to model property performance. This paper reports only limited market overview of AirBNB in Bratislava which is available for free on AirDNA webpage.

Figure 5. Rental growth of Airbnb in Bratislava, Slovakia.



Note: The number of total cumulative rentals is 2,157.

Source: AirDNA 2018.

According to the official data on tourism in Slovakia, in the first quarter of 2018, the number of visitors has grown by 4.4 per cent to 1.2 million visitors compared to year 2017. Similarly, the number of overnight stays has increased by 5 per cent and reached 3.2 million overnight stays in 2018 (Ministerstvo dopravy a výstavby Slovenskej Republiky [MINDOP] 2018a). Looking closer at the structure of the accommodation offered, the category that should include Airbnb listings is ‘accommodation in private establishments’. However, we see a little change in period 2014-2017 with 732 private establishments in Slovakia in 2018 compared to 631 in 2014 (MINDOP 2018b), despite the growth of Airbnb services in Slovakia. Likewise, in Bratislava region, the official statistics reports only 14 establishments that offer accommodation in private and this number even decreased from 17 establishments reported one year before (MINDOP 2018c). Hence, it is clear that the official data fail to report new types of accommodation services offered within the platform economy.

2.1.3.2 Microwork – Jaspravim, Domelia

Although the IRSDACE project focuses on microwork in care and cleaning services, it is important to mention the most prominent online portal for microwork in Slovakia, which is Jaspavim.sk. Therefore, following section briefly describes two online platforms for microwork, Domelia (cleaning and care services) and Jaspravim (all types of microwork).

Jaspravim

The biggest online platform for microwork in Slovakia, although not particularly focused on care services and cleaning, is Jaspavim.sk. Since its start in 2011, more than 110,000 customers used its services and platform workers, approximately 20,000 registered profiles, earned more than 1.9 million EUR via the platform (TREND 2017; Jaspravim.sk 2018).

Domelia

Domelia, active in Slovakia since November 2009, claims to be the largest platform for household services in Slovakia. The platform focuses mainly on services in care for elderly,

care for children, and household help, including cleaning services. According to its webpage, it has more than 8,400 active profiles and overall more than 40,000 offers, which have been used by more than 16,400 households and firms. The portal reports more than 70,000 visitors monthly (Domelia.sk 2018). However, compared to other online platforms, Domelia stands out, since workers can register for free and later skip the platform entirely if they agree on work outside of the portal.

2.2 The main challenges and impacts for workers

Regarding the working conditions of platform workers in Slovakia, there is no special legal framework on working conditions in the collaborative economy. General rules applicable to other types of economy apply. The most important legal document on working conditions is the Slovak Labour Code (Act No. 311/2011 Coll.). The Labour Code includes provisions on work performed outside an employment relationship and different flexible forms of employment, without any reference to collaborative economy. Self-employed persons follow the Trade Licensing Act as well as the commercial code.

Similarly, there are no policy documents, official government commitments, no court cases or actions by labour inspectorates on working conditions in the collaborative economy in Slovakia. Even in media and among the experts, any ongoing discussions on the issues of the collaborative economy relate to the basic legal regulations of services as such and do not focus on working conditions on the supply side.

Nevertheless, there are several prominent issues and challenges that impact platform workers: first, their unclear legal and employment status in labour market; second, their unclear responsibilities mainly in regard to the tax authorities and third, the conditions of their work.

Who are the platform workers?

The main challenge for workers in the platform economy is how to define themselves and their status in the labour market. In Slovak public space, the discussion on whether platform workers are employees or not is missing (see chapter 3 and 4 of this report) and their status is left for what a concrete platform requires. Platforms such as Airbnb, Domelia or Jaspravim (microwork) do not require any certificate of self-employment (declared by providing an identification number of an organization - IČO). On the other hand, platforms active in personal transportation do ask for the identification number, however, they provide a period of three months to upload the document, which interestingly collides with the time period in which, for example, most Taxify drivers quit working for the platform (TRA 4). This challenge translates itself to an important impact in terms of undeclared work and/or income, but also in terms of social contributions, health insurance and future pension of platform workers.

What are their responsibilities? (or who shall pay the tax, and which?)

Likewise, the (lack of) definition of platforms and platform providers itself adds to the unclear status of workers in the platform economy. First, are Uber and Taxify drivers providing taxi services or not? Are Airbnb hosts providing accommodation in private, or not? If yes, are they supposed to pay the same tax as traditional providers, such as, for instance, taxi service providers? While there seems to be an agreement on answers to the questions above (yes, all platform workers are required to follow the same legal rules as other already established providers in the respective sectors), the lack of enforcement mechanism and control complicates the picture and leaves the status quo unequal. For instance, in the accommodation sector, Airbnb hosts are required to pay local tax for each guest. However, if the accommodation itself is not registered anywhere and no one knows about its services, how does the state enforce such a tax?

Similarly, the new provision which establishes that the online platforms have an obligation to pay a tax in Slovakia shifts this responsibility to platform workers if an online platform fails to register its operation in Slovakia (see again section 2.1.2.4 on taxation of platform providers). A lack of clear information on both sides, however, leaves the question of who shall pay the tax, and which, unanswered.

Working conditions of platform work

Another challenging issue for platform workers is conditions of their work. One of the most discussed aspect of it is flexibility of platform work and working time. Most of the workers in the platform economy in Slovakia work part-time, and most commonly, their work is in addition to their main job. According to an Uber representative, in 2017 more than 40 per cent of Uber drivers worked less than 10 hours per week (Euractiv 2018). Similarly, Taxify reports that only 20 per cent of their drivers work full-time and an average working time for the app is 12 hours per week with an average length of stay about three months (TRA 4). Given the lack of statistical data, it is hard to establish how many people work for platforms on top of their job and what does that mean for the overall hours spent working. In personal transport, this may have health implications for both the platform workers and customers, who, for the lack of any regulation of working time, also lack the information on quality of services provided (e.g. a car ride with a sleepy driver). Similarly, in accommodation sector, Airbnb hosts need to be available to check-in and check-out their guests almost anytime, which multiplies if they themselves provide cleaning and other services. In microwork, on the other hand, relatively low remuneration and unclear distinction between working and resting hours (e.g. in care services) can also lead to an accumulation of “overtime” work. This ‘not-so flexible flexibility’, which influences remuneration, quality of services and even feedback from customers and ranking, was also pointed out during the interviews with the platform workers, described in detail in chapter four.

2.3 The role of industrial relations and social dialogue in platform economy work

Comparably to the lack of legal framework for working conditions, there is no legal framework, policy documents, official government commitment, court cases or any action by labour inspectorate regulating industrial relations or social dialogue for collaborative economy. In general, not only there is a lack of legal regulation of platform work in Slovakia, but also lack of involvement of social partners from relevant sectors in any discussions concerning the platform economy. One exception could be the Slovak Tourism Association (*Zväz cestovného ruchu Slovenskej republiky*), whose president is regularly invited to speak at the various conferences on collaborative work.

Table 4 offers an overview of industrial relations in the three sectors: transportation, accommodation and microwork services. In all three sectors, traditional work is compared to the platform work in terms of representation of workers and employers. As can be seen, social partners from “traditional work” are present in all three sectors except a missing representation of employers in microwork. On the other hand, in the platform work, there is no official actor that would represent either workers in the platform economy, or platform providers (see Table 4).

The only exception is the company Uber. In April 2018, a month after the suspension of its services in Slovakia, Uber surprisingly became a 55th member of the National Union of Employers in Slovakia (RUZ) as their individual member. Together, RUZ unites 31 sectoral associations and 21 other individual members, among which are the biggest companies in Slovakia, such as U. S. Steel Košice. To become a member of RUZ, a subject has to fill in an application and pay a membership fee. According to RUZ, anyone can become a member, but the focus is on large employers. Membership fee is paid based on the number of employees and the recommended starting threshold is a company with at least 20 employees. To be accepted as a member, all other RUZ members have to vote on the membership (Ondruš 2016).

This, however, suggests that Uber is considered an employer in Slovakia. By their membership in RUZ which is a member of the national tripartite body (HSR SR, *The Economic and Social Council of the Slovak Republic*), Uber is indirectly involved in the national social dialogue and can influence national industrial relations. HSR SR for instance approves the national minimum wage and its members are partners in virtually any discussion concerning labour relations in the country. Similarly, Uber is a member of another employer association, the IT association of Slovakia, which is an influential organisation among the employers (see Table 4). By joining RUZ, Uber not only gained an official access to other industrial relations actors and the government, but also sent a signal that the company pays attention to social dialogue in Slovakia.

Table 4. Overview of industrial relations in transportation, accommodation and microwork sectors.

Level	Industry	Traditional work		Platform work	
		Employee representation	Employers	Employee representation	Platforms representation
National	all	KOZ SR (The Confederation of Trade Unions in Slovakia)	RUZ (The National Union of Employers) AZZZ SR (Federation of employers' associations of the Slovak Republic) APZ (Association of Industrial Unions)	N/A	Uber in RUZ
Sector	Transportation	The Union of Taxi drivers (self-employed)	Taxi Drivers Guild (Professional association)	N/A (informal Facebook and WhatsApp groups)	Uber in ITAS (IT Association of Slovakia, member of RUZ)
Sector	Accommodation	OZPOCR (Trade Union of workers in Commerce and Tourism)	ZHRSR (The Slovak Association of Hotels and Restaurants) ZCRSR (The Slovak Tourism Association)	N/A (informal Facebook groups; civic Association "Welcome Home" /Vitaj Doma)	N/A
Sector	Microwork	SOZZaSS (The Slovak Trade Union of Employees in Health and Social Services)	not applicable	N/A (Informal discussions on portals)	N/A

Source: own table

Regarding the platform workers representation (for simplicity under the category employee representation), workers are almost exclusively united in various informal Facebook/WhatsApp groups and engaged in discussions on social networks (see Table A1 in Annex for the list).

One of the initiatives to organize platform workers has emerged from a Facebook group uniting Airbnb hosts and in late April 2016, the members of the group created a civic association "Vitaj Doma" (*Welcome home*⁷). The association, a network of hosts, was created "mainly to exchange good practices or ideas about hosting and build a network of Airbnb Bratislava hosts" with the aims to help in questions of taxation of Airbnb, necessary documentations and workers supply, especially cleaners (Vitaj Doma 2018).

⁷ See Vitaj Doma's webpage at <https://airbnbba.weebly.com/contact.html>

Regarding the public debates, by far the most prominent debate in Slovakia revolves around the taxi vs. Uber drivers. Taxi drivers, united among others⁸ in the Union of Taxi drivers, are also the most active in calling for the equal conditions for all with no new regulations. Protests organized by the taxi drivers are common and successful in driving attention of the state that as a result, amended a law and deregulated taxi services in Slovakia. The Union, besides a call for equal conditions in the sector addresses few of the issues related to the working conditions of drivers, such as requirement to have regular health and psychological examination, but also questions of wages and profit in the sector, as can be further seen in Chapter 3 on discourse among the established industrial relations (IR) actors.

⁸ Some taxi drivers are members of the Taxi Drivers Guild, which is a professional association rather than the union. More on the distinction can be found in Chapter 3.

3. Discourse, perceptions and experiences on work in the platform economy among established industrial relations actors, processes and outcomes

This chapter presents the results of an analysis of public discourse among established industrial relations actors based on the interviews gathered for this project (see Table 5). The first section presents the views of employee representatives – trade unions. Second section focuses on the views of traditional employers and employer associations. Third section presents the views of public authorities. The limitations of this qualitative approach are described in the introductory part of this paper.

Table 5. List of social partners interviewed for the IRSDACE project, Slovakia.

Interview code	Organisation	Respondent function	Date
NAT 1	KOZ SR National level Trade Union	KOZ SR representative	13.3.2018
NAT 2	SOZZASS trade union in healthcare	SOZZASS representative 1, representative 2	24.4.2018
TRA 3	The Union of Taxi Drivers (Unia Taxikarov)	representative	15.5.2018
TRA 4	Platform Taxify	Representative for public policy and government relations for central, south and eastern Europe	18.5.2018
ACC 3	ZCRSR Employers association in tourism; ZHRSR Employers association of hotels and restaurants	ZHRSR representative and ZCRSR representative	21.5.2018
NAT 3	Ministry of Transport Tourism Section	Representative of Strategy and Analysis Department	29.5.2018
EXP 1	INESS research institute	Expert	29.5.2018
EXP 2	National Bank of Slovakia	Expert	29.5.2018
EXP 3	Office of the President SR	Advisor and expert	31.05.2018

Note: The table includes all stakeholders interviewed for the project (relevant for the Chapter 3 and the Chapter 4), except the platform workers.

3.1 Employee representatives

The biggest trade union umbrella organization, **the Confederation of Trade Unions in Slovakia (KOZ SR)** does not perceive collaborative, platform economy as a salient issue in Slovakia. During their negotiation meetings, including the meetings of the tripartite committee, this topic has never been officially discussed or even brought up by any of its sectoral member organizations. Therefore, there are no standard terms or definitions being used within the organization. Similarly, the knowledge about online platforms operating in Slovakia is limited to the two most visible in public debate, that being platforms Uber and Airbnb.

As a member of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), KOZ SR registers that the topic of collaborative economy has been discussed and communicated extensively at the European level fora. In Slovakia, however, trade unions still focus their actions on the representation of traditional employees (NAT 1). Therefore, new forms of work within the collaborative economy are seen as a subset of new, atypical and untraditional forms of employment and are thus measured against the traditional advantages of standard employment.

Unions see this flexible work as any other flexible contracts, potentially endangering job security of workers. However, the Confederation acknowledges that there is a part of labour force that prefers flexibility, and should turn their attention to those workers, too. According to the KOZ SR representative, the state should play a role in discussions on platform economy, particularly concerning the taxation, social security of workers and ambiguity of this type of work which can overlap with informal, shadow economy.

Several issues arise as problematic when mapping the work within the collaborative economy, according to the KOZ representative. First and the most important is how to identify workers in collaborative economy and how to initiate contact with them? Subsequently, how to connect and organize them? These two questions also illustrate the obstacles KOZ SR faces in potential representation of platform workers. Nevertheless, KOZ SR agrees that there may be a potential to organize workers in collaborative economy, particularly within the new, modern trade unions:

“If they really want to make use of their modernity to which they ascribe, one might expect that they will also want to focus on this type of workers.” (NAT 1).

Even within the confederation, the potential to organize these workers exists, but the current structure of the organization and the decision-making processes within the confederation rather complicates any potential inclusion:

“we are structured according to the sectors, (...) I can imagine the debates would be stuck on practicalities, such as under which sectoral trade unions these workers belong, or there would need to be a completely new trade union organized directly under the confederation (...)” (NAT 1).

The obsolete structure of the confederation which does not have individual members at the moment, together with a slow dynamics and adaptation to new challenges are seen as the biggest obstacles for unions in an attempt to organize workers in platform economy. Additionally, according to the KOZ SR representative, unions somewhat fail to address any new, hot topic, which will need to change in the future. Trade unions should take advantage of new trends and use them to increase their membership base (NAT 1). If, however, people working in collaborative economy would not be organized in one union, but would rather be members of existing sectoral unions, this could complicate collective bargaining processes in

the sectors since the traditional role of the unions is to protect standard employees. In addition, organized workers need a relevant partner from an employer side for their negotiations. Here, trade unions would need a relevant partner, an “employer” for any social dialogue to develop.

Looking into the traditional sectors which may have been influenced by microwork in care services, **the Slovak Trade Union of Employees in Health and Social Services (SOZZaSS)** does not pay particular attention to the new forms of work within the collaborative economy. In their views, the sector has other more salient problems, such as low wages, and the number of people working for platforms in care services is quite small. In general, the trade union is not against this type of work. Regarding the potential for organizing and representing micro workers in care services, the issue overlaps with a question of how to represent and organize self-employed people, to which trade unions are yet to find answers (NAT 2).

In the transportation sector, the taxi drivers represent the loudest voice against the unequal conditions in the new type of platform economy. **The Union of Taxi drivers (Únia Taxikárov)**, established in 2012 by the taxi drivers who felt underrepresented by an already existing Taxi Drivers Guild (Cech taxikárov) uniting taxi dispatch companies rather than drivers in their view, actively enters the discussions on collaborative economy in Slovakia. Almost 90 per cent of the union members are self-employed taxi drivers, the rest have a status of employees (TRA 3). In a traditional understanding of unions and their role to organize workers, the Union of Taxi drivers perceives themselves neither as a trade union, nor as an employer’s association: “*we are representing ourselves*” (TRA 3).

The Union strongly criticizes those platforms that do not follow the legal requirements for taxi drivers. Interestingly, the representative admits that some taxi drivers work part-time on platforms, too. In their view, platforms operating in the transportation sector are breaking the law if they do not adhere to the rules valid for the road passenger transport and taxi services. They specifically name platforms Uber and Taxify and accuse them of unfair competition. It is the “unfair” part of the competition they find problematic. In their view, they don’t have any problems with new forms of entrepreneurship if all companies follow the same rules. Referring to the strict regulation of taxis in Slovakia, they stress: “*If we managed to adapt, why they can’t?*” (TRA 3) and are against relaxation of current regulations. In this regard, the Union representative highlights one platform from Slovakia, Hopin, as the only platform that does not break the law and works only with licensed taxi drivers who fulfil all the legal requirements to provide personal transportation services in Slovakia.

“Hopin took it seriously, it’s a Slovak firm, they stood up and said: we will work on this platform, but we will do it legally.” (TRA 3).

The most important issue for the union of taxi drivers is a lack of professional qualification for a job and anonymity of platform workers. The state should use available control mechanism (specifically, the Slovak Trade Inspection), they claim, and force Uber and Taxify drivers to properly label their cars in order to control them. They also criticize the policy

makers who in their view instead of forcing the platforms and their workers to adhere to the already existing (legal) rules, are planning to change the law to suit it to the platforms. In addition, they mention poor communication with platforms and their representatives, who, for the lack of sensible argumentation, are not interested in talking (TRA 3).

Concerning the social dialogue in the sector and its possible overlap to the platform economy, the Union feels that unless the taxi drivers demonstrate, nothing happens, as could have been seen during the strikes against Uber in Slovakia. Nevertheless, there are certain limitations even for the traditional actors:

“Fortunately for the foreign countries where the unions are stronger. Why? Because unlike here, where we are 90 per cent of self-employed and 10 per cent of employees, there, it is the opposite. (...) Here, we are all self-employed and everything is on our heads.” (TRA 3).

The Union’s representative is sceptical towards Uber’s step to join the National Union of Employers (RUZ), which he sees only as a way to make the company more visible and to lobby easily (TRA 3). Among their successes, nonetheless, they count an abolition of Uber in Slovakia and consequently, they focused their attention to Taxify, and a case against this platform has recently been filed.

3.2 Employer representatives

As already presented in the previous section, Uber has joined **the National Union of Employers in Slovakia (RUZ)** in April 2018, just a month after its suspension in Slovakia. It is unclear whether the suspension came as a surprise in the time when the acceptance to the RUZ was already being discussed, or vice-versa, Uber decided to join RUZ precisely because of the suspension in a hope to gain better lobbying position. Nevertheless, the company expects to resume its operation in Slovakia soon after the decision of the court will be overturned. The representative of the Slovak Tourism Association and the Association of Hotels and Restaurants, as a member of the National Union of Employers (RUZ), was first sceptical when Uber applied for a membership in RUZ and predicted a possible division in opinions within the organisation, which may make it more fragmented.

“I looked at what are the basic principles of RUZ, and is it [Uber] an employer? It is. Then I remembered some typical examples where even within RUZ, there were different opinions on some legislation. (...) Sometimes there is no consensus on a legislative proposal, but if there is enough time or space to do so, we are looking for a consensus, which is good. And if not, then RUZ simply does not give an opinion. (...) I see it, it will contribute to some dialogue, to some communication, even when it's Uber now, and it's not Airbnb.” (ACC 3).

Uber is also a member of an **IT Association of Slovakia (ITAS)**, a professional association in the information and communication technology sector, which belongs to the RUZ too. ITAS

supports the developments in collaborative economy and states that Slovakia should not resist the trends and innovations which may result in a need to change traditional business models and legislative framework. More specifically, legislation “*should not only regulate new online services, but also deregulate traditional providers*” (ITAS 2018). They call for quick changes to the act no. 56/2012 on road transport “*which would regulate the conditions for passenger transport to reflect the arrival of new information and communication technologies and meet the requirements of the 21st century*” (ibid.)

The Slovak Association of Hotels and Restaurants (ZHRSR), which belongs to the umbrella organisation **the Slovak Tourism Association (ZCRSR)**, is aware of the platform economy and follows the current developments in the gig world. At the same time, it states that in Slovakia, platform economy is not yet that prevalent in the accommodation sector. ZHRSR does not report any particular concern among its members and the association itself focuses its attention to a legal perspective, i.e. it is interested in a definition and overall framework for the platform work. One of the possible explanations of a lack of particular interest in platform economy within the sector is that in Slovakia, tourism is growing in numbers and at the same time, no one knows about the size of accommodation services offered through the platforms. In other words, the sector is calm since no one is losing their business.

In general, the association sees the platform work in accommodation services as a healthy competition and contrary to the transportation sector, is in favour of **deregulation** of a situation in the accommodation sector:

“we obviously see it as some kind of a competitor, but rather a healthy one, unlike the taxi drivers, we are looking for an inspiration there, in the way they [platforms] communicate and present themselves, but on the other hand, we point out that in accommodation services, standard physical or legal persons which are doing business, whether a micro-enterprise or a large enterprise, face a lot of regulation. Great amount of regulations.” (ACC 3)

The focus and an interest in the legal underpinnings of platform work stems from a 2017 proposal to change the law on local tax and fees, which influences all the providers of accommodation. The proposal attempted to move the responsibility to pay local tax from a guest to a provider of accommodation. Among one of the cited reasons for a change was the ability to gather a local tax from all types of accommodation, including accommodation provided through the platforms (Airbnb). Employers, including ZHRSR, and the Association of Towns and Municipalities (ZMOS) did not support this change. According to the ZHRSR, since the law assumes that the accommodation is offered only by entrepreneurs (companies including self-employed), this change would still target only those hosts who are officially self-employed and leave others outside the regulation (ACC 3).

Towns and municipalities, according to the ZHRSR’s representative, lack any tools to quantify the number of places offered through the platforms. Similarly, the ZHRSR association itself does not have any internal analyses on neither the number of platform

workers in the accommodation services, nor the number of accommodation units offered through platforms in Slovakia. Nevertheless, they regularly follow the trends and available statistics from foreign countries, especially through their membership in European structures, such as HOTREC (Association of hotels, restaurants and cafes), which follows the topic of collaborative economy and platforms closely.

The main reason for concern is that Slovakia misses any national-level, systemic strategy on platform work, which should be its top priority according to the ZHRSR. Only after that, sector-specific policies can be applied (ACC 3). The representative sees that in the future, when platform work will be more defined, there is a possibility for social dialogue to develop. At the same time, however, he stresses that even among the traditional partners, there is no collective agreement in the sector (ACC 3). However, similarly to other traditional partners, e.g. KOZ, the statutes of the organisation in its present form complicate the inclusion of new members (individual hosts from Airbnb that are not service providers/entrepreneurs) into the association.

3.3 Public authorities

In general, public authorities are not active in the issues related to the platform economy, which was also reflected in the difficulties to identify, approach and organize interviews with the relevant stakeholders. Often, ministerial bodies are unable to identify a person responsible for the agenda, particularly since there are no strategies, commitments, or any official documents or bodies assigned to the topic of the platform economy. The exceptions are related to the legislative acts that were amended (the Act on Taxation and the Act on Road Transport), partly as a response to growing platform economy in Slovakia.

Tourism, including accommodation services and transportation are in the competences of **the Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic (MINDOP)**. The Ministry follows the developments in platform economy and perceives its role as a guarantee of legislative rules. It does not assume an active role; control mechanism should be used by other state authorities. However, especially accommodation services offered via platforms are not seen as something new. Accommodation in private, where Airbnb belongs according to the ministry, has always been here. The novelty lies only in a mechanism by which these services are provided, that is, via an online tool (NAT 3).

The representative of the Tourism section at the ministry participated at six workshops on platform economy, organized by the European Commission, which resulted in certain policy recommendations. According to the ministry, smaller states such as Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia and Malta have all problems to reach the platforms and to communicate with their representatives, unlike in other European states where they communicate openly (NAT 3). For this reason, smaller countries felt disappointed that the Commission did not issue any declaration with a common, European perspective for all EU states.

Then,

“it would be solved for all and not one-by-one [state] needs to negotiate the conditions. (...) It would be solved, if it comes from the EU.” (NAT 3).

The current strategy thus is, in words of the Ministry representative, waiting.

Nevertheless, one of the biggest issues for the ministry is that we cannot estimate the size of the platform economy in Slovakia and the effects it has on traditional sectors. Especially, that apart from the positive effects such as boosting of the economy, we don't have tools to measure how many jobs (e.g. in hotels) were lost due to the unregulated platforms operating in the accommodation sector. This touches upon another topic, which is informal, shadow economy. The representative of the ministry notes that certain percentage of jobs, such as cleaning jobs done for Airbnb hosts, may be done without a proper employment contract (NAT 3).

Regarding the social dialogue within the platform economy, the Ministry does not see platforms as employers, rather as providers of services that connect one person to another (NAT 3). The aspect of voluntariness is crucial here. Airbnb and other platforms don't have tools to force unsatisfactory conditions on anyone and you can opt-out and leave anytime (NAT 3). On the other hand, informal activities which suggest a need for organization and representation of workers have been noticed by the ministry, especially via social media, where people regularly exchange various questions (mostly on taxation and legal regulation).

The situation in personal transport has been changing in 2018, partly as a result of the prominent public debate on taxi services (taxi drivers vs. Uber drivers). Although the head **of the National Transport Authority**, an institution in charge of the approval of vehicles, systems components and separate technical units under **the Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic (MINDOP)** stated that the Ministry supports equal legislative conditions for all (Chochlík 2018), the Ministry of Transport started to deregulate taxi services and proposed an amendment to the Road Transportation Act, relaxing conditions for taxi drivers. The act is currently in the legislative process and expected to be valid from April 2019. In other words, the Ministry of Transport decided to deregulate current legislative framework which should still apply to all, traditional providers and new platforms operating in the sector (which are still regarded as providers of taxi services) instead of preparing a new legislation unique for the online platforms. According to the Ministry of Transport, this has been decided after the meetings with promoters of digital platforms and representatives of traditional taxi services (The Slovak Spectator 2018).

One of the few initiatives related to the platform economy was the decision to tax digital platforms in Slovakia (see again part 2.1.2.4. on taxation of platform providers) by **the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic (MINFIN)**. According to the Ministry's representative and an expert on taxation, the motivation to tax all the platform providers was to make the conditions equal for all:

“we said to ourselves that if there is a Slovak digital platform in Slovakia – a classic tax entity which pays taxes, so we said that we want to unify conditions in Slovakia in business whether it is a Slovak digital platform or a foreign digital platform” (Klučková 2018).

Other public authorities approached, such as **the Office of the President of the Slovak Republic**, made only general comments about positive influence of new technologies and online platforms. The President of Slovakia, who has almost solely a representative role but is also a powerful initiator of public debates, has never been approached by either the online platform representatives or the platform workers. This, according to his advisor, points to the fact that collaborative economy is not yet a prominent topic in Slovakia, unlike other with which people regularly approach the Office (EXP 3).

Several governmental bodies, such as the Deputy Prime Minister’s Office for Investments and Informatization of the Slovak Republic did not respond to our request for an interview. Similar case happened with other ministerial bodies. This, again, points to the fact that there is a lack of “ownership” of the agenda around the platform economy in Slovakia.

4. Discourse, perceptions and experiences on work on the platform economy among platform owners and their workers

This chapter presents the results of an analysis of public discourse among platform owners and platform workers based on the interviews gathered for this project (see Table 5, Table 6 and Table 7). The first section presents the views of platform owners. The second section focuses on the views of platform workers and is based on individual interviews with them. The third section presents the outcomes of the focus group exercise.

4.1 Platform owners

In the **transportation sector**, the platform owners/providers focus their attention on legal regulations in Slovakia. Specifically, on the new proposal to deregulate conditions for the taxi drivers within the Act on Road Transport (the Act no. 56/2012). According to the **Taxify's** representative for public policy and government relations for central, south and eastern Europe, they see an inspiration in the Estonian model (n.b. home country of Taxify) which according to him does not differentiate between the taxi driver and a private driver working for platforms. The decision to open negotiations, de-regulate taxi services and modernize the Slovak law was welcome by the Taxify (TRA 4).

Similarly, an **Uber** representative for the Czech and Slovak market welcomed the Ministry's initiative.

“Uber is still fully determined to renew its operation in Slovakia, and we are ready to have a discussion with all representatives of the state and public administration, as each modern city needs the broadest possible variety of options on how to travel in it” (Uber in The Slovak Spectator 2018).

Regarding the possibility for **social dialogue** to develop in the platform economy, Taxify does not perceive itself as an employer vis-à-vis drivers that are subscribed to their platform:

“We are a technology company that develops a platform that connects drivers and passengers, so for us, the driver is our customer and the passenger is our customer.” (TRA 4).

Because the work in platforms is flexible and voluntary, he does not see a potential for organizing Taxify drivers in trade unions or other traditional forms of representations. In addition, most drivers use platform work part-time. According to the Taxify representative, their average driver spends approximately 12 hours working for the platform and approximately 80 per cent of the drivers use Taxify as a source of additional income (or their second “job”) (TRA 4). Since the main occupation covers their health and social contributions, there is no particular reason to think about those traditional aspects of work. In

addition, there is a substantial fluctuation among the drivers, who according to the Taxify's data, work for Taxify for three months on average (TRA 4).

In the accommodation sector, an interview with the representative of **Airbnb in Slovakia** was impossible to organize, particularly because of the lack of contact information that the company provides and makes public. Similarly, in **microwork** services, although an initial conversation with the platform providers was established (Jaspravim, Domelia), we miss their opinion which is a big limitation of this report and its qualitative approach in general.

4.2 Platform workers

Table 6. List of individual interviews with the platform workers for the IRSDACE project, Slovakia.

Interview code	gender	age	Respondent function	Main/secondary job activity	Employment status in main job	Sector (main job)	Date
ACC 1	male	30	AirBnb host	secondary job activity	agreement based/ freelancer	education and research	27.3.2018
ACC 2	female	26-27	AirBnb cleaner/ helper	secondary job activity	student	N/A	18.4.2018
TRA 1	male	30	Uber driver	main activity	unemployed	N/A	4.4.2018
TRA 2	male	34	Uber driver Taxify driver	secondary job activity	employed	pharmaceutical sector	30.4.2018
MIC 1	female	45-55	microwork care worker and cleaner	main activity	n/a	cleaning sector care sector	19.4.2018
MIC 2	female	29	microwork care worker	secondary job activity	employed	social services	8.8.2018

4.3 Results from individual interviews

The results from individual interviews with the platform workers are presented according to the questionnaire and its themes, developed for this project. The structure of the interviews is as follows: 1) background of the workers and state of knowledge, 2) work experience in the platform economy, 3) presence of social dialogue – presence of institutions representing either side and presence of issues related to the platform economy 4) other outstanding issues.

Personal transport

Background of the workers and state of knowledge

Both respondents working for the platforms in personal transport were males in their thirties, residing in Bratislava Region, with university education. One had an experience with the platform Uber, another worked for two platforms, Uber and Taxify. Both drivers were active for three months, but only one worked full-time for the platform, while officially registered as

an unemployed person. The second respondent had another main job where he worked full-time (TRA 1; TRA2).

The three-month period after which they both dropped their services collides with a three-month period in which drivers have to register their identification number at the platform, which verifies their status as self-employed persons. According to the respondent, after Uber asked for the identification number (ICO) which he did not have, he dropped. The same process was then repeated for another platform, Taxify. Afterwards, the respondent started to work for Uber within a fleet, which does not require to have its own identification number (a fleet offers drivers to use fleet's own identification number) and after its suspension, he now works for a fleet within Taxify (TRA 2). The main reason why some drivers decide to work for the fleet rather than on their own is that they do not have to own and/or use their own vehicle for the service. In this case, the share they have to deduce from their income is higher.

Work experience in the platform economy

Both drivers identify freedom and flexibility as the biggest advantage of their work for the platforms (TRA 1; TRA 2). In addition, they say it was easy to sign up and easy to use, and offered positive experiences with customers (TRA 1). While one respondent claims that the financial motivation was significant and his hourly wage was bigger than at his main job (TRA 2), the other does not share his optimism. In his view, working as a driver for a platform is only advantageous when driving during certain peak times, specifically on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturday nights from 11 p.m. to 4. a.m. This, however, was not possible in his case (a father of a small child) (TRA 1). Several other factors play a role in financial motivation and in income that driver receives at the end of the day. For instance, while one respondent had to borrow a car from Uber and pay additional costs for it (TRA 1), another used a fleet which took additional percentage from his income (TRA 2). Among the disadvantages, the respondent states that using his own car and take strangers into your own property felt problematic, as well as taking all responsibility for possible damages (TRA 2).

The respondent drivers also agreed that they did not experience any major problems when working for the platforms and if they did, they were quickly resolved. Rating system was seen as positive, allowing to filter out bad drivers and thus ensure quality of services (TRA 1). In this regard, one respondent criticized "creative" ways of using platforms, in which drivers officially use Uber but are de facto full-time employees of another company, which pays them an hourly wage. This decreases trust in platform work and quality of services provided, since drivers do not have the same motivation as if they work part-time or directly for the platforms (TRA 1).

The future of platform work in the transportation sector should according to the respondent follow the example of a Slovak platform Hopin, which is a platform that adheres to all legal regulations. At the same time, he supports the idea of de-regulation of taxi services in general (TRA 1).

Social dialogue in the sector

Regarding the possibility of social dialogue to develop in the sector, the respondents were sceptical. First, because workers working within the same platform do not know about each other, they have no knowledge on how many people work for the same or even other platform and all communication is done online with the platform itself:

“If I wanted to meet someone, not as a costumer, there was no chance.” (TRA 1)

Neither of them was ever approached by the traditional social partners or heard about any group uniting workers in the platform economy, apart from informal, Facebook groups or chats. One driver expressed concerns about joining such a group (online safety) for a possible infiltration of taxi drivers that could cause some problems (in relation to protests against Uber in Bratislava) (TRA 1).

Importantly, they both agreed that they do not feel as employees working for the platform because of the element of voluntariness and possibility to leave:

I could switch it off anytime and walk out.” (TRA 1)

“It does not matter to me that much, even if they cancel Taxify today, I will survive.” (TRA 2)

In addition, their work is not seen as fulfilling the criteria of dependent work (see Box 1):

“I did not feel like an employee (...) If I needed to deal with something, I had to advise myself, it was not as easy as to just pick up the phone or write a message. It should be there if I'm an employee, I am expecting my supervisor to deal with any little problem right away. But they do not do anything, I have to take care of everything.” (TRA 2).

Nevertheless, they would both welcome an opportunity to talk with someone, to discuss future plans within the company, talk about his suggestions for improvement and new business ideas (TRA 2) and one driver would even consider to join some organization resembling the traditional trade union, if it could bring some advantages for him, for example possibility to negotiate his pay (ibid.).

Box 1. Definition of dependent work: Excerpt from the Labour Code, Part one, General Provisions, Scope of the Labour Code, § 1:

(2) Dependent work is work carried out in a relation where the employer is superior and the employee is subordinate, and in which the employee carries out work personally for the employer, according to the employer's instructions, in the employer's name, during working time set by the employer for a wage or remuneration.

(3) Dependent work may be carried out only in an employment relationship, a similar labour relation or in exceptional cases defined herein in another form of labour-law relation. Dependent

work cannot be carried out in a contractual civil-law relation or in a contractual commercial-law relation according to special regulations.

Source: Act No. 311/2001 Coll. (Labour Code)

Accommodation

Background of the workers and state of knowledge

The respondents from the accommodation sector were quite different: the first was a male approaching his thirties, from Bratislava Region with a university education and a freelancing/agreement-based main job, using Airbnb platform as a host, but not the owner of the property (ACC 1). Second respondent was a female in her mid-twenties, a PhD student, who works as a “helper” in charge of cleaning, house maintenance, key delivery and all other responsibilities associated with an Airbnb hosting. She is also not the owner of the property and there is no official employment contract between her and the property owner, who is her friend (ACC 2).

Work experience in the platform economy

The respondent ACC 1 was surprised by how easy it was to register at Airbnb, compared to for example Uber, where you need to scan your self-employment certificate or compared to Booking.com, where you need a certificate of property ownership:

“I was surprised that when you set it up, no one wants anything from you. You create it with a Facebook profile. I only clicked that I agree to their terms and conditions”
(ACC 1).

The main advantage of platform work in accommodation is its flexibility and profit (ACC1; ACC2), which is bigger compared to a long-term lease and is set by the hosts not platforms (ACC1). Rating of both hosts and guests which does not exist in other traditional forms of accommodation, or even at Booking.com, was another positive feature of Airbnb (ACC 2). However, one respondent agreed that the rating system is quite challenging and demanding and to gain (and preserve) a superhost status, one needs to secure 80 per cent of the reviews with five stars (out of five) and 50 per cent of their guests have to leave the review. In addition, all individual categories have to be rated to at least 60 per cent of satisfaction (ACC 1).

Social dialogue in the sector

Neither of the platform workers have been contacted by the traditional social partners or have knowledge on their work. In addition, one respondent never thought about traditional partners and a possibility for them to represent the new types of workers (“*I did not think about it in this way*” ACC2)).

“Employees at the hotels probably do not care about things like AirBnB, but I find it rather logical that if AirBnB is a competition to traditional hotels, then if someone should represent their interests in negotiations, it should be them”. (ACC 1)

However, both respondents can imagine an organization that would represent their interests:

“But so far it has not been necessary, because nothing has happened, no one wants to cancel us or make some adjustments that would not be profitable. In such case, people would probably automatically get together and mobilize.” (ACC 1).

“Maybe they could share their experiences more, help each other and advise on how to deal with problems.” (ACC 2).

There has also been an agreement that Slovakia needs to find a compromise between traditional forms and new platforms of work and not follow the example of Uber in Slovakia, which has been cancelled. Both are also in favour of deregulation of the accommodation sector (ACC 1; ACC2).

Microwork:

Background of the workers and state of knowledge

Two individual interviews were conducted with the workers who use platforms for microwork, especially in cleaning and care services. Both respondents were females, one fifty years old from Bratislava Region with secondary education who has been active in cleaning and care services for more than ten years. In her work, she used platform Domelia, however, only once. The respondent did not hear about the term platform work, or collaborative economy and does not follow the development in the “platform sector” (MIC 1). The second worker was a younger woman (29) who started to work for Domelia based on the recommendations from her university friend. Similarly, after she had filled the advertisement for free and got in touch with a customer, she left the platform and continue the work in the sector on her own. Although she would call this micro job portal a platform, she was unaware of how they earn money if they do not charge their “workers” (MIC 2).

Work experience in the platform economy

The respondents’ interaction with the platform is limited, in fact, both workers have been contacted via the platform only once and following jobs were based on contacts or spread of a good word. Among the advantages, one worker states a possibility to choose work and a flexible working time. However, she works based on terms (2 weeks long) and sometimes needs to be available 24 hours (MIC 1). On the other hand, the second worker mentions security, unclear responsibilities and health concerns as main concerns and disadvantages of this work.

“I was afraid she [mother of a child] would kill me in case of some accident” and “I had a huge respect towards this type of job” (MIC 2).

In addition, cash payments were common in both cases. The respondents accepted this type of payment because the wage was relatively good for a student (MIC 2) or because they had another part-time job (with social contributions) and babysitting was only a “supplement job” (MIC 2; MIC 1).

Social dialogue in the sector

Both respondents never heard of any organization that represents similar workers as themselves and were also never approached by any organization. The first respondent does not see a reason to be represented, because she is self-employed (MIC 1). She nevertheless registers some complaints of her colleagues and friends who work for an agency (temporary agency work) about the working conditions, especially about the travelling to the work, which does not count to their working hours (MIC 1). The second respondent could imagine advantages of workers’ representation (*“It feels like a luxury”*) (MIC 2). Representatives then could deal with the issues of security and responsibility of small kids, working time and weekly quotas for work (problem of no control) and questions of minimum wage which would ensure that the hourly wage would not be lower the minimum (MIC 2). However, all of these ideas came to the respondent’s mind only after the interviewer used probes and hints regarding possible difficulties in the microwork sector. This shows that some platform workers do not think about their working conditions or problematic aspects of their work, unless they are explicitly asked to.

4.4 Results from the focus group

Table 7. List of conducted interviews – focus group with workers, all conducted on 28. November 2017

Interview code	gender	Age	Respondent function	Main/secondary job activity	Employment status in main job	Sector (main job)
FOC 1	female	Approx. 40	Microwork care worker	secondary job activity	N/A	gastronomy
FOC 2	female	30	AirBnB host	secondary job activity	self-employed	state administration
FOC 3	male	25-32	Uber driver	secondary job activity	employed	automotive
FOC 4	male	36	Uber driver	secondary job activity	employed	mechanical engineering
FOC 5	male	25-32	AirBnB host	secondary job activity	employed	state administration
FOC 6	male	34-40	AirBnB host	secondary job activity	self-employed	entrepreneurship

The focus group interviews for this project have been conducted on 28th of November 2017 in Bratislava, Slovakia with six participants and one moderator, and lasted 120 minutes. Demographically, our sample was overrepresented by younger people: all respondents were between 25-40 years old. The group was composed of two females and four males. All participants in our focus group work or have worked for the platform on a side and platform work was their secondary job activity. The group was composed of two people working in accommodation sector for AirBnB platform, three people with experience in personal transportation and company Uber, and one person who is active in care services within what qualifies as microwork. Their main job activity varies across sectors, so as their employment status. Only two of five were self-employed in their main job (see Table 7). All respondents joined the platform work because it was seen as either an investment (FOC 2; FOC 5; FOC 6) or it was considered economically advantageous (FOC 3; FOC 4). For the case of microwork, the respondent specifically stated a need for a secondary income (FOC 1).

In next section, we present the results from the focus group exercise grouped in themes which were the most prominent during the debate. First, the discussion evolved around the lack of definition of collaborative economy and platform work, and the lack of data connected to it. Second, legal regulations and framework, or lack thereof for the platform economy were discussed. Third, the debate evolved around the working conditions within the collaborative economy, especially about the flexibility and the working time, income, and safety concerns. Fourth, the respondents discussed the stimuli and barriers to social dialogue in the platform economy.

- **Definition of collaborative economy, online platforms and its statistics**

Respondents across all sectors had difficulties to estimate how many people work for their platform and/or sector and cited only public information from the media. Respondents from AirBnB claimed that the number of AirBnB hosts is increasing in Slovakia (FOC 2; FOC 5; FOC 6), Uber drivers on the other hand had zero knowledge on concrete statistics in their sector (FOC 3; FOC 4). Similarly, they hardly ever met any colleague and if they knew about other people working in the sector, it was because they were friends. In addition, especially for the microwork sector, it has been difficult to identify whether a platform actually qualifies as a platform, and not as a portal.

- **(Lack of) clear legal rules and regulations**

All respondents expressed their concerns about lack of clear definitions, legal underpinnings and framework within the sector (*“How does it work in Slovakia?”*). Connected to this, respondents agreed that they lack knowledge on taxation systems, which taxes should they pay and how:

“I was not sure how it works in Slovakia for a long time. What should be taxed, what is not needed, whether or not there is a need to do something, if any control can come” (FOC 6).

- **Working conditions**

Regarding the working conditions, the most common concerns were about the *remuneration for their services*. In microwork, remuneration was not seen as fair. Customers look for the cheapest options which pushes the prices down. In addition, most of the workers in microwork are not certified, which raises concerns about the quality of services provided (FOC 1). In personal transport, drivers have no control over their pay, which is set by the platform without any negotiations with the drivers, compared to the AirBnB hosts, who have this option. This, according to our respondent, is one of the major barriers to full-time employment (FOC 4).

Flexibility of working time was by far the major advantage identified by the respondents. However, one respondent asks whether it is really that flexible, and states that an AirBnB host needs to be available almost any time for their hosts (FOC 2). Indeed, platform AirBnB motivates its workers to be available virtually any time (shows their response rate) and financially penalize cancelation of bookings.

Rating system was considered to have both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, good rating improves the quality of services and information for the clients. On the other hand, keeping a good status can be very stressful. For instance, in case of AirBnB, cancellation of booking comes with a penalty, which is reflected in hosts' rating.

Respondents also expressed concerns about the *liability and safety*. This was connected to both their properties (apartments, cars) and to the safety of customers and clients (e.g. in case something happens to the guests at the apartment). The respondent from microwork had one specific experience that illustrates the safety concerns:

“It once happened to me that one father came to me and gave me his baby for three days [agreement was for one day only]. He was not picking up the phone, noting. I did not know what to do. Three days later he came and said that he was on business trip.” (FOC 1).

- **Stimuli or barriers to social dialogue**

Across all sectors, the respondents did not identify any signs of formal social dialogue present in their respective sector. When asked about the traditional social partners, the respondents did not seem to understand why they should be involved in the debates on platform work, if all workers are self-employed or independent. Compared to the individual interviews where most of the interviewees did not see a reason to be represented, during the focus group, the respondents started to think about these possibilities and at the end of the session, they agreed that the representation of platform workers would be advantageous. This, however, points to the methodological issues connected to the focus group interviews, where one respondent can influence answers of other respondents, or shift the debate to topics which may have never been discussed during the individual interviews.

Nevertheless, several factors pointed to the possibility that in the future, some form of social dialogue may develop in the platform work. Before Uber has been stopped in Slovakia, Uber drivers had regular meetings with a local Uber representative. No similar meetings were reported by the AirBnB hosts or micro worker. When asked if they feel like employees in their work for platforms, all respondents said no. They were also unable to identify an employer with whom any possible negotiations could happen.

The role of the state in defining overall framework for the platform economy was seen as crucial by the respondents in the focus group. One of the possible stimuli to the development of social dialogue was connected to the state's involvement in these issues. The respondents agreed that a meaningless, harsh regulation of conditions in the platform economy could motivate them to organize themselves:

“I can imagine many situations the state can cause that would force us to go and protest, but I cannot imagine what the platform could do.” (FOC 2).

5. Comparative analysis of discourse, perceptions and experiences

5.1 How do discourse, perceptions and experiences compare?

Employee representatives at the national level do not have a clear stand towards platform work. For unions, platform workers are sort of a sub-group of flexible forms of employment and hence, potentially precarious. As with other non-standard employees but also for the problems of identification of platform workers, there are currently no attempts to unionize them. Moreover, the structure of most of the union organizations (sector-based) and slower decision-making process are two main obstacles for their inclusion in the future.

Employers united in the peak-level employer association see the growth of platform work as a positive sign for the economy and call for equal conditions for traditional and platform work with no additional regulations from the state. In transportation sector, taxi providers would like to keep the current legal requirements in place and force platforms to adhere to the already set legal regulations, which stems from their overall negative perception of the platform providers. Employers from the accommodation sector, unlike in other countries such as Hungary, do not see online platform work as a threat and call for de-regulation of the sector for all. Microwork sector is seen in a neutral way by most of the actors.

Public authorities, especially at the Ministry of Transport, remain neutral towards the growth of platform economy and support equal regulations for all, after the de-regulation of taxi services. Nonetheless, there is a relative silence towards the platform economy from governmental perspective, apart from the regulation on taxation of platform providers (described in part 2.1.2.4).

Lastly, platform workers remain positive about their work, and are satisfied with no regulations taking place in Slovakia. The results from individual interviews and from the focus group with the platform workers show, that they perceive their work to have both advantages (additional income, flexibility) and disadvantages (not-so flexible flexibility, security, liability, unfair income, etc.). In general, platform workers agreed with what are generally considered to be problematic aspects of the platform work: unclear definition of platform work, unclear responsibilities and (un)fair working conditions in the sector (see again section 2.2 on main challenges and impacts for platform workers). For comparison of perceptions and views of the actors interviewed for this report, see the Table 8 below.

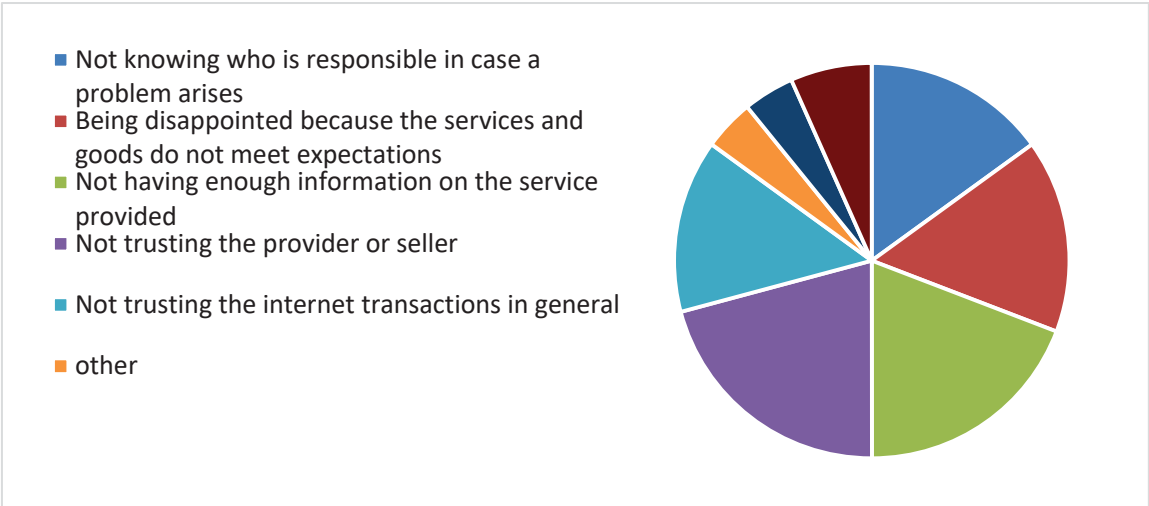
Table 8. Comparison of perceptions and views of all relevant actors in the platform economy

Sector	Actor	TRADITIONAL WORK Legal perspective	PLATFORM WORK Legal perspective	PLATFORM WORK General stand
National level	Unions	N/A	N/A	N/A
National level	Employers	Keep the status quo for all	Support/ Keep the status quo for all	positive
Transportation	Taxi providers (employers+ self-employed)	Keep the status quo for all	regulate	negative
Accommodation	Ministry	Deregulate the status quo for all	Equal regulations for all	neural
Accommodation	Employers in hotels and restaurants	Deregulate the status quo for all	Regulate (but only necessary regulations)	positive
Microwork	Unions (healthcare)	N/A	N/A	neutral
All	Workers in platform economy	Not applicable	Keep the status quo or deregulation	positive

Source: Own table.

Similar results were reported in the Eurobarometer survey (438) on the use of collaborative platforms. In the survey, the most problematic aspect of platform work in Slovakia was a lack of trust (not trusting the providers or seller, 21 per cent), followed by the lack of information on the service provided (19 per cent). Of all respondents, 14 per cent claimed to have problems to identify who is responsible in case of any problems, which was also cited as problematic in our sample of respondents.

Figure 6. Compared to the traditional commerce of goods and services, what do you think are the main problems for the people using the services offered on these platforms?



Source: Eurobarometer 2016. Note: results for Slovakia.

Table 9 presents in greater detail the comparison of social dialogue and industrial relations in traditional versus platform work in Slovakia. As can be seen from the table, in all traditional sectors of accommodation, transportation and healthcare, social dialogue is present. However, only one sector concludes a higher-level sectoral collective agreement (healthcare). On the other hand, there is no social dialogue taking place in the platform work across either of the researched sectors (see Table 9).

Table 9. Comparison of social dialogue and IR in traditional work and in platform work across three sectors

level	Industry	Traditional work				Platform work				C B A
		Employee representation	EMPLOYERS	Social Dialogue	C B A	Employee representation	Platforms representation	Social Dialogue	C B A	
National	all	KOZ SR	RUZ AZZZ SR	yes	yes	N/A	Uber Ruz	in Yes?	no	
Sector	Transportation	The Union of Taxi drivers (self-employed)	Taxi Drivers Guild (Professional association)	yes	no	N/A (informal Facebook and WhatsApp groups)	Uber ITAS	in no	no	
Sector	Accommodation	OZPOCR	ZHRSR (professional association) ZCRSR	yes	no	N/A (informal Facebook groups)	N/A	no	no	
Sector	Microwork	SOZZaSS	not applicable	yes	yes	N/A (Informal discussions on portals)	N/A	no	no	

Source: Own table.

To repeat the question of one respondent, if we do not conclude collective agreements for traditional workers in the accommodation or the transport sector, what should be the motivation to negotiate working conditions of platform workers? On the other hand, the existence of social dialogue in all proxy sectors suggests that the inclusion of platform workers into the traditional structures should be possible. At the moment, however, the discussion on working conditions and work in the platform economy in general, takes places on informal fora such as on Facebook closed groups, or on WhatsApp groups. The most prominent debates of AirBnb hosts, for instance, revolve around legal conditions, mostly taxations and looking for reliable workers, especially cleaners (see Box 2).

Box 2. Most prominent debates in Facebook group form AirBnB hosts:

1. Reliable ‘employees’ in accommodation, esp. cleaners.
2. Taxation (‘if I clean after the host, do I need to be self/employed’), searching for tax advisor, local taxation, new tax.
3. Other topics connected to platform app and daily maintenance.

Source: Facebook

6. Conclusions and policy recommendations

Several conclusions can be drawn from the report. **First, platform economy is not seen as a salient issue in Slovakia.** While the concrete statistics and data is not available, the growth of tourism in Slovakia which influences two of three sectors, accommodation and personal transportation, results in a calm approach by the traditional social partners in accommodation. Similarly, public authorities show small interest in the platform work, limited to the discussions on several legislative acts and general legal framework in the collaborative economy.

Second, there is an agreement among all actors that the **platform workers are not employees and platform providers are not their employers.** Two elements explain this approach, voluntariness of their work for the platform and possibility to leave anytime. Hence, platform worker are seen as outside the category of dependent work.

Third, there is **no social dialogue in the platform work sector.** Nevertheless, traditional social partners follow the topic informally and focus their attention on legal regulations and framework within the collaborative economy. Employee representatives – trade unions – see the structural obstacles for new types of workers to join the unions. They claim that their presence across all sectors and lack of possibilities to identify the workers makes any organizing attempts hard to pursue. Employers see no need to collectively bargain even in their traditional sectors since there are no higher-level collective agreements and little to no company level collective agreements in accommodation and transport sectors, with the exception of healthcare.

Fourth, unlike in other states, **attempts to be organized come from the employers' side** (Uber in the National Union of Employers; Uber in ITAS) **and not from the workers side**, who report almost no interest to organize themselves. This inclusion of platform provider into the traditional structures of industrial relations are met with surprise and some employers expressed their concern over the potential fragmentation of representation. On the workers' side, only informal discussion on social media and one civic association in accommodation sector were reported. While during the individual interviews, respondents did not see a potential to organize and represent themselves, this view shifted during the focus group exercise, where majority of respondents agreed that such representation may be helpful in the future.

What are the next steps for Slovakia?

The natural next steps should follow the lines of gaps identified in this research. First, Slovakia should adopt a national strategy for the platform work. Second, it should clarify legal status of workers in the platform economy, including their roles and responsibilities towards the local and state authorities. Third, with ever growing number of people working for the new types of online platforms, Slovakia should start to gather data on platform workers which would allow for further research and improvement of the working conditions

in the sector. Lastly, it is necessary to start the discussion between the state and the platform providers and include them into the policy-making processes in Slovakia.

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Annex

Table A1. Examples of Facebook groups for platform workers

Name of the Facebook group	Platform	Link
Uber vodiči - Bratislava	Uber	https://www.facebook.com/groups/931611143621648/
AirBnb- Community Slovakia	AirBnB	https://www.facebook.com/airbnbslovakia/
Airbnb hosts	AirBnB	https://www.facebook.com/airbnb.hosts.forum/
Taxify vodič bratislava	Taxify	https://www.facebook.com/groups/TaxifyVodicBratislava/



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