

BACKGROUND PAPER

Mapping Platform Work in *Czechia*

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EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy is a non-profit, non-partisan, and independent think-tank focusing on European integration and cohesion. EUROPEUM contributes to democracy, security, stability, freedom, and solidarity across Europe as well as to active engagement of the Czech Republic in the European Union. EUROPEUM undertakes original research, organizes public events and educational activities, and formulates new ideas and recommendations to improve European and Czech policy making.

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About the project

This paper was produced within the framework of *The Platform Revolution*, an eight-partner research initiative funded by **Stiftung Mercator** and coordinated by EUROPEUM. The project seeks to advance fairer conditions for platform workers in the Visegrád Four and Western Balkans regions by examining national contexts, fostering a network of organizations engaged in platform work research, and promoting evidence-based policy change.

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1. Characteristics of platform work

1.1. Features of platform work

Platform work in Czechia has been growing rapidly in the past years. This expansion was largely driven by Uber's entry into the country in 2014¹. Almost a decade later, Czech workers can access over 95² online labor platforms,³ both Czech and international, offering a wide range of services. Popular international platforms include Bolt, Wolt and Uber, whereas prominent national platforms include Grason.cz (on-location services)⁴, Epopstavka.cz (crafts)⁵, Hlídačky.cz (childcare services) and Doučuji.eu (private tutoring).

Overall, while online work is more widespread among the Czech population, on-location platform work tends to be more substantial in terms of earnings and hours worked.⁶ According to a European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) survey

¹ Mariya Aleksynska, "Digital Work in Eastern Europe: Overview of Trends, Outcomes, and Policy Responses," International Labour Organization, May 25, 2021, <https://www.ilo.org/publications/digital-work-eastern-europe-overview-trends-outcomes-and-policy-responses-1>.

² This estimate is based on research conducted in 2023, which compiled a database of platforms operating in Czechia based on a methodology developed by De Groen et al. (2021). See Willem P. De Groen, *Digital Labour Platforms in the EU: Mapping and Business Models: Final Report* (Publications Office of the European Union, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.2767/224624>. The Czech study identified platform work based on the criteria of Czech ownership or localization. If the platform is not operated by a Czech natural or legal person, the platform must include a Czech-language website with all key information available in Czech to be included into the study. The list was completed through desk research and in-depth interviews with representatives of digital work platforms. Platforms listed as operating in the Czech Republic but not meeting the criteria above were excluded. Hence, the total number of platforms Czechs can access might be higher. For an overview of the platforms see Jana Váňová and Soňa Veverková, "Digitální pracovní platformy a platformová práce v České Republice," Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs, 2023, <https://www.rilsa.cz/clanek/digitalni-pracovni-platformy-a-platformova-prace-v-ceske-republice/>.

³ Váňová and Veverková, "Digitální pracovní platformy"; Jan Drahokoupil, "Collection of Factsheets on Online Platforms and Platform Work," Friedrich Erbert Stiftung, 2023, <https://futureofwork.fes.de/news-list/e/new-report-collection-of-factsheets-on-online-platforms-and-platform-work.html>.

⁴ Grason offers various on-location services including hostesses, couriers, waiters, cashiers and storekeepers.

⁵ Epopstavka offers services for customers looking for craftsmen to complete various tasks, such as car repairs or house painting.

⁶ Agnieszka Piasna, Wouter Zwysen, and Jan Drahokoupil, "The Platform Economy in Europe: Results from the Second ETUI Internet and Platform Work Survey (IPWS)" *ETUI Working Paper*, 2022. Agnieszka Piasna, Wouter Zwysen, and Jan Drahokoupil, "The Platform Economy in Europe" (ETUI, 2022), <https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4042629>.

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conducted in 2021, online clickwork—short computer-based tasks like data entry, sorting, transcription, or participation in paid online surveys—is the most widespread type of platform work in Czechia. The survey found that around half of Czech platform workers had engaged in clickwork in 2021.⁷ However, clickwork remains a low-commitment, low-income activity for most workers. Of the remaining platform workers, the survey states that 17% reported experience with on-location

work (handyman work, cleaning, babysitting and tutoring), whereas 13% were active in delivery work. Remote professional work—translating, software, marketing and graphic design—accounted for 10%, while transport and other freelance services comprised 6% each.

For most ETUI survey respondents, platform work is a supplementary income source with limited earnings and time investment. However, delivery and remote professional work show more substantial income and time commitment. According to the survey, both delivery⁸ and remote professional workers earn about 25% of their annual income from platform work.⁹ Remote professional work is relatively uncontroversial, as many workers in this category rely on multiple channels, not just platforms, to find clients.¹⁰ Delivery and taxi services, on the other hand, are more contentious and salient in the policy debate, with workers considered at risk of precarity and below-standard working conditions. Most self-employment workers in this category show characteristics of dependent work, raising concerns about widespread bogus self-employment.¹¹

⁷ The percentage of clickworkers include both occasional participants, who may have completed only a few tasks, and regular workers, who engage in clickwork more consistently over time. In addition, workers sometimes engage in multiple types of platform work, meaning there is some crossover between different task categories.

⁸ According to the 2021 survey, delivery workers earn a median of €427 per month while working 25 hours a week.

⁹ Piasna, Zwysen, and Drahokoupil, “The Platform Economy in Europe”.

¹⁰ Aleš Kroupa, Jana Váňová, and Soňa Veverková, *České digitální pracovní platformy* (Research Institute for Labour and Social Affairs, 2023). https://katalog.vupsv.cz/fulltext/vz_532.pdf.

¹¹ Kroupa, Váňová, and Veverková, *České digitální pracovní platformy*.

1.2. Prevalence of platform work

Estimates about the prevalence of platform work remain difficult due to the limited publicly available data.¹² Nevertheless, it is estimated that 5% of Czechs worked for a platform in 2021, with about 1% relying on it for most of their income.¹³ However, there are substantial geographical differences regionally. With its high urbanization and GDP per capita, Prague's capital region shows the country's highest share of platform work. Approximately 9% of residents in the Prague region have worked for platforms, constituting the principal occupation for as much as 5%.¹⁴

Meanwhile, rural and industrial regions (Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics, NUTS 2), like Southwest (*Jihozápad*),¹⁵ Moravia-Silesia (*Moravskoslezsko*),¹⁶ and Central Moravia (*Střední Morava*)¹⁷, report the lowest uptake (around 2% according to the 2021 ETUI survey).¹⁸

¹² The lack of regulation, absence of official statistics, and untransparency of online platforms make precise estimates about the extent of platform work difficult. While data is collected by online platforms, it is often not publicly accessible. For this reason, this paper relies on the 2021 IPWS ETUI survey, which provides the most recent and reliable data on platform work in Czechia. Agnieszka Piasna, "Precariousness in the Platform Economy," in *Faces of Precarity* (Bristol University Press, 2022), 130–45.

¹³ Kroupa, Váňová, and Veverková, *České digitální pracovní platformy*.

¹⁴ Wouter Zwysen and Agnieszka Piasna, "Juggling Online Gigs with Offline Jobs: How Local Labour Markets Are Driving the Growth in Internet and Platform Work," ETUI Working Paper (2023), <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4401054>.

¹⁵ The Southwest region has the lowest population density in Czechia. In line with earlier research, its rural character likely offers fewer opportunities for platform work. Across countries, platform work is concentrated big cities and metropolitan areas. While the effect is stronger for on-location work, also online work tends to be clustered in and around big cities. Urban spaces provide a favorable environment for the platform economy because digital-mediated exchanges thrive on population density, close physical proximity, and the socio-economic specialization found in urban areas. Fabian Braesemann et al., "The Global Polarisation of Remote Work," PLOS ONE 17, no. 10 (2022): e0274630, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0274630>; Niccolò Cuppini, Mattia Frapporti, and Maurilio Pirone, "When Cities Meet Platforms: Towards a Trans-Urban Approach," Digital Geography and Society 3 (January 1, 2022): 100042, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.diggeo.2022.100042>; Urzì Brancati, Carmen, Andrea Pesole, and Enrique Fernández-Macías. New Evidence on Platform Workers in Europe: Results from the Second COLLEEM Survey. EUR 29958 EN. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2020, <https://dx.doi.org/10.2760/459278>.

¹⁶ Moravia-Silesia is a historically industrial region with an economy that heavily focuses on manufacturing.

¹⁷ Central Moravia and Moravia-Silesia's low GDP per capita could hold back demand for platform work services in these areas. However, GDP is not a sufficient factor. Despite having the lowest GDP per capita in the country, the Northwest (Severozápad) NUTS 2 region reports a significantly higher share of platform work (5%). Further research should explore the socio-economic factors that may contribute to the higher prevalence in this region. Zwysen and Piasna, "Juggling Online Gigs with Offline Jobs".

¹⁸ Zwysen and Piasna, "Juggling Online Gigs with Offline Jobs".

1.3. Platform worker demographics

While the Czech platform worker demographic is diverse, the 2021 ETUI survey shows they are, on average, significantly younger,¹⁹ more educated,²⁰ and over 50% male (58%) compared to the working-age population.²¹ Gender disparity is significantly more pronounced among those relying on platform work as their primary occupation—85% were men in 2022.²² However, gender distribution varies by sector. Across the EU, women dominate in on-location care services, while men are more prevalent in transport.²³ Furthermore, platform workers are more

likely to be self-employed or unemployed—using platforms as a quick way to earn income during job searches.²⁴ Finally, while migrant workers are generally overrepresented in platform work across EU states,²⁵ this is not the case for Czechia.²⁶ Crucially, the profile of platform workers is constantly evolving. With platforms increasingly mediating existing professions rather than creating new jobs, the difference between the platform workers' demographics and the general working population is slowly disappearing. For example, Czech apps initially

While the Czech platform worker demographic is diverse, gender disparity is significantly pronounced among those relying on platform work as their primary occupation.

¹⁹ The 18-34 age group is more likely to be involved in platform work compared to older age groups (35+ years).

²⁰ The 2021 ETUI IPWS survey shows that 74% of platform workers have a secondary degree, compared to 69% of people who have never worked over the internet. Furthermore, 23% of platform workers—and 34% of those relying on platform work as their main occupation—possess a college degree, compared to 22% of non-platform workers. However, it should be noted that this is aggregated data comprising various types of platform workers, and education levels can vary based on the type of platform work.

²¹ Kroupa, Váňová, and Veverková, *České digitální pracovní platformy*.

²² Kroupa, Váňová, and Veverková.

²³ Piasna, Zwysen, and Drahokoupil, "The Platform Economy in Europe".

²⁴ Kroupa, Váňová, and Veverková, *České digitální pracovní platformy*.

²⁵ Including in Central European states like Hungary and Slovakia.

²⁶ There may have been demographic changes resulting from the migration of Ukrainians to Czechia following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. However, there is no reliable data to assess the magnitude of this impact. Kroupa, Váňová, and Veverková, *České digitální pracovní platformy*; Wouter Zwysen and Agnieszka Piasna.; "Digital Labour Platforms and Migrant Workers," ETUI Working Paper, 2024, <https://www.etui.org/publications/digital-labour-platforms-and-migrant-workers>.

developed for platform economy tasks, like house cleaning, have now evolved into traditional cleaning services similar to those of professional agencies.²⁷

2. Characteristics of platform work

A 2023 Czech study based on interviews with platform workers reveals that autonomy and flexibility are the main driving factors for engaging in platform work in Czechia across social groups.²⁸ However, strategies slightly differ depending on the age group. Younger workers aged 18-35 often use this type of work to support themselves during their studies or to combine multiple jobs. For those in the 34-54 age group, platform work particularly appeals to mothers managing childcare or individuals who prioritize flexibility as a long-term work strategy. The latter group, often with extensive work experience and no family commitments, choose platform work as one of several economic activities they engage in—typically in a self-employed capacity. Meanwhile, workers aged 50+ often turn to platform work as a flexible alternative to unemployment and a way to supplement their retirement income or support themselves during a job search.²⁹

In addition, the potential for supplementary income is a major motivating factor, particularly in lower-wage countries.³⁰ A 2019 study covering 13 European countries found that Southern, as well as Central and Eastern European countries—including Czechia—lead in relative income generation through online platforms. Lower national wages in these regions compared to Northern or Western Europe make

Among those aged 34-54, platform work particularly appeals to mothers managing childcare.

²⁷ National Training Fund, “Impact of Shared Economy on a Position of Employees and Proposed Changes in Legislation. Paper Prepared for the Association of Independent Trade Unions,” 2017, https://ipodpora.odborny.info/soubory/dms/wysiwyg_uploads/bba5a5c7366cdaf3/uploads/2_impact_shared_economy_2017_en.pdf; Aleksynska, “Digital Work in Eastern Europe.”

²⁸ Kroupa, Váňová, and Veverková, *České digitální pracovní platformy*.

²⁹ Kroupa, Váňová, and Veverková.

³⁰ France, UK, Czechia, Slovenia, Finland, Estonia, Spain, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Italy, the Netherlands, and Switzerland.

platform work a more appealing or essential choice.³¹

3. Country-specific impact: benefits and challenges

Whilst platform work offers extra earnings and flexible work, it also engenders income uncertainty,³² precarious employment, and non-compliance with labor legislation.³³ In addition, delivery work, in particular, often resembles dependent work disguised as self-employment.³⁴ Bogus self-employment, commonly known as the *Švarc* system, is all but a new problem in Czechia. Whilst illegal, the *Švarc* system—named after a construction entrepreneur who fired all his employees and rehired them on a self-employed basis³⁵—has been a persistent issue since the 1990s.³⁶ The rise of platform work, however, amplifies the problem and confronts the government with a phenomenon characterized as a “turbo *Švarc* system”.³⁷ This model exposes workers to even greater income insecurity than the traditional *Švarc* system, as they are compensated on a task-by-task basis.

The Czech legal system does not recognize or define online platforms as a separate category, nor does it provide specific regulations.

In addition, a study based on interviews with platform workers points out that low awareness about the implications of self-employment, like tax and social

³¹ Kaire Holts et al., “The Platformisation of Work in Europe. Highlights from Research in 13 European Countries,” *Foundation for European Progressive Studies*, 2019, <https://feps-europe.eu/publication/686-the-platformisation-of-work-in-europe/>.

³² Kroupa, Váňová, and Veverková, *České digitální pracovní platformy*.

³³ Váňová and Veverková, “Digitální pracovní platformy”.

³⁴ Delivery work, in particular, is more likely to fulfil criteria of control like setting price rates, rules on uniforms, supervision of quality through algorithms, ability to accept and reject tasks, or the restriction to work for a third party or platform. Kroupa, Váňová, and Veverková, *České digitální pracovní platformy*.

³⁵ “Union Leader Warns Revival of ‘Švarc System’ Would Mean Death of Social State,” *Radio Prague International*, February 10, 2009, <https://english.radio.cz/union-leader-warns-revival-svarc-system-would-mean-death-social-state-8587590>.

³⁶ Kroupa, Váňová, and Veverková, *České digitální pracovní platformy*.

³⁷ Soňa Veverková, “Enhancing the Social Partners and Social Dialogue in the New World of Work in the Czech Republic,” in *The New World of Work* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2021), 155–87, <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800888050.00010>; Silke Maes, “EU Platform Workers’ Directive: A Test for Regulating the Future of Work”, EUROPEUM, February 1, 2023, <https://www.europeum.org/en/articles-and-publications/policy-paper-eu-platform-workers-directive-a-test-for-regulating-the-future-of-work/>; Jaroslav Šulc, “Je pro odbory sdílená ekonomika spíše šancí, nebo rizikem?,” in *Pohledy 2/2017: Očekávaný ekonomický vývoj v roce 2018* (Prague: ČMKOS, 2017).

security obligations, makes it hard for platform workers—particularly students—to evaluate job offers.³⁸ A final challenge concerns the recruitment of migrants for low-paid and excessive hours, with reports of foreign drivers in Prague working under non-visa regimes.³⁹ While these jobs can be lucrative—also for the drivers—they involve long hours with no protection, leaving workers vulnerable in cases of unpaid wages.⁴⁰

4. Current national regulatory landscape and EU criteria

4.1. Classification of platform work

The Czech legal system provides little regulation for platform work. For example, it does not recognize or define online platforms as a separate category, nor does it provide specific regulations. Furthermore, unlike in countries such as France,⁴¹ there is no dedicated register for online platforms.⁴² The status of an online platform largely depends on its activities. For example, platforms involved in brokering employment or temporary agency work are classified as employment agencies.⁴³

About 95% of Czech platform workers were estimated to be self-employed in 2023.⁴⁴ Whilst in some cases, platforms conclude work performance agreements, employment contracts are a rarity.⁴⁵ While self-employed workers are entitled to unemployment benefits, they are not covered against accidents at work (particularly problematic for delivery and taxi workers), and only a few (17%)

³⁸ Váňová and Veverková, “Digitální pracovní platformy”.

³⁹ Monika Martišková and Adam Šumichrast, *Bargaining for Working Conditions and Social Rights of Migrant Workers in Central East European Countries (BARMIG), National Report: Czechia*, Central European Labour Studies Institute, 2022, <https://ideas.repec.org/p/cei/report/46.html>; Petra Dvořáková, “Spolupráci pracovních agentur s odbory se zatím nedaří,” *denikreferendum.cz*, July 6, 2017, <https://denikreferendum.cz/clanek/25609-spolupraci-pracovnich-agentur-s-odbory-se-zatim-nedari>; Martin Pokorný, “Uzbek s ukrajinským řidičákem, polským autem a vízem. Takto jezdí taxi v Praze Bolt,” *Měsíc.cz*, January 10, 2020, <https://www.mesec.cz/clanky/uzbek-s-ukrajinskym-ridicakem-polskym-autem-a-vizem-takto-jezdi-v-praze-bolt>; Váňová and Veverková, “Digitální pracovní platformy”.

⁴⁰ Both issues extend beyond the realm of platform work and can also affect (self-employed) workers in other sectors.

⁴¹ Under the act, online platforms have to provide identification details of the platform operator, along with the user's identification information, their status (whether private or professional), and the total gross amount of transactions conducted by the user in the previous calendar year. France, *Amended Finance Act*, no. 2016-1918, December 29, 2016, art. 24, <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/eli/loi/2016/12/29/2016-1918/lo/texte>.

⁴² Váňová and Veverková, “Digitální pracovní platformy”.

⁴³ Drahokoupil, “Collection of Factsheets”; Czech Republic, *Act No. 435/2004 Coll., on Employment* (2004).

⁴⁴ Kroupa, Váňová, and Veverková, *České digitální pracovní platformy*.

⁴⁵ Kroupa, Váňová, and Veverková.

are covered by voluntary sickness insurance.⁴⁶ Despite the precarious situation of some platform workers, there are currently no associations representing them.⁴⁷ The lack of trade union involvement, in turn, further complicates the control of working conditions.⁴⁸

4.2. Current policy debates

While the introduction of online platforms went largely uncontested, the rise of platform taxi services, especially Uber, sparked major policy debates. Protests from taxi drivers led to bans in Prague and Brno, resulting in a series of court rulings.⁴⁹ In Prague, the legal battle ended in 2018 with a memorandum setting standards for Uber drivers in the country,⁵⁰ while Brno saw changes with the 2020 amendment to the Road Transport Act.⁵¹

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In addition to the controversial bans on platform taxi services, tax avoidance has been a prominent issue in the policy debate surrounding platform work.⁵² A 2017 government analysis identified corporate income tax avoidance as an issue of

⁴⁶ Meanwhile, the vast majority of EU member states (21 out of 27) have a system of compulsory sickness insurance. European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, and Sonja Avlijaš, *Social Situation Monitor: Comparing Social Protection Schemes for the Self-Employed across EU 27: Focus on Sickness, Accidents at Work and Occupational Diseases, and Unemployment Benefits* (Publications Office of the European Union, 2021), <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2767/59743>.

⁴⁷ Drahokoupil, "Collection of Factsheets".

⁴⁸ Trade union presence can enhance the control of working conditions in several ways. For example, they act as watchdogs, reporting labor law violations and pushing for enforcement of regulations to prevent illegal work and exploitation. Martišková and Šumichrast, *Bargaining for Working Conditions*.

⁴⁹ The Brno regional court declared an Uber Free zone in 2017. Lukáš Hendrych, "Czech Cities against Uber, but European Court Has the Last Word," Euractiv, June 23, 2017, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/sharing-economy/news/czech-cities-against-uber-but-european-court-has-the-last-word/>.

⁵⁰ The standards for drivers included an approved license and a predetermined price for passengers. Eurofound, "Tax Memorandum Signed by Uber in Czechia", Platform Economy Database, March 7, 2022, <https://apps.eurofound.europa.eu/platformeconomydb/tax-memorandum-signed-by-uber-in-czechia-110058>.

⁵¹ The amendment changes the overall conditions and simplifies the requirements for taxi service operators. For example, it removes the requirements for a taxi sign and garage while adding new conditions, such as residence requirements for operators, and allows fare confirmations via electronic devices. Chamber of Deputies. Parliament of the Czech Republic, "Sněmovní tisk 431. Novela z. o silniční dopravě - EU," accessed January 27, 2025, <https://www.psp.cz/sqw/historie.sqw?o=8&t=431&rss-cz=0>.

⁵² Drahokoupil, "Collection of Factsheets".

concern and named Uber as a prime example.⁵³ To address the problem, a 2018 tax memorandum introduced electronic sales records to enhance tax control.⁵⁴ Since then, relations have improved significantly, and today, Uber is Prague Airport's official taxi provider.⁵⁵

4.3. EU level

The Czech government is not the sole regulator of platform work. In the next two years, the country will have to implement the EU Platform Work Directive aimed at improving platform workers' conditions.⁵⁶ It remains to be seen whether the directive, adopted in October 2024, will tackle some of the challenges platform workers face in the country. The Czech government has not been supportive of the proposal and has made several attempts to weaken it during the negotiations under its presidency in 2022, pushing back against a strong presumption of employment.⁵⁷ Their pushback raises concerns about the enforcement of the directive, especially given Czechia's past struggles with enforcing workplace regulations like the so-called *Švarc* law tackling bogus self-employment.⁵⁸

⁵³ Drahokoupil.

⁵⁴ Eurofound, "Tax Memorandum Signed by Uber".

⁵⁵ However, the requirement to either use the app or enter personal details at the kiosk has led to frustrations among passengers. Prague Airport is currently negotiating with Uber to find an alternative that caters to demand for classic taxi services alongside the app-based system. Prague Morning, "Taxi Service at Václav Havel Airport Prague Is Now Provided by Uber," September 26, 2023, <https://pragemorning.cz/uber-prague-airport/>; Expats.cz, "Classic Taxi Services Set to Return to Prague Airport after Uber Backlash," February 15, 2025, <https://www.expats.cz/czech-news/article/classic-taxi-services-to-return-to-prague-airport-after-uber-backlash>.

⁵⁶ Directive (EU) 2024/2831 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2024 on Improving Working Conditions in Platform Work (Text with EEA Relevance) (2024), <http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/2831/oj/eng>; European Parliament, "Initiative to Improve the Working Conditions of People Working in the Platform Economy," Legislative Train Schedule., accessed January 27, 2025, <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-a-europe-fit-for-the-digital-age/file-improving-working-conditions-of-platform-workers>.

⁵⁷ A worker is legally presumed to be employed rather than self-employed when at least two criteria of 'control' are present. These include control over working time, remuneration, appearance or uniforms, or exclusivity. ETUC, "Ministers Should Reject Czech Platform Proposal," 6 December, 2022, <https://www.etuc.org/en/pressrelease/ministers-should-reject-czech-platform-proposal>; Théo Bourgery-Gonse, "Member States Deal Heavy Blow to Platform Work Deal," Euractiv, December 22, 2023, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/economy-jobs/news/member-states-deal-heavy-blow-to-platform-work-deal/>.

⁵⁸ The law, amended in 2012, broadened the definition of illegal work to include dependent activities carried out outside of an employment relationship. Czech Republic, Act No. 435/2004 Coll., on Employment.

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