

Dynamics of virtual work: some reflections on measurement of digital work based on the experience with EWCS

Greet Vermeylen,
Brussels, 18 February 2016

- Established in 1975, tripartite European agency
- Eurofound's MISSION STATEMENT reads:
'To contribute to the planning and establishment of better living and working conditions through action designed to increase and disseminate knowledge likely to assist this development.'
- Policy-relevant research on working conditions, industrial relations, living conditions and management of change
- Annual budget: 20mEUR; 100 employees





Overview report

European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS)

1990/91; 1995/96; 2000; 2005; 2010; **2015**

European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS)

2003; 2007/8; 2011/12; **2016**

European Company Survey (ECS)

2004; 2009; **2013**

EurWORK

European observatory on working life

Quality of life in Europe: Impacts of the crisis



3rd European Quality of Life Survey

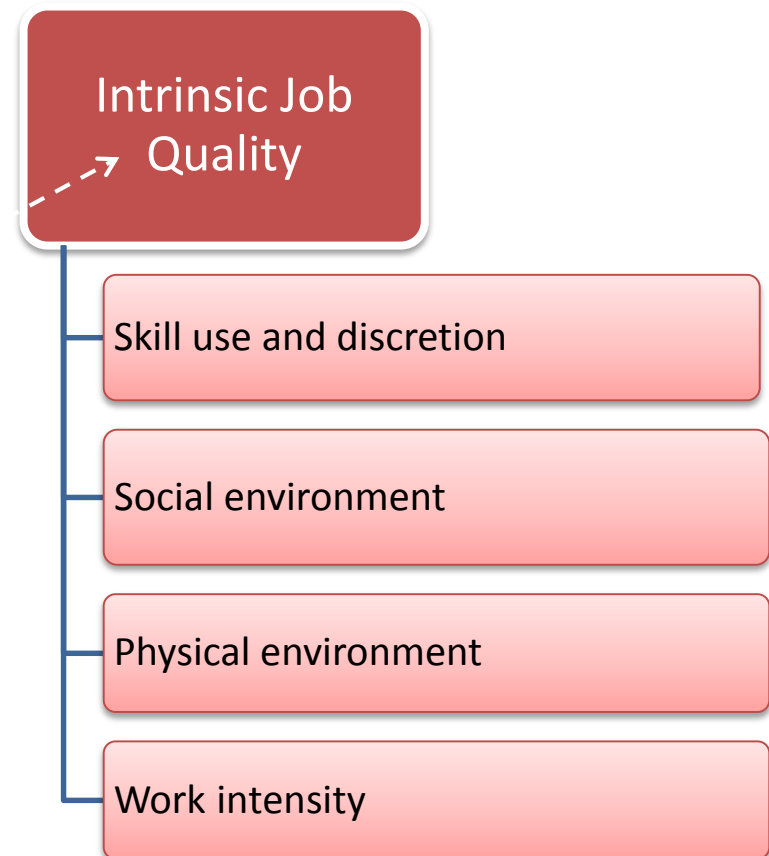


- European wide survey – 6 waves: 1991, 1995, 2000 (+01/02), 2005, 2010, 2015
- 1 questionnaire / translated in all the languages
 - 2010: 25 languages and 16 variants
- Country coverage: EU + neighbour countries
 - 6th EWCS (2015) : 35 countries: EU28, Norway, Switzerland, Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey
 - 43000 interviews in total (1000/3300 interview per country)
- Workers survey: employees and self-employed (15+) (LFS def)
 - Face to face interviews in people’s homes (45 min)
- A wide range of aspects of conditions and work and employment:
 - Demographics, job characteristics, household info (incl work in private sphere), working time : duration and organisation, physical and psychosocial work factors, place of work, work organisation, training, organisational justice, work-life balance, voice, say, health, job satisfaction, engagement, earnings
 - Revision questionnaire: with support of a questionnaire development group + Governing Board
 - Gender mainstreaming : central in reflection for revision
 - Quality process: strict quality assurance mechanisms & documentation

- Digital work:
 - Occupation and sector (isco/nace)
 - Very important to probe enough to get refined classification
 - Creative industries
 - Digital work in more traditional industries
 - Either knowledge work (whereby computer is used to do job) or computer as facilitator (eg uber etc) or both (some forms of crowd platforms)
 - Employment status and digital work
 - ICT driven forms of SE: e.g. crowd employment
 - Digital work both in self-employment as in employment
 - Both new and older forms eg free lance, crowd empl
 - Knowledge work and ICT
 - E-nomads
 - Supplemental and substitutional telework
 - Digital work as second job
 - Limitation in EWCS: we only know whether someone has a second job (occasional/regular) and working hours, but not what kind of job nor status

- Capture working conditions of workers in ‘digital work’
 - Job quality
 - refers to the potential impact of the characteristics of jobs on the well-being of workers.
 - Earnings, prospects, intrinsic job quality and working time quality
 - Adapt to workers in different empl status
 - Currently ongoing

Job quality: four indices (Green and Mostafa, 2012)



Index	Brief description of content	Items Used In Construction *
Earnings	Hourly earnings	EF10, EF11, Q18
Prospects	Job security, career progression, contract quality	Q77A, Q77C, Q6, Q7
Intrinsic Job Quality	Skill Use and Discretion (0.25) •skills and autonomy	Q61A, Q61C, Q49C, Q49E, Q49F, Q50A, Q50B, Q50C, Q51C, Q51E, Q51I, Q51O, Q24H, ef1_isced, isco_08_2
	Good Social Environment (0.25) •social support, absence of abuse	Q51A, Q51B, Q58A, Q58B, Q58C, Q58D, Q58E, Q77E, Q70A, Q70B, Q70C, Q71A, Q71B Q71C
	Good Physical Environmental (0.25) •low level of physical & posture-related hazards	Q23A to Q23I, Q24A to Q24E
	Work Intensity (0.25) •pace of work, work pressures, & emotional/value conflict demands	Q45A, Q45B, Q46A to Q46E, Q51G, Q51L, Q51P & Q24G
Working Time Quality	Duration, scheduling, discretion, and short-term flexibility over working time	Q18, Q32, Q33, Q34, Q35, Q39, Q40, Q43

Source : Green and Mostafa (2012), Trends in job quality

Earnings:

- For self-employed eg free lance, crowd employment
- Being paid a salary or fee on a regular (monthly) basis
- Economic dependency on one client
- Financial security in short (percentage of income on most important client)
- Financial security in long term (I would be financially secure if I would get sick)

Prospects:

- Contract quality (+ duration for temporary contracts)
- Being able to find a job of similar salary ... very mixed results

Working time quality:

- How to capture working time might be a problem
- Working time duration is serious issue (blurring): long working hours/ days, work outside working hours to meet work demands (if there are limits...)
- Organisation of working time: more autonomy (generally... but not for all)
- Regularity and predictability: might be issue for crowd empl
- Short term working time flexibility (being able to take an hour or 2 off for personal or family issues): usually quite easy ... (but then again, some exceptions)

Intrinsic job quality:

- Skills development:
 - usually own responsibility for SE /
 - for teleworkers/ict mobile workers: probably similar to other employees
- Autonomy :
 - probably quite high for self-employed (but degrees)
 - seen as one of the advantages for ict mobile work, but there are differences (working outside employer premises does not always give you autonomy and discretion)
- Good social environment
 - Might be a problem for both SE (crowd empl) and telework / ict mobile workers
 - For ICT mobile workers depends on work organisation and communication in company
 - Isolation is a psychosocial risk
 - (Cyber)bullying is / remains risk
- Physical risks
 - Ergonomics : might be responsibility of the worker
- work intensity
 - Pace of work and work pressure : usually quite high
 - Emotional and value conflicts

Other aspects of working conditions important to consider for digital work

- Other aspects of working conditions which might be important to capture
 - Use of technology, skills, training and employability
 - Work organisation and place of work
 - Organisational justice (fair treatment, trust etc) / recognition
 - Employee participation : voice and say
- Workers circumstances and preferences
 - Household (work intensity) and care responsibilities over the life course, health situation, skills and education, (working time) preferences
- Outcomes
 - health and well-being, work-life balance, engagement
- Employment and social protection rights
 - Contractual rights, legislation (eg health and safety, working time), social protection rights (eg sick leave and health insurance, maternity and parental leave, child allowance, unempl benefits, pensions...)
 - Representation (collective voice)
- Tasks / robotisation / IT skills, training and (digital) work content
 - Not covered or proxies in EWCS

- Previous work
 - E-nomads / working time and work-life balance / job quality
 - New forms of employment
- Ongoing work:
 - Comparative analytical report on ICT mobile work (mainly substitutional and supplemental telework) as part of joint ILO-Eurofound project and in context of bigger project on working time patterns for sustainable work
 - Overview report 6th EWCS
 - Exploring self-employment in the EU
 - Secondary analysis (capturing different groups of self-employed as well as heterogeneity)
 - Contributions from our national correspondents capturing the differences from national situations and treatment
 - Foundation seminar series on ‘the impact of digitalisation on work in the EU’ will be organised later this year (with tripartite groups)
 - Next 4 year work programme will include more work on different forms of employment, digitalisation ...

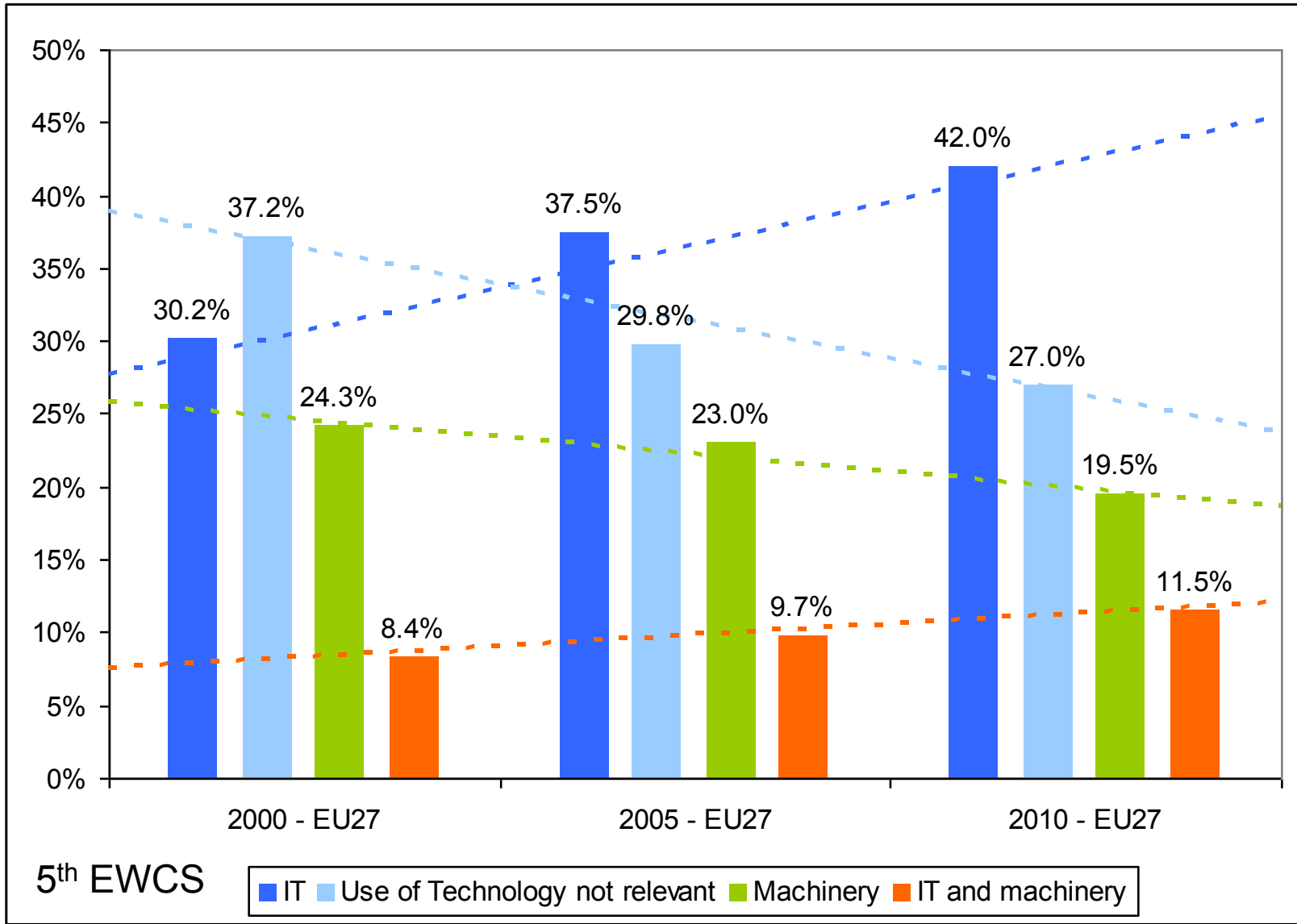
- What do we talk about when we talk about digital work?
 - Variety of situations
 - Important to map them
 - Not all of them have the same working conditions, advantages and disadvantages
- Job quality is important: short and long term implications: health and well-being, sustainability of work ...
 - Capture job quality: try and reflect on how to apply the different dimensions on different groups of workers (/digital work)
 - Employment status is important :
 - Right related to different forms of employment, in particular new forms of employment
 - Employment legislation and social protection
 - Representation of these forms of employment
- But it is not sufficient:
 - Work environment is important
 - Work organisation, employee participation (voice and say), organisational justice
 - Interaction individual and work
 - Preferences and specific circumstances throughout the life course

Thank you for your attention!

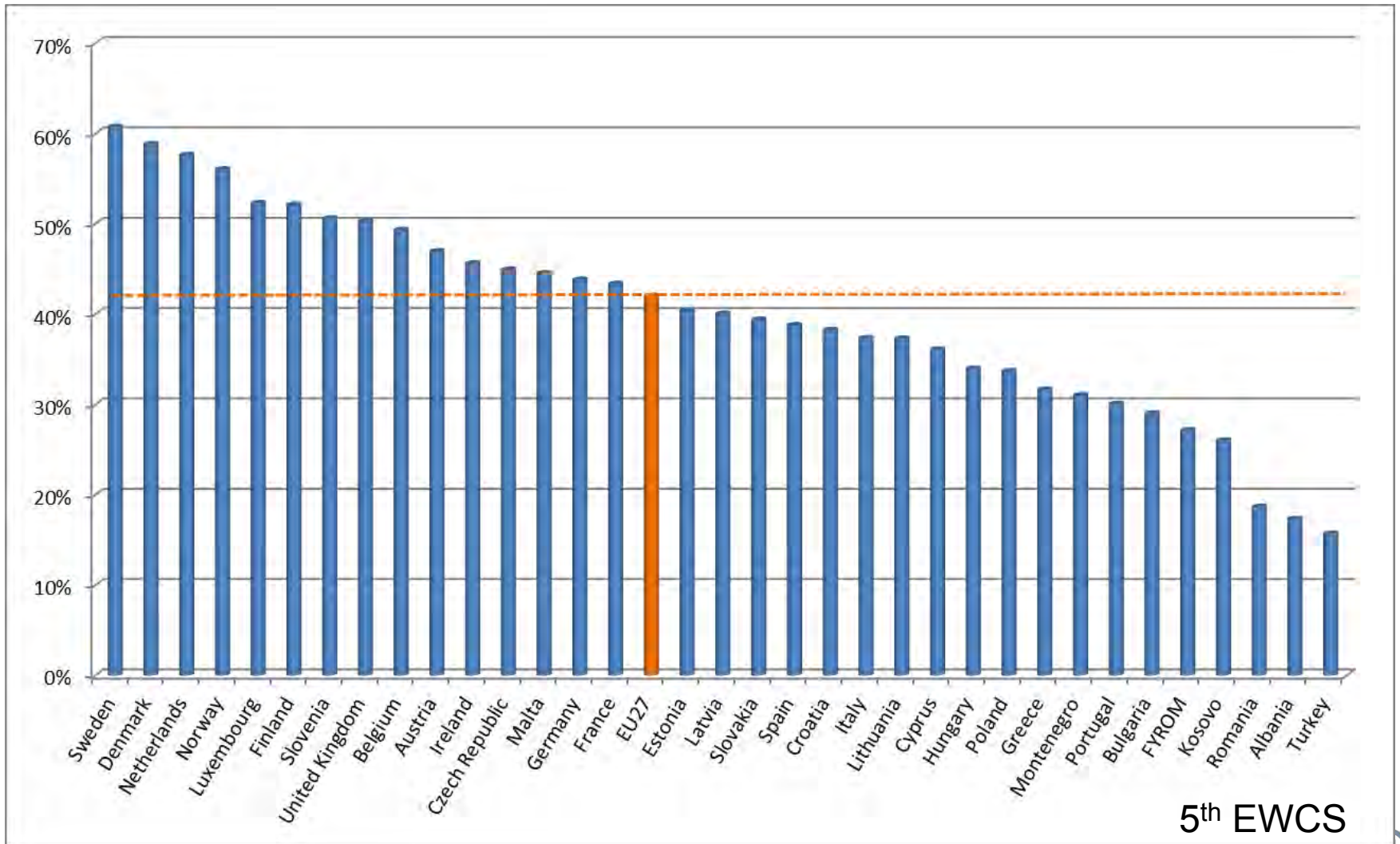
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SOME RESULTS FROM EUROFOUND PROJECTS WHICH MIGHT BE USEFUL

Some results of the survey
Use of technology, EWCS, EU27, 2000-2010,



Share of workers using ICT, 5th EWCS, 2010



5th EWCS

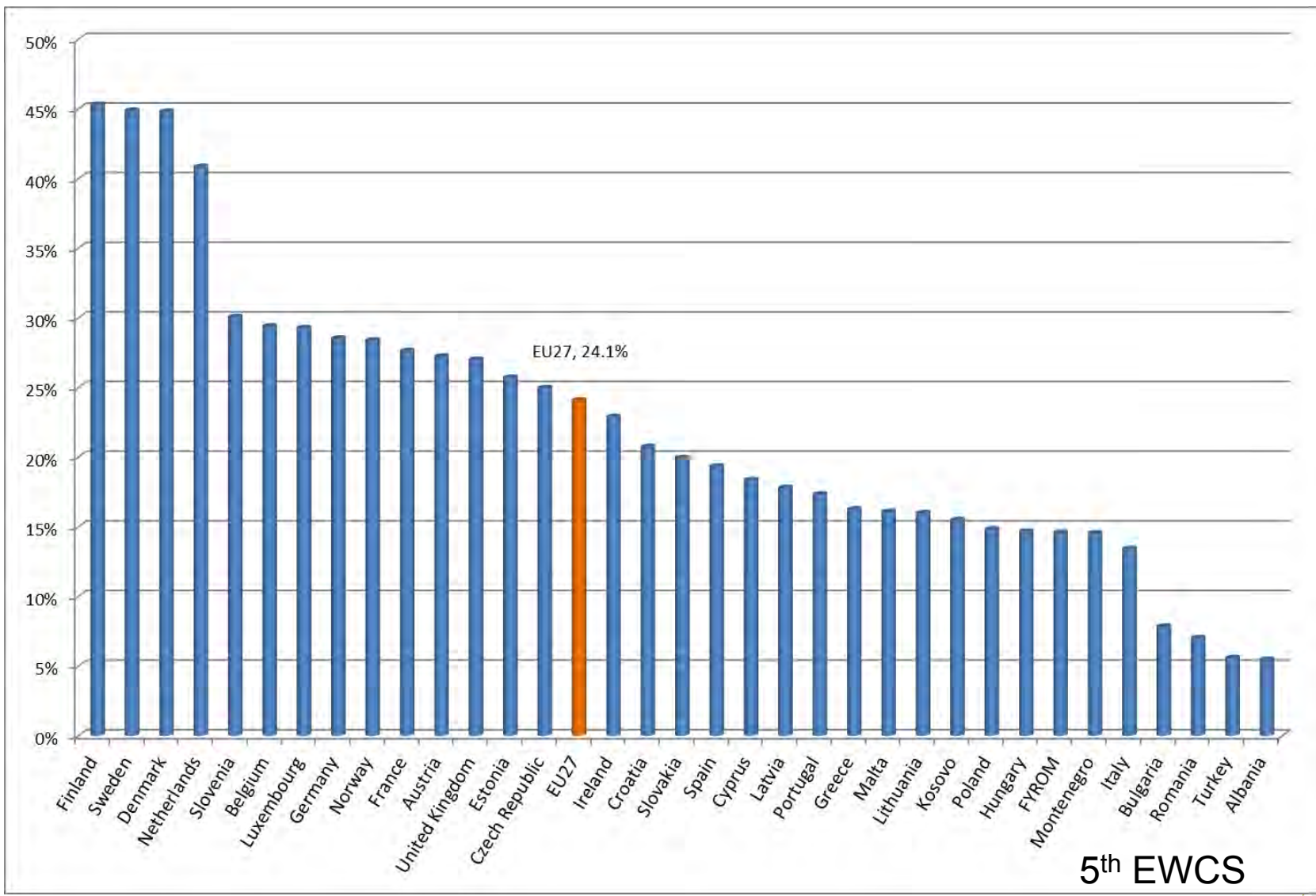
Electronic nomads - workers who:

- do not have their employer's premises (or own premises - self-employed) as main place of work.

&

- use ICT (computers, internet, e-mails) at least most of their time.

E-nomads, 5th EWCS, 2010



5th EWCS

“Telework/ICT-mobile work” is the work carried out by workers using Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) outside the employers premises.

- Who are the workers doing ICT related work outside the workplace?
- What are the implications for their working time?
- What effects does this organisation of working time have on work-life balance and health and well-being of workers?
- What measures/policies are implemented in relation to the use of ICT outside employers premises in some EU countries?
- Europe: BE, DE, ES, FI, FR, HU, IT, NL, SE, UK
- Rest of the world: Brazil, Argentina, USA, India and Japan

3 Criteria

(1) Select only employees

(2) Select only those employees who use ICT at least 3/4 of their time

Q30. Please tell me, using the same scale, does your main paid job involve...?

	All of the time	Almost all of the time	Around ¾ of the time	Around half of the time	Around ¼ of the time	Almost never	Never	DK	Refusal
A – Tiring or painful positions (TREND)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
(...)									
I - Working with computers, laptops, smartphones etc. (MODIFIED)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Source: Questionnaire of 6th European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS)

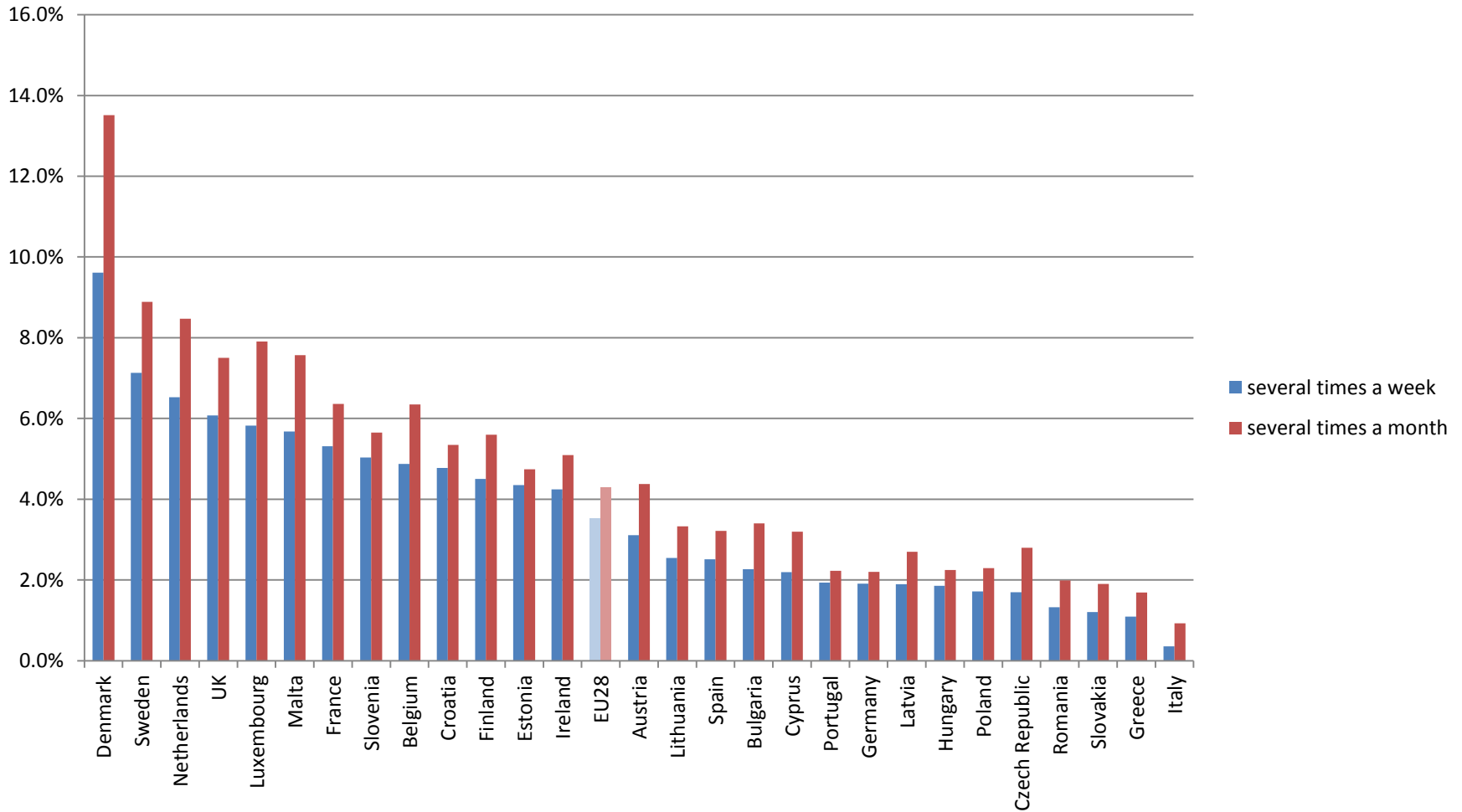
(3) Select only those employees who use work outside employer's premises at least several times a week.

Q35. Please take a look at these locations. In a moment, I will ask you how often you have worked in each location during the last 12 months in your main paid job / since you started your main paid job.

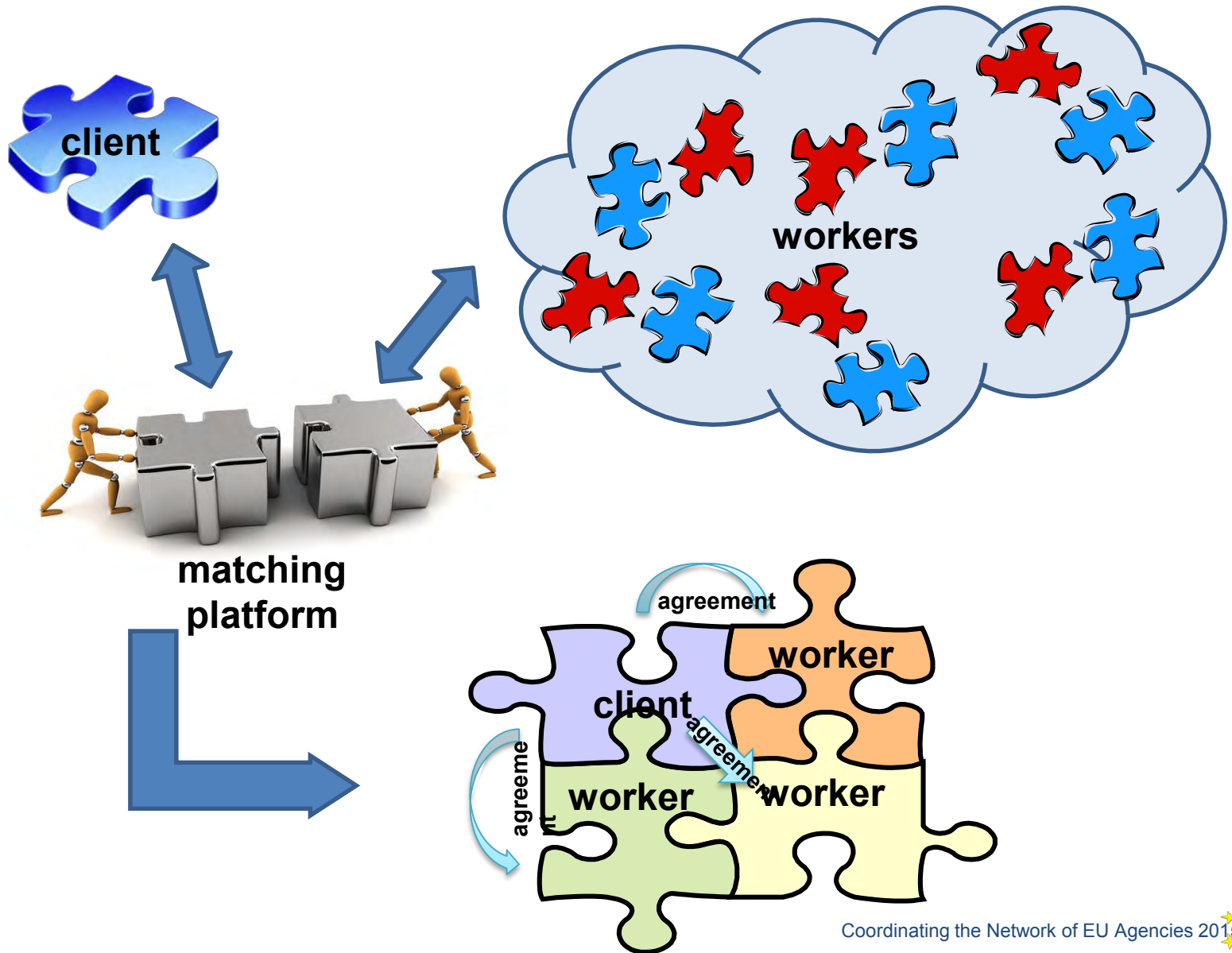
	Daily	Several times a week	Several times a month	Less often	Never	Don't know	Refusal
A. Your employer's/your own business' premises (office, factory, shop, school, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
B. Clients' premises	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
C. A car or another vehicle	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
D. An outside site (e.g. construction site, agricultural field, streets of a city)	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
E. Your own home	1	2	3	4	5	8	9
F. Public spaces such as coffee shops, airports etc.	1	2	3	4	5	8	9

Source: Questionnaire of 6th European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS)

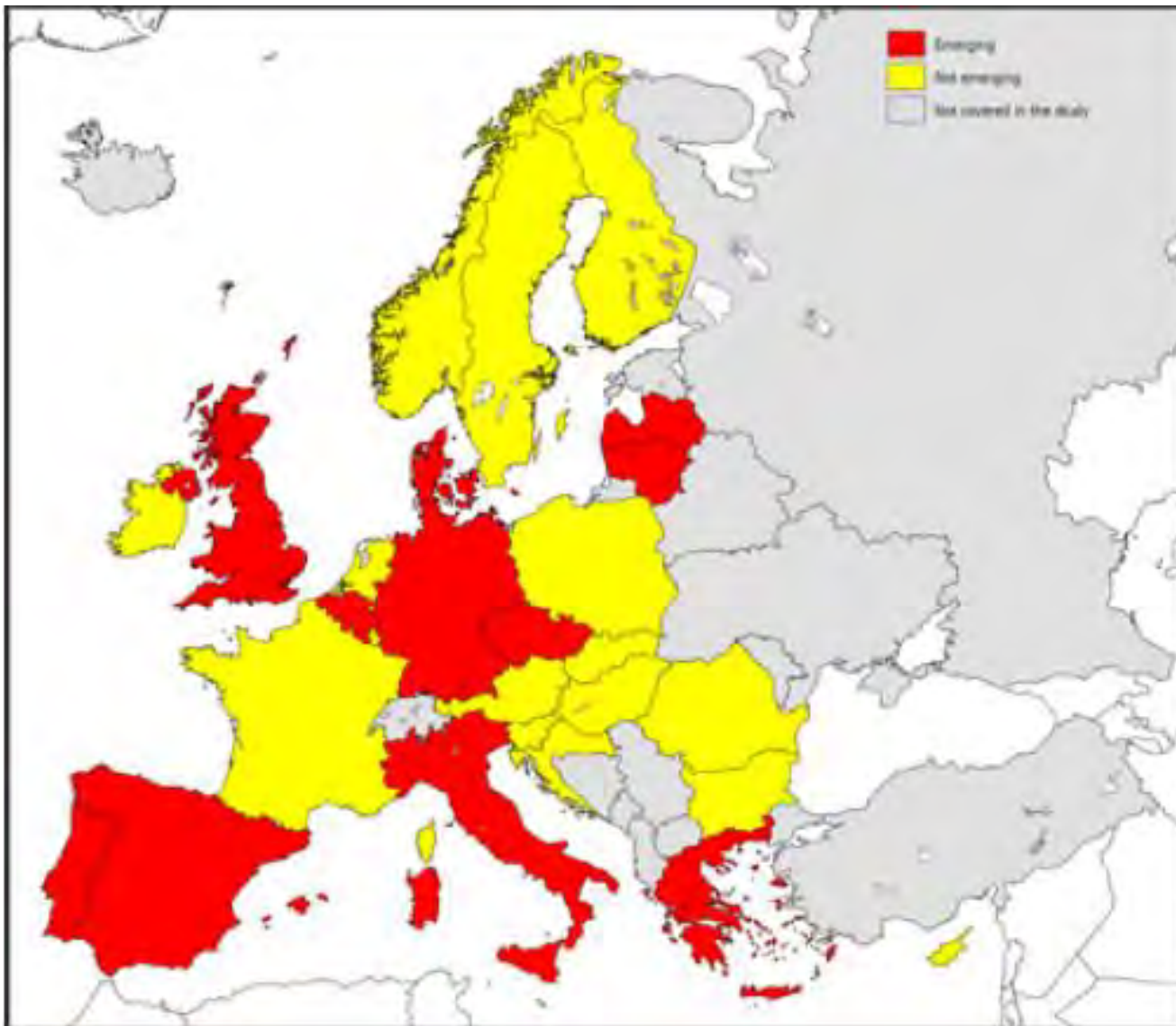
Employees doing telework / ICT-mobile work at least...



EU28 = 1528 out of 34438 respondents



- No specific legal or collectively agreed framework
- No central administration or monitoring
- Types of platforms
 - Competitions
 - Procurement
 - Worker-initiated
- Publishing fee vs. percentage of pay
- Freedom to agree on pay vs. minimum level set by the platform
- Taxation, social protection up to the worker



Source: Eurofound, based on national contributions

Positive effects	Negative effects
High flexibility	Low pay
High autonomy	Insecurity about pay
Personal productivity gains	No access to benefits
Skill development	No social protection
Improved work-life balance	Information asymmetry
	Lack of reliable dispute resolution systems
	Possibility of privacy violation
	Social isolation
	Boredom
	Stress due to need for self-organisation
	Blurring spheres of work and private life

Positive effects	Negative effects
Access to work opportunities	Orientation on tasks rather than jobs
Contribution to inclusive labour markets	Potential for 'race to the bottom' as regards quality of work
Opportunity for income generation and social mobility	Potential crowding out of standard employment
Improvement of competences	
Job creation in the platform administration	

Thank you for your attention!

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