

A Better Deal

Partnering to improve platform
work for all

Uber

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Foreword

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As COVID-19 brought European cities to a standstill over the past year, independent workers have played a critical role in continuing to move what matters. Drivers transported tens of thousands of frontline workers and are now helping people get to vaccination centres, while couriers are providing essential home delivery services for millions of people and businesses across the region.

But just as independent workers have proven themselves to be an essential part of the world around us, the pandemic has highlighted that there is still too much uncertainty about how this important type of work is classified and protected.

After taking an honest look at how our platform has benefited workers - and importantly how it hasn't - we're ready to do more and go much further.



We believe independent workers across Europe deserve better - work that offers flexible and decent earning opportunities when they want it, and protection and benefits when they need it.

That's why today we're publishing this White Paper - A Better Deal - calling on platform companies, policy makers and social representatives across Europe to come together to set a new standard for platform work.

This standard needs to recognise the value of independent work, and be grounded in principles drivers and couriers say are most important to them. It should include flexibility and control over when and where they want to work, earning a fair wage, access to relevant benefits and protections, and meaningful representation.



To make a real difference, it must also be based on industry-wide reform requiring all platform companies to offer workers standardised benefits and protections, without compromising the status of independent work.

We believe a new approach is possible - one where having access to protections and benefits doesn't come at the cost of flexibility and of job creation. We need progressive laws that recognise the value of this unique type of independent work—and pave the way for better protecting it.

We also recognise a one-size-fits-all approach isn't suitable across Europe. Better protections and

benefits for platform work will be different from country to country. And yet, Europe is about unity through diversity. We must all work together to ensure the well-being of independent workers, no matter where they work or which app they choose to use.

At a time when we need more jobs, not less, we believe Uber and other platforms can be a bridge to a sustainable economic recovery, if together with policy makers, other platform companies and social representatives we establish a better standard of platform work for all.



Digitalisation and globalisation have generated radical shifts in how we live and work that the COVID-19 crisis has only served to accelerate and amplify. At OECD, we develop evidence-based advice on how countries should respond in terms of skills policy, social protection, labour market regulation and social dialogue. This crisis has made our contribution all the more urgent given the considerable impact on jobs, incomes and livelihoods. The impact of this crisis is set to be exponentially greater than the Global Financial Crisis of 2008. An effective recovery will require intense levels of international co-operation and far greater policy coherence: a whole-of-society approach orchestrating economic, employment and social policies that address deep-rooted inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic, disproportionately impacting youth, women, temporary and migrant workers. We have both appreciated and derived substantive value from the close and intensive engagement of Uber as a partner of the OECD Forum, the OECD's multi-stakeholder community bringing policy shapers from all sectors of society together with policy makers to engage on the key challenges facing our societies. Uber's contributions to our Forum Engagement Group on the Future of Work around innovating social protection and skills recognition have made a genuine difference to promote peer learning, best practice, and help co-create actionable solutions fit for the 21st century.

The OECD Forum was created in 1999 to discuss the key economic and social challenges on the international agenda, organised alongside the main annual OECD Ministerial meeting and gathering high-level government representatives, CEOs, leaders from civil society and trade unions as well as prominent members of academia and media.



Reinforcing the social safety net for platform workers is vital for ensuring good quality work and working conditions. The platform economy is here to stay, and to take advantage of its strengths, such as service efficiency and cost reduction, we need to overcome its weaknesses. This calls for a coordinated approach where those at the forefront of platform innovations assume the responsibility that comes with creating these new forms of organizing (e.g. ensuring algorithmic transparency). Uber has come a long way and is taking proactive steps to provide workers with worthwhile benefits. This includes a private protection scheme for drivers and couriers, a COVID-19 relief fund and training programs, and other initiatives. It is crucial that we acclaim these actions and encourage companies like Uber to continue along this path. Everyone (including companies, regulators and academics) has a role to play and - most importantly - platform workers deserve a seat at the table.

Reshaping Work is a non-profit initiative headquartered in Amsterdam that was established in 2016 in order to bring different stakeholders together to jointly discuss the future of work and find ways to shape it.



There has been a global shift in the way we work. We must embrace this change, and challenge existing models and old ways of working. With entrepreneurial activity and other forms of work such as self-employment on the rise, Europe must support its citizens in taking the initiative through appropriate policies and access to finance.

To weather the COVID-19 storm, restart the economy and emerge from this crisis stronger and more resilient, the entrepreneurial spirit of Europe and its citizens must be awakened. SME Connect therefore welcomes all voluntary efforts in the private sector. We believe Uber is on the right path here. In addition to advancing new models and standards for the future of work, it also offers more opportunities for inclusivity, diversity and freedom of entrepreneurship for the benefit of the economy and consumers.

Founded in 2017, SME Connect is one of the largest European SME networks facilitating the exchange of ideas, promoting entrepreneurship, competition and innovation, and advocating for the mid-sized sector in Europe.



AXA is proud to put our customers first. In line with our payer to partner strategy, we focus on protecting all customers - regardless of age or gender. That also means all types of workers, whatever their status: employees, freelancers or independent workers. It is an exciting endeavor that requires a strong ability to innovate and adapt to the needs and expectations of each customer. We are very proud to support Uber drivers and couriers in several markets by offering protection and health cover since 2017 (first in France, then across Europe).

Present in 57 countries, AXA's 160,000 employees and distributors are committed to serving our 108 million clients. As one of the largest global insurers, our purpose is to act for human progress by protecting what matters.



As work changes, people are using multiple platforms to provide their services and earn additional income. This has created a need for a new kind of financial service built to support people who choose flexible work. At Cachet, we do exactly that - we aggregate cross-platform information related to platform-workers' working schedule and translate it into flexible insurance, and in the future into other financial services. We create efficiencies that no platform could do alone. This allows people to provide their services on the platforms they choose, for the time they want, and get tailored insurance pricing tailored. It helps platform workers maintain a work-life balance while monitoring their income and working hours.

Future frameworks need to move past rigid regulations and look at what workers need. For that, we need a framework that enables cross-sector and platform wide cooperation that will benefit workers, consumers and platforms. and create the conditions for a thriving ecosystem.

Cachet is a financial services marketplace that aggregates and enriches cross-market data from digital platforms to enable better priced and personalized coverage based on the ride hailing drivers' real work hours.

Collective.

The global pandemic has shaken the foundations of all forms of employment and accelerated the importance of flexible, independent work in our economies and societies. Unfortunately, not all independent work is “good work”, sometimes leading to a fragile financial existence without the essential safety nets and protections expected in Europe. At Collective, we are rebuilding insurance protections, financial services and other benefits to provide independent workers with an essential safety net of portable protections that enable them to thrive.

Uber’s ‘Partner Protection’ programme set a new standard of protection in 2018 and, once again, this report highlights Uber’s leadership in calling for a partnership of platforms, policymakers and other key ecosystem players to move beyond outdated employment relationships and social welfare systems. Together, we can make independent work work for everyone.

Collective Benefits are the leading insurance and benefits specialists for independent work, making it easy for companies with the right intentions to provide the right protections for their workers. Making independent work work for everyone.



The world of work is changing, with growing numbers of workers choosing independent work. Current protection mechanisms are often inadequate to fully protect all workers, exacerbating inequalities and the income protection gap. Zurich Insurance Group (Zurich) shares Uber’s commitment to improve protection for independent workers. We believe it should be easier for independent workers to protect themselves against relevant risks, and platforms could (and do) play a role in this respect. We are also looking to continuously improve our products to make them fit for the future of work. Zurich has an ongoing research collaboration with the University of Oxford to examine the potential solutions for life-long, tailored, contemporary social protection.

Zurich is a leading multi-line insurer that serves its customers in global and local markets, providing a wide range of insurance products and services in more than 215 countries and territories.

CHANCE

We believe that working as a courier provides necessary short term revenues, while allowing the flexibility to plan a future career in parallel. Both are complementary.

Chance is proud to partner with Uber Eats in order to offer its unique expertise and methodology to support couriers in defining their future professional path and take it to the next level.

Chance is a leading company providing professional training and coaching. Pioneering the emerging field of PsyTech, Chance is building an advanced career guidance system, making it affordable for all.



As a leading organisation providing flexible education in the Netherlands, especially for working professionals, we see a continuous and increasing need for professional development. Combining life-long learning with work, while maintaining a sustainable and healthy work-life balance, calls for flexible solutions. Giving people the freedom to choose when, where and at what pace to study is exactly what we can offer and what makes our cooperation with Uber a natural fit. An initiative that combines flexibility and unlocks opportunities for better working conditions, and more training and education is a step in the right direction.

Leiden Educational Institutions (LOI) is a renowned institution providing distance learning. It aims to make the difference in education by making high-quality education accessible to everyone.

OPENCLASSROOMS

Platform work is often a stepping stone for independent workers. OpenClassrooms works with organisations like Uber in order to answer the challenges that the future of work brings. By offering dedicated and tailor-made training content to independent workers, we enable them to take their next professional step. Through Uber, 2600+ lessons have been offered and 550+ certificates delivered.

OpenClassrooms is one of the largest online learning platforms in Europe, offering high quality education-to-employment programs, and career coaching services for students worldwide.



As a pioneer in the field of flexible and inclusive education, the Open University always looks to bring quality education to people whenever and wherever they want to access it. Our award-winning partnership with Uber provides higher education to eligible Uber drivers or a family member at zero cost. At a time when the cost of study is a significant barrier to upskilling, this programme offers a unique opportunity for platform workers to realise their potential and pursue degrees and other formal qualifications, with Uber covering the cost. This tailored approach removes obstacles and allows people to make the most of their day working and studying flexibly.

Policy makers, platforms and other key stakeholders have the opportunity to create a framework that will help scale such initiatives and widen access to education and training regardless of the type of work people do.

The Open University is a leading university for flexible, innovative teaching and world-leading research in the United Kingdom and in 157 countries worldwide.



It takes on average 10 years for a newly arrived person to find a job that matches their skills, during which time their talent is wasted. At Wero, we put newcomers and their skills to work for the benefit of the economy.

With Uber Eats, we want to enable new couriers to express their potential, so that they are more comfortable on the job and look to take the next step in their professional journey with confidence.

WERO is the leading recruitment agency specializing in the placement of refugees. It is a hub for employment, connecting the demands of refugees to the needs of companies wishing to diversify their recruitment.



The world of work is changing. Enterprise Nation firmly believes that up-and-coming entrepreneurs should be given every tool and resource to succeed - our partnership with Uber is already helping to expand opportunities to entrepreneurs across the UK. We are seeing more people choosing to work in this way. The trend towards independent work through side-hustles, collaboration, and full-time businesses has seen a step-change and online markets like Uber have a big role to play in that.

Enterprise Nation brings together businesses, business advisers and new entrepreneurs. It acts as a hub to promote best practices, and offers resources, expertise and connections to help new businesses grow.



Uber has been a pioneer in its commitment to fight against violence against women. We have worked together to raise awareness amongst drivers and passengers. Our latest project helps to empower women drivers, so that they can build their confidence and better cope with stressful situations. We have developed a dedicated coaching program to tackle safety issues, and share tips to manage stress and difficult interactions.

HandsAway is a non-profit organization dedicated to fighting sexism, sexual aggression and harassment in public places and public transports.



Executive summary

The COVID-19 crisis has shone a spotlight on the essential role that platform workers play in keeping cities and communities moving. It has also shown that we need to do much more to ensure independent workers have access to benefits and protections when they need them most.

Uber is a ride-hailing platform where private hire vehicle drivers (henceforth ‘drivers’) can provide trips to passengers who book them via the Uber app. Uber Eats is a food delivery platform that connects restaurants and couriers with customers ordering food via the Uber Eats app which restaurants prepare and couriers deliver. When the pandemic hit European communities in March 2020, drivers were there to help safely transport tens of thousands of health workers while public transport services were reduced or suspended. As businesses were forced to close their doors and millions of people asked to stay at home, couriers provided an essential delivery service and a lifeline for local restaurants.

Uber’s immediate priority was to help drivers and couriers stay safe, while providing assistance to those unable to work due to COVID-19. We worked around the clock to source and provide safety equipment to drivers and couriers working on the front line. We offered financial assistance to those who were diagnosed with the virus or asked by public health authorities to self-isolate, and helped drivers whose income was impacted find alternative work opportunities on and off our platform.

Despite our efforts, the pandemic has shown gaps in the social safety net which we believe platforms like Uber should help address. We want to work closely with policy makers, other platforms and social representatives across Europe to build on this White Paper, and provide people using our app to work with the support and protections they deserve without risking the flexibility they desire.

Recognising the value of flexible work

Over the past year, 600,000 drivers and couriers across Europe have used our app to access flexible earning opportunities. Between 2018 and 2020, they earned more than €12 billion, excluding tips.

Flexibility allows people to choose if, when, where, for whom and for how long they work. This means that, unlike traditional employment relationships, offering their service via platforms like Uber can fit around a person's other priorities - whether that be caring for a child or loved one, studying, or combining multiple earning opportunities at the same time. This provides access to earning opportunities for people who often find themselves excluded from the labour market.

In virtually every public survey over the last decade, this autonomy is what drivers¹ and couriers² say they value most about platform work. Research in 2018 showed that 93% of drivers in the UK partnered with Uber to have more flexibility in their schedule and to balance work and family life, while 80% of drivers preferred flexible working over fixed hours.³ These results were reaffirmed by 2020 survey results that found 89% of drivers in the UK said that flexibility was the most important reason they choose to drive using the Uber app.⁴

But flexibility should not come at the cost of peace of mind and security. Alongside the advantages that flexibility brings, we believe that independent work should also provide additional benefits and protections - more traditionally associated with employment.

Principles of good platform work

At a basic level, platform work should be available to everyone who meets the legal requirements required to perform a task. This means actively working to be an anti-racist, non-discriminatory and equal opportunities platform, issues we know those from minority, immigrant or disadvantaged backgrounds can face in the traditional labour market.

Alongside operating an open-access platform, we believe good platform work should be built around the following five pillars:

1. Flexibility

The freedom to choose if, when, where, for whom and for how long to work.

2. Protection/benefits

Access to a broad set of reliable social protections and benefits, including for sickness and injury.

3. Earnings

Fair and transparent earning opportunities.

4. Growth

Lifelong learning and development opportunities.

5. Voice

The right to be heard, with demonstrable action on feedback.

1. Uber (2020) [Consultation des chauffeurs - Édition 2020](#) - 78% of drivers

2. Uber Eats (2020), [Consultation des livreurs - Édition 2020](#) - 79% of couriers list flexibility and freedom of connection as an aspect of the app they most appreciate.

3. Oxford University (2018), [Uber Happy? Work and Well- being in the "Gig Economy"](#)

4. Uber (2020), [The Impact of Uber in the UK](#)

Since the publication of Uber’s White Paper on Work and Social Protection in Europe in early 2018⁵, we have worked hard to deliver on this vision:

- We rolled out a Partner Protection scheme in collaboration with AXA for drivers and couriers across Europe, and have provided an additional €8 million in financial support to thousands of drivers and couriers across Europe during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We partnered with leading academic, training and business skills providers across Europe to help drivers and couriers learn new skills and grow professionally. This includes working with Open University in the UK to provide free access to over 900 online courses, and with other partners across Europe, including those whose statements feature at the beginning of this White Paper.
- We launched new tools to provide more control and transparency over earnings, including an earnings estimator in France to help give drivers a clearer view of what they can expect to earn; and a tool providing drivers in France, Switzerland and the UK, and couriers in Italy, Belgium, France and the UK with additional information on the fare, distance and destination before they accept a trip. We are also testing new ways for drivers to set their own fares.

We want to do more and go much further

We believe platform workers across Europe deserve a better deal - work that offers flexible and decent earning opportunities when they want it, and

protection and benefits when they need it.

We want to partner with policy makers, other platforms and social representatives across Europe to improve platform work for all, with industry-wide standards that all platform companies must provide independent workers. This should be grounded in the principles drivers and couriers say are most important - flexibility and control, fair and transparent earnings, relevant benefits and protections and meaningful representation, in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights’ principles.⁶ At a fundamental level, we believe all independent workers deserve to earn a fair wage, regardless of the platform they choose to work on. This means ensuring all work completed on platforms is adequately compensated.

We also need new and innovative solutions to standardise and improve access to protections and benefits for independent workers, and believe reform is needed to modernise the social safety net. This could include helping platform workers pay into existing public social protection schemes or could go as far as an industry-funded portable benefits fund, allowing platform workers to accrue funds to access the protections and benefits they want—whether it’s paid time-off or to fund long-term life goals like starting a family or going to school.

However, without a clear enabling regulatory framework that recognises the value of independent work, platforms and workers across the sector are faced with an unnecessary trade-off. The current legal ambiguity on the status of independent workers makes it difficult for platforms like Uber to provide both access to flexible work and benefits and social protections to independent workers.

A positive path forward is needed to ensure that adequate protection and benefits are not

5. Uber (2018), [White Paper on Work and Social Protection in Europe](#)

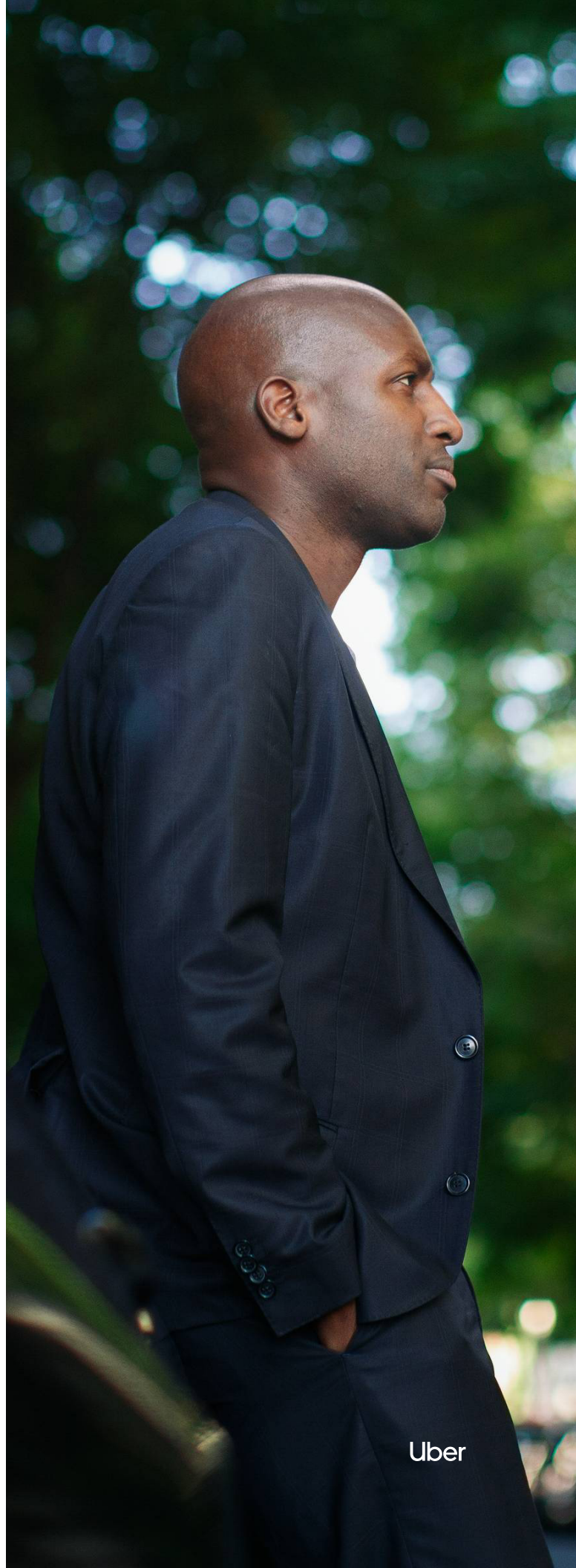
6. European Commission, [The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles](#)

incompatible with the flexibility that is so valued by independent workers today.

Securing forward-looking policies will not be straightforward. Responsibility for employment lies primarily with national governments, although the competence is shared with the European Union for its 27 Member States. To add complexity, the national courts have reached contradictory decisions on platform work, despite operating in the same legal jurisdictions. For instance, while the French Supreme Court reclassified one driver in March 2020, less than a year later, a Paris tribunal and a Court of Appeal separately ruled that drivers in France are independent, citing the freedom and lack of control inherent within Uber's model, other than when justified by safety and regulatory requirements.

We now want to work hand-in-hand with policy makers, other platforms and social representatives to create new industry standards for platform work, while ensuring it is recognised and valued at a legislative level. With the right framework, platform work can be a bridge to a sustainable economic recovery. It can provide many more people with much needed flexible earning opportunities, while ensuring they have access to relevant benefits, protections and meaningful representation.

We care deeply about the people who choose to partner with us, and we want to do more, and go much further on the issues that matter to them. We are ready to partner with the European Union, national governments and other stakeholders, including other platforms and social representatives, to drive forward reform that gives platform workers a better deal.





today represent 14% of the EU's workforce⁷ - must be strengthened. Better safety nets and protections do not need to come at the expense of the ability to work flexibly.

Platform work opportunities

The increased demand for flexible forms of work continues to transform the way people interact with the labour market across Europe. From cleaners to engineers to taxi drivers, the paid-by-the-job model is nothing new. However, the rise of digital opportunities has created new forms of independent work across a wide variety of sectors. According to a recent study, around 8% of workers in Europe “relatively frequently” undertake platform work.⁸

The COVID-19 crisis has broken a six-year long positive trend in the labour market⁹, leaving thousands in need of new earning opportunities. Recent Eurostat findings show a significant drop in hours worked, principally as a result of the economic impact of COVID-19.¹⁰ At the same time, the pandemic has revealed gaps in the system that affected independent or freelance workers - not all of whom could sufficiently and equally benefit from economic support packages.¹¹

The availability of platform work during the pandemic has provided much needed earning opportunities. Built-in flexibility meant that in many markets, people were able to switch from badly affected sectors (like private hire vehicle drivers who use Uber and similar platforms) to sectors with surging demand (like food delivery workers). A survey spanning six European countries showed that 40% of couriers started delivering with Uber Eats to augment their income



What should good platform work look like?

Flexible platform work offers vital earning opportunities for people who wish to control if, when, where, for whom and for how long they work. But we believe that the protections and benefits afforded to independent or freelance workers - who

7. Eurostat (2018), [Self-employed persons](#)

8. Pesole, Annarosa, et al. (2018), [Platform Workers in Europe](#)

9. European Commission (2020), [Commission publishes proposal for a Joint Employment Report 2021](#)

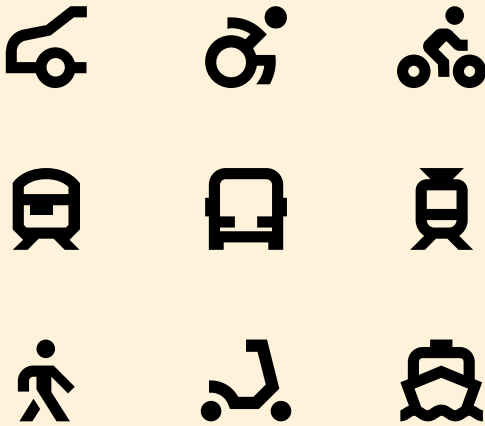
10. Eurostat (2021), [Hours of work - quarterly statistics](#)

11. The Fairwork Project (2020), [The Gig Economy and Covid-19: looking ahead](#)

as a result of COVID-19 related pay cuts or job loss.¹² In 2018, we produced a White Paper on Work and Social Protection in Europe.¹³ Since then, we have worked hard to deliver on our vision of good platform work.

Uber in Europe: making our vision a reality

Uber's business in Europe



- › Operates in 23 countries
- › More than 280,000 drivers provided trips using the Uber app in 2020
- › 22 million passengers took a trip
- › More than 370,000 couriers delivered meals using the Uber Eats app

- › 24 million people ordered meals from over 126,000 restaurants
- › Between 2018 and 2020, drivers and couriers earned over €12 billion, excluding tips

Uber's vision: the Five Pillars of good platform work

While most people continue to choose more traditional models of full- and part-time employment, platforms like Uber provide welcome alternatives: flexible opportunities that make a positive contribution to job markets across Europe.

However, it is right that all work, whether independent or not, should strive to meet the highest standards. However, it is right that all work, whether independent or not, should strive to meet the highest standards. We agree with Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, that our challenge is to “make sure that flexibility does not mean absence of rights, and absence of protections”.¹⁴ In 2017, the UK Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices¹⁵ said that “good work” should be fair and decent, with scope for development and fulfilment. Roberto Viola, Director General of DG CONNECT at the European Commission, said that platforms should be more actively involved in “the well-being, professional development and training”¹⁶ of workers who take advantage of flexible earning opportunities. Platform and gig work can deliver on this, as agreed in Reshaping Work’s Future of Work Report¹⁷, which brought together key actors in the broader sector

12. Ipsos Mori (2020), Mercury - Uber Eats: Spain, Italy, UK, France, Belgium, Netherlands [internal]

13. Uber (2018), [Work and Social Protection in Europe](#)

14. Nicolas Schmit (2020), during [Committee on Employment and Social Affairs](#)

15. Gov.uk (2017), [Good work: the Taylor review of modern working practices](#)

16. Roberto Viola (2019), [The Platform economy: revolutionising the world of work](#)

17. Reshaping Work (2021), [Advancing Quality of Work & Working Conditions in the EU](#)

including academics, business leaders (including Uber), social partners and policy makers.

We have built on these views and other studies across Europe, and extensive feedback from drivers and couriers, to set out our vision for good platform work.

Good platform work should be built on five pillars, offering platform workers:

1. Flexibility

The freedom to choose if, when, where, for whom and for how long to work.

2. Protection/benefits

Access to a broad set of reliable social protections and benefits, including for sickness and injury.

3. Earnings

Fair and transparent earning opportunities.

4. Growth

Lifelong learning and development opportunities.

5. Voice

The right to be heard, with demonstrable action on feedback.

These principles sit at the heart of our offer to drivers and couriers who choose to earn on Uber's apps. Since 2018, we have made meaningful progress to improve work on our platform across these five pillars.

Key actions since 2018

- › We implemented our Partner Protection insurance with AXA for drivers and couriers across all European markets. We were the first platform to have made this choice, providing fundamental insurance protection that includes:
 - › Payments for on-trip/at-work accidents causing permanent disability, death, hospitalisation or lost income while recovering with a temporary disability.
 - › Payments for lost income while recovering from sickness or illness and a lump-sum payment for maternity and paternity events.
- › Since the launch of the scheme, AXA has paid over 235,000 days of lost earnings, averaging €1,275 per recipient driver or courier, and €12 million for maternity and paternity events.
- › We have provided €8 million in financial support to thousands of drivers and couriers across Europe during the COVID-19 pandemic, alongside dedicating \$50 million globally to provide protective equipment such as face masks, hand sanitiser and cleaning materials.

- › We have partnered with leading academic, training and business skills providers across Europe to provide new tools for platform workers. This includes:
 - › Developing an award-winning partnership ([Guardian](#) and [Pioneer](#) awards) with the [Open University](#) in the UK to provide UberPro partners and their families with free access to 900 online courses.
 - › Running a pilot programme with [WERO](#) in France to help immigrant couriers develop language skills, while creating partnerships with [Chance](#) to help platform workers take the next step in their professional path.
 - › Launching new initiatives with [Enterprise Nation](#) in the UK to help drivers, couriers and food entrepreneurs to grow their own business.
 - › Starting a partnership in France with [OpenClassrooms](#) to offer training to drivers and couriers as well as scholarships on digital skills.
 - › Working with [LOI](#) in the Netherlands to provide tuition coverage to eligible drivers.

- › Introducing an Earnings Estimator tool in France which gives French drivers a clearer view of what they can expect to earn; and an 'Offer Card' tool giving drivers and couriers in France, Switzerland and the UK additional information on the fare, distance and destination before they accept a trip.

1. Flexibility and control are key drivers for people choosing independent work

Independent workers can choose if, when, where, for whom and for how long they work, at any given moment. While this flexibility does not suit everyone, we strongly believe that people should be able to choose the path of work that most suits their own circumstances. Platform work helps economies across Europe provide a rounded mix of earning opportunities that reflect the changing demands of people.

Some companies offer 'one-sided flexibility' where managers set specified working hours on zero-hour contracts depending on consumer demand. This provides flexibility to the employer but offers little choice to the worker. In contrast, Uber provides true 'two-way flexibility', giving drivers and couriers full control over their schedule.

Charlie has provided rides through Uber in London for the last 2 years

“I chose to drive with Uber for freedom and choice and independence. [In my previous job] I had very very long days, I had to be at a certain place at a certain time. And I had to be around until the end of that shift. I couldn’t go home, I couldn’t live my life.”

“What matters to me as an independent driver is that very word, the independence. I’m choosing my work day. If I want to start at six in the morning, I do. If I don’t want to start at six in the morning, I want to have the day off, I do.”

“It’s given me choice, freedom to make decisions, about how I live my life. So I’m not missing school plays, I’m not missing shopping trips.”

“There’s also Open University courses, they’re free! So if you want to take your life somewhere other than driving for Uber, that’s a great way to do it because you’re getting those options. So in your spare time you can do a degree, come out, end up as a psychologist. Who knows?”

Drivers and couriers across Europe greatly value this control – 64% are very satisfied with the flexibility and independence Uber provides (with 91% of them being either very or somewhat satisfied).¹⁸ We do not impose any restrictions on access to our app, other than to ensure public safety and to meet regulatory requirements.¹⁹ A driver or courier can work to their own timetable and freely provide their services via Uber’s competitors, or to an entirely different full- or part-time job. This means that, unlike in employment relationships that set rigid schedules and minimum service hours, working using the Uber app can empower individuals to fit work around their own priorities – a critical aspect of the attractiveness of this kind of work.

A 2020 survey in the UK found that 79% of drivers with caring responsibilities said that working via the platform provides them with significantly more flexibility than their past or other jobs.²⁰ According to Eurofound, this gives platform workers a “positive sense of well-being” by providing the autonomy of being able to work “exactly as much as they want”.²¹

The ability of independent workers to make autonomous choices about how they spend their time helps platforms like Uber create earning opportunities for people often excluded from the labour market, such as those with childcare responsibilities, the elderly, students or disadvantaged groups. We work actively to promote these groups; for example our partnership with [Lingoing](#) helps to get deaf and hard of hearing [drivers](#) into the workforce.

18. Uber (2021), EMEA driver and courier survey - January [internal]

19. Uber must meet a range of regulatory requirements that vary between jurisdictions, such as a requirement to ensure drivers hold valid private hire licences. In addition, Uber implements a number of safety initiatives, for example preventing drivers from undertaking more than a 10 hour shift.

20. Uber (2020), [The Impact of Uber in the UK](#)

21. Eurofound (2019), [On-location client-determined moderately skilled platform work: Employment and working conditions](#)

Diversity in Uber

Diversity is one of our greatest assets. The right to equal treatment and opportunities, regardless of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, is a key underpinning principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights²² and a priority for the European Commission.

Uber's platform creates equal independent work opportunities, particularly for those from minority²³, immigrant and disadvantaged backgrounds or with disabilities who have commonly struggled to access the traditional labour market. Uber can act as a springboard for these groups, providing an interim step on a journey towards a new career. A study showed that 36% of couriers using the Uber app in France are doing so while searching for another professional opportunity.

We are also committed to promoting gender diversity. A 2018 IFC report found that women ride-hail drivers value flexible work - 82% of Uber's female drivers in the UK cited "I can work when I want" as the top reason for becoming a ride-hail driver. However, the report also found that women drivers are disproportionately discouraged by a lack of social protections - 29% believe that a lack of benefits stops more women from becoming ride-hailing drivers.²⁴



We want to play our part in addressing this: our our International Headquarters in Amsterdam has been accepted into the [UN Women's Empowerment Principles](#) community, demonstrating our commitment to women's equality and increasing the number of women who can take advantage of the economic opportunity provided by platform work.

Our annual global People and Culture²⁵ Report underlines the actions we are taking to rid our platform of racism and promotes the diversity which Uber aspires to and our drivers and couriers reflect.

22. European Commission, [The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles](#)

23. Over half of drivers partnering with Uber in the UK come from a minority background. Uber (2020), [The Impact of Uber in the UK](#)

24. IFC (2018), [Driving Toward Equality: women, ride-hailing and the sharing economy](#)

25. Uber (2020), [2020 People and Culture Report](#)

Prioritisation of accessibility on our platform does not stop with drivers and couriers. We also work to ensure that Uber is as accessible as possible for passengers. We continue to innovate to provide customers with services which are convenient, safe and affordable - be it ordering a wheelchair accessible vehicle and specialised driver assistance through UberWAV²⁶ or facilitating additional assistance for older, less mobile and disabled individuals or those who must rely on assistance dogs via Uber ACCESS (available in the UK²⁷, France or Portugal²⁸).

Easy access to flexible work opportunities can also bridge the gap to a new job for the unemployed or temporarily unemployed. More than a quarter of couriers using our app in Europe were long-term unemployed prior to earning with Uber, rising to almost half in some markets (49% and 54% in Italy and Spain respectively).²⁹

In Portugal, 17% of active couriers are 25 or under, despite this age group only representing around 7% of the active labour force, and despite youth unemployment being over three times higher than the average rate. The flexible income that platform work offers can also provide entrepreneurs with the time and space to develop their business ideas.³⁰ The European Economic and Social Committee recently recognised these points, stating that “platforms contribute as much to job creation and innovation, flexibility and autonomy for workers, as to ensuring

income for workers (often supplementary) and allowing vulnerable people to access employment”.³¹

Over the last two years, we have continued to provide even more control to people using our app to work, including giving drivers in France, Portugal and Switzerland additional information on the fare, distance and destination before they accept a trip. Regular consultation has helped us identify and deliver the changes our drivers and couriers want to see.

2. Platform work should also offer reliable social protections

While flexibility and control is the key attraction for most of those choosing platform work, people also deserve to feel secure in their jobs and know they are able to provide for their families.

Independent workers often face gaps in social protection provisions. A 2018 study showed that while the flexibility of Uber’s model meant that drivers had higher levels of well-being than the wider London workforce, they also had higher levels of anxiety, mirroring other research that shows that working for oneself or owning a business is generally associated with a heightened experience of negative emotions such as anxiety and stress.³²

But pushing people towards traditional employment models is not the answer. Employment relationships are intentionally rigid, designed to match the number of employees on a payroll with the size of a business. Uber’s business model, on the flip side, reflects constantly fluctuating demand. A push towards employment would mean platforms like Uber would have to restrict the flexibility that is so valued by drivers and couriers today.

26. Uber, [UberWAV](#)

27. Uber, [Uber Access and Assist](#)

28. Uber, [Uber Assist: mobilidade acessível para todos](#)

29. Ipsos Mori (2020), Mercury - UberEats Couriers, Global Report

30. National Bureau of Economic Research (2020), [Gig Economy and new business foundation](#)

31. EESC (2020), [EESC recognises benefits platform work brings the economy](#)

32. Oxford University (2018), [Uber Happy? Work and Well- being in the “Gig Economy”](#)

Instead, social protection systems for platform workers should provide adequate benefits and protections, while maintaining the advantages of flexibility.³³ This means that, as supported by the European Commission³⁴, independent workers would be able to choose the type of work that fits their needs, without risking their independence, while being able to rely on an adequate social safety net.

Over the last two and a half years, Uber has led the way in providing additional benefits and protections to independent workers using our platform. Our Partner Protection insurance with AXA launched in June 2018 and provides (at no cost) a range of insurance coverage including sickness, injury, and maternity and paternity payments for drivers and couriers across Europe. In the Netherlands, for example, it offers drivers up to €1,650 to replace lost earnings from on-trip injuries that prevent them from working, and up to €825 to replace earnings in the case of sickness or injury sustained while not using the Uber app.³⁵ Uniquely amongst our competitors, these protections apply to both couriers and drivers on and off the job across Europe.

AXA provision - 2018 to present

- › 58,000 claims made through the partnership
- › 40,000 sickness or off-trip injury claims
- › Amounting to 235,000 days of lost earnings paid to drivers and couriers

33. Dara Khosrowshahi (2020), [I am the CEO of Uber. Gig Workers Deserve Better](#)
34. European Commission (2020), [Mutual learning workshops on access to social protection for non-standard workers and self-employed](#)
35. Uber (2021), [Policy Summary: Partner Protection Policy for Uber Partner Drivers, Netherlands](#)

- › A further €12 million paid for 11,000 maternity and paternity claims

Aziz used AXA when he contracted COVID-19 in 2020

“Being off for 21 days when you are self-employed is very complicated, bills keep coming in and if you do not pay them, they pile up. So, I heard about partner protection. It’s an AXA policy I get for free when I drive with Uber. I filled out a declaration on the AXA website. Then they contacted me again and it took a few days to get financial compensation. So it’s good to be independent but having protection like this is essential.”

Semere used AXA paternity cover when his youngest child was born

“Being a father of, now, three, I love the flexibility it gives me. When I found out my wife was pregnant, I was very happy. I thought I would take time-off, but I was also a little worried about the financial side of it. The great thing is, Uber, they have paternity insurance protection. I went through the claim process and then the insurance company paid me directly. It was a great relief to me. This enables me to stay home without worrying, and enjoy the new addition to the family... Family comes first in my life, I am grateful to have that kind of support.”

But if platform workers are to be protected throughout their working life, we must go further. As recommended by Reshaping Work,³⁶ we need new solutions to standardise and improve access to protections and benefits for all independent workers. This could include helping earners pay contributions to public safety nets or go as far as an industry-funded portable benefits fund, allowing platform workers to accrue access to cash payouts to spend on the benefits and protections they want. Whether it's paid time-off or to fund long term life goals like starting a family, buying a house or investing in education.

Together, we must build new solutions for the modern labour market. Everyone should play a part, whether through government-mandated and proportional contributions to existing frameworks or by complementing what exists with industry-funded solutions to fill gaps in protection and savings.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic and stay at home guidance has been a particular challenge for drivers. Alongside dedicating \$50 million globally to provide protective equipment, we have also provided financial assistance to drivers and couriers, distributing €8 million to those in Europe who were infected or were asked to quarantine (this financial assistance was in addition to our AXA Partner Protection insurance).

COVID-19 has also demonstrated the additional benefits that flexible and agile working models can bring. While demand

for private hire rides fell as people moved less, our food delivery platform Uber Eats expanded to provide a vital lifeline to people and food businesses of all sizes. Consequently, where local laws allowed, drivers who up until now had only partnered with Uber's rides app were able to seamlessly switch to provide their services via Uber Eats, supplementing their income during this tough time. We also directed drivers to opportunities with partner organisations, whether that be working with **Save the Children** in Spain to deliver essential packages to vulnerable families or encouraging drivers to sign up to earn with **Ocado** delivering groceries in the UK.

3. Platform work should provide fair and transparent earning opportunities

Earning opportunities that allow people to combine multiple workplaces simultaneously and choose if, when, where, for whom and for how long they work are a unique aspect of platform work. People who choose to earn flexibly with Uber are able to fit work around their schedules and personal needs instead of having to show up for a specific shift (or be penalised if they don't turn up). Some choose to make Uber their primary income source, while others log-on for just a few hours a week to top up their income. Between 2018 and 2020, drivers and couriers using the Uber app in Europe earned over €12 billion.

36. Reshaping Work (2021), [Advancing Quality of Work & Working Conditions in the EU](#)

Earnings vary depending on whether workers are active at times when, and in places where, demand is highest. Various studies have assessed how much drivers earn on the app:

- In 2018 a study by academics at Oxford University³⁷ found that around half of drivers saw higher earnings after partnering with Uber and calculated that in London, the median income of Uber drivers is £11 per hour net of costs and tax.³⁸
- In France in 2018, drivers earned an average €24.81 per hour which represented an estimate of €9.15 per hour net of costs and tax, or a monthly net income of €1,617 (after all vehicle and tax costs were deducted). This is over €200 more a month than the average earnings for self-employed workers in the transportation sector.³⁹
- In Switzerland in 2019, drivers earned an average CHF 20.84 per hour net of Uber's services fee and costs. Drivers in Switzerland use the app very flexibly, with a quarter of drivers using it for less than 10 hours per week, and eligible drivers only choosing to go online in 33 weeks of the year.

While flexible earning opportunities help drivers and couriers support themselves and their families, many have told us that earnings are not always transparent or consistent trip-to-trip.

Also based on this feedback, we want to partner with the industry to advocate for changes to the way platform workers are paid. At a fundamental level, we believe all independent workers deserve to earn a fair wage, regardless of the platform they choose to work on.

But we can't do this alone. That's why we're calling on policy makers and social representatives to build a framework for flexible earning opportunities, with industry-wide benefits and protection that all platform companies must offer to independent workers.

This could include universal standards such as the Proposition 22 legislation recently introduced in California. Or it could be based on a European model of social dialogue where platform workers, policy makers and industry and social representatives work together to set earning principles for the industry. For example in Italy, the food delivery industry and the General Labour Union signed an [agreement](#) confirming the self-employed status of couriers, while requiring the industry to provide working standards for couriers, including provisions about earnings, injury, third-party insurance and training.

Critically, whatever the earning model, it must be based on an industry-wide level playing field. This would ensure all independent workers have a consistent earnings baseline, whichever platform they choose to work with.

We also believe it is the industry's responsibility to be more transparent on earnings. In response, we introduced an Earnings Estimator tool in France which gives French drivers a clearer view of what they can expect to earn; and a tool giving drivers in France, Switzerland and the UK additional information on the fare, distance and destination before they accept a trip. We intend to introduce this tool gradually to new markets when we can be certain it will not negatively impact local service provision.

37. Oxford University (2018), [Uber Happy? Work and Well-being in the "Gig Economy"](#)

38. Ibid, p.2

39. Uber (2019), [French income report 2019](#)

4. Good platform work should enable professional and personal growth

While flexibility, earnings transparency and social protections should form the bedrock of platform work, we firmly believe that all workers, regardless of employment status, should have access to opportunities to learn and grow.

This is a vital component of workers' ability to reinforce existing skills and develop new ones. Lifelong learning not only benefits the worker but has wider societal benefits through improved productivity and earning potential.

As the world of work changes rapidly around us, we need to rethink traditional models of learning and development and provide the opportunity for everyone to reskill and upskill.⁴⁰

Simon Tindall, Head of Skills and Innovation at
The Open University

Whether drivers and couriers are using the Uber app as a stepping stone back into a full-time career or as a primary source of income, we want to empower them to take the next step. Earning with Uber requires skills that are valuable in the wider job market, including being entrepreneurial, having good people and language skills, and being comfortable with technology. A Stanford University report showed the value of experience for ride-hailing drivers: a driver who has completed more than 2,500 trips earns 14% more per hour than one with fewer than 100 trips.⁴¹

40. Trainingzone and The Open University (2020), [Closing the opportunity gap. The economic drivers for learning as a benefit](#) p.3

41. Cody Cook et al., Stanford University (2020), [The Gender Earnings Gap in the gig](#)

But we also want to provide new skills and opportunities to learn. Over the last two years, we have worked with a number of partners to create bespoke programmes that support drivers and couriers in this way.

In brief - learning programmes

- **The Open University** provides our Uber Pro⁴² drivers and their families in the UK with fully-funded access to 900 online courses, helping them achieve their development goals in a flexible learning environment. This initiative removes the financial barrier to higher education - almost 50% of those who signed up said they had experienced barriers to entering higher education prior to joining the programme.
- In partnership with **OpenClassrooms** in France, we offer drivers and couriers access to training programmes with a strong focus on digital skills.
- We partner with **LOI** in the Netherlands to provide tuition coverage to eligible drivers as part of the Uber Pro programme.

[Economy: Evidence from over a Million Rideshare Drivers](#)

42. Uber Pro is our customer loyalty program that recognises outstanding drivers. The scheme provides rewards to long-standing drivers.

- › The pilot partnership with **WERO** aims to help migrant couriers integrate into French society through language courses.
- › The pilot partnership with **Chance France** offered the opportunity to couriers to take the next step in their professional path through digital coaching.
- › In France, we have also partnered with **Babel** and **Jobready** on skill development and soft-skills development. This has helped unlock opportunities for drivers with other organisations like French Bus Service RATP.
- › We have partnered with **Enterprise Nation** in the UK to help drivers, couriers and food entrepreneurs grow their own business.

In the final few months of 2018, I left my full-time job to drive with Uber and focus on my start-up. Going into self-employment was very scary. After driving for a month, I realised how amazing it really was. Driving with Uber has massively helped me fund my start-up and given me the flexibility needed to focus on my new venture.

Nicholas is working with Enterprise Nation to pursue his business ambitions alongside driving with Uber

5. Platform workers should be able to exercise their right to make their voices heard, and should know that their feedback will be acted upon

We believe in the right of workers to make their voices heard. True worker representation allows platforms to understand the concerns of those who choose independent work and makes platforms accountable for addressing them. People who choose to earn with Uber care about a wide range of issues that have a real impact on their day-to-day experiences, from clarity over deactivation criteria to training and health and safety.

Our technology and open access model means that the population of drivers and couriers on the platform is highly changeable, with complex and varied interests. In this context, diverse forms of representation are needed that can be tailored to meet workers' different needs. We have worked with drivers, couriers and third parties to ensure that those using the Uber apps can share their feedback with us in multiple ways:

 **Regular large scale surveys**

 **Webinars**

 **Round table discussions**

 **Driver and courier associations and unions**

 **Driver hotlines and calling campaigns**

Workers should be able to express their views on platform guidelines and practices to the platform, and platforms should provide processes, channels and/or forums as appropriate for those discussions to occur... Platforms should ensure that workers have access to transparent and accountable mechanisms, where applicable, for resolving disputes with users/clients and with other workers within a reasonable timeframe.⁴³

World Economic Forum charter of principles for good platform work, endorsed by Uber, Deliveroo, Grab and other platforms

Uber regularly surveys all drivers and couriers across Europe to ensure workers on the platform have a forum to provide their feedback. We publish the results of these surveys, so that we can be held accountable for following up on them. Regular consultations not only help us understand more about how drivers feel about key issues but also how they want to communicate them to Uber.

Given the diverse and evolving nature of the workers who use our platform, there is a clear preference for direct channels that better respond to individual needs. 33% of European workers on our platform indicate that the Uber app is their preferred feedback route. Drivers or couriers chosen as independently organised worker representatives are preferred by 7% of drivers and couriers.⁴⁴

Platform work with true “two-way flexibility” is fundamentally different from an employment relationship. Working standards, health and safety provisions or training requirements need to be adapted to a reality where workers can choose when,

where, for whom and for how long to work, or even not to work at all. In this context, social dialogue needs to integrate these differences, not eliminate them, if it is to improve working conditions for platform workers and preserve the flexibility they value.

We are committed to acting on the feedback we receive. We also welcome discussions with all stakeholders who wish to improve work on our platform. We have regular constructive conversations, either individually or with industry associations, with drivers and couriers, and other social representatives across Europe, with recent engagement in Spain, Italy and France.

Case study: France

In 2019, Uber launched the first of its annual large scale consultations to canvass driver⁴⁵ and courier⁴⁶ opinion on topics that are important to them, including their daily activity, earnings and social protection. The 2020 edition encompassed a digital survey and 95 virtual and physical roundtables, reaching over 15,000 couriers and 7,500 drivers in France.

The results confirm the value drivers and couriers place on independence and flexibility, and highlight specific topics where drivers and couriers expect Uber’s support, including earnings, safety, improved assistance and training offers.

Uber is committed to taking concrete steps to answer these issues. We are testing a functionality enabling drivers to set their own price, and separately

43. World Economic Forum (2020), [Charter of Principles for good platform work](#), p.3

44. Uber (2021), EMEA driver and courier survey - January [internal]

45. Uber (2020), [Consultation des chauffeurs](#)

46. Uber Eats (2020), [Consultation des livreurs](#)

partnering with a financial institution to offer financing solutions to drivers. We are extending opening hours for driver helplines and improving our communications around decisions to deactivate accounts and opportunities to appeal against our decisions.⁴⁷ And we are doubling down on our training and jobs opportunities to reaffirm the role of platform work in career paths.

We regularly communicate and involve drivers and couriers in the steps we take throughout the year.

Case study: Spain

In Spain, Uber has regular, proactive dialogue with couriers. In July 2020, along with other delivery platforms, we signed a good practices agreement⁴⁸ with the main courier associations, supporting proactive self-regulation and dialogue that will help to improve working conditions for couriers in Spain.

The industry association has recently carried out an economic impact study and survey.⁴⁹ 81% of respondents indicated flexible working hours as their main motivation to use these services. 77% of them saying that quick and easy access to income that platform work provides was the reason for joining.

47. Uber (2020), [Keeping Cities Moving](#)

48. Adigital (2020), [Sectoral Good Practices Agreement](#)

49. Adigital (2020), [Economic Importance of Digital Delivery Platforms and the Spanish Courier Profile](#)

A new regulatory framework should protect us, but without exposing us... Forcing a change in our status would deny us the freedom and flexibility that is so valuable to us⁵⁰

An open letter to the Spanish government from the three main courier associations, June 2020

We received over 25,000 answers to our most recent pan-EU driver and courier surveys. We are committed to responding to the feedback received with concrete actions by the end of the year.

While we are finalising the results of these surveys, we continue to look to launch the below changes based on concerns that drivers and couriers consistently share with us:

- More control over which users or partners they provide services to
- Improved transparency on what they can expect from the service Uber provides and on what may lead to a suspension of the service
- More information on how to prepare for making the most of the service before using the platform and on how to improve when on the platform

50. AAR, APRA y Asoriders (2020), [Carta abierta](#), p.2



→
**Achieving a
vision of good
platform work
for all**

COVID-19 has revealed the fundamental inequity of our current employment system where some workers get benefits and protections, while others do not enjoy the same levels of rights and guarantees. Legal frameworks are forcing platforms and workers to make a choice between flexibility and security at precisely the moment when both are needed.

Why employment is not the answer for platform workers

Traditional employment models - with the set hours, benefits and protections they provide - are suitable for many businesses and individuals and will remain the norm in most parts of the economy. However, this does not suit the flexible, dynamic relationship that Uber has with drivers and couriers. Uber was designed as a completely open-access, flexible model where workers can come and go as they please. Passenger demand goes up and down throughout the day, and Uber's model means that drivers can connect freely to meet that demand or choose a quieter time of day if they wish. This is also why self-employment has long been prevalent in the taxi and private hire vehicle industry. In 2019/20, 83% of licensed taxi and private hire vehicle drivers in England were self-employed, and one in four worked part-time.⁵¹

Being self-employed is also what attracts many workers to Uber. In a 2018 study, 81% of drivers said they would prefer to remain independent contractors rather than be classified as an employee and lose the ability to set their own schedule.⁵² A recent survey in the UK found that a majority of drivers would rather retain the right to set their own hours, even if the alternative was 20% higher pay.⁵³

In a world where independent work was outlawed, Uber would only have full-time jobs for a smaller fraction of drivers, and a smaller driver pool would result in Uber operating in fewer cities and towns than today. Trips would likely be more expensive and less reliable. And drivers would be required to work a certain number of hours, losing the flexibility they have today.

51. Department for Transport (2020), [Taxi and Private Hire vehicle statistics, England, 2020](#)

52. Oxford University (2018), [Uber Happy? Work and Well-being in the "Gig Economy"](#)

53. Uber (2020), [The Impact of Uber in the UK](#)

Impact of reclassification in Geneva

In Geneva, a series of court rulings have resulted in Uber Eats having to change its operating model, resulting in couriers being prohibited from accessing the app as independent contractors. Instead, anyone working on Uber Eats had to become an employee of a “fleet operator” – a delivery company that hires couriers as traditional, scheduled employees.

This transition had an immediate impact on the size of the market. 77% of couriers - 1,000 individuals - were put out of work.⁵⁴ The combined effect of a lack of available couriers, increased delivery prices and degradation of the delivery experience (with average delivery times increasing by six minutes) led to a 30% reduction in orders in just three weeks, heavily impacting restaurants.

The severity of this impact is confirmed by the fall in the growth rate of the Uber Eats market in Geneva when compared to similar Swiss cities. While Geneva saw trip growth of just 8.5% between August 2020 and January 2021, Uber Eats trips in Lausanne - where couriers continue to operate as independent contractors - grew by 68.5%.

Encouraging societies to move beyond a binary model of employment will create tangible benefits for workers and economies. It can allow governments to give all workers the rights they deserve and the protections they need. We see a world in which individuals easily access earning opportunities. Where they can build and move benefits entitlements from job to job, combine several forms of work if they want to. Where platforms like Uber contribute to a system of portable benefits - pots of funding that allow independent workers to withdraw cash for the benefits they want, all based on the hours of work they put in. Where platforms and governments cooperate to provide lifelong learning accounts that allow people to take up the learning programmes that suit their needs and goals.

[Some young people prefer] to be their own boss and [are] committed to the freedom of self-entrepreneurship... we must support people who want to start a business, become self-employed, and respect the diversity of working methods.

Élisabeth Borne, French Minister of Labour, Employment and Integration (Speech to French Parliament, September 2020)

Improving access to social protections for all workers

In many jurisdictions in Europe, the legal status of platform workers is being debated by politicians and decided in courts where the provision of benefits or training is a key factor in employment classification claims. These discussions are inevitable in systems where workers are forced to choose between being an employee with more benefits but less flexibility or an independent worker with more flexibility but lacking a social safety net.

54. Alison Stein, Uber (2020), [Independent couriers' reaction to employee reclassification: learnings from Geneva](#)



We believe another approach is possible. We encourage policy makers to look at working conditions, and expand access to social protections and skill training for all, irrespective of status - as enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights.⁵⁵

Several countries are already taking this approach. In 2019, Portugal reformed its independent worker social security coverage by making it more accessible to workers, providing protections in line with those that full-time employees benefit from, and revising contributions to adjust them to how independent workers choose to work and to how much they actually earn.⁵⁶

55. European Commission, [The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles](#)

56. Portuguese Government (2019), [Social Security Contribution System](#)

In France, the 2019 Compte Personnel de Formation⁵⁷ reform means that every single worker, employee or self-employed has access to a personal fund to access vocational training. And in California, Proposition 22 was passed in state elections in November 2020, classifying platform drivers in the state as independent contractors rather than employees. This means drivers can receive additional benefits, while still taking advantage of flexibility.

Case study: Regulatory reform in India - social security for all

In India, a labour market reform⁵⁸ adopted in 2020 will open up access to social security for all workers, irrespective of their classification. The reform simplifies and updates complex labour legislation to take account of new and evolving forms of work that have emerged over the past decade. The new legislation defines gig and platform workers as being outside the traditional employer-employee relationship, and establishes a Social Security Fund with mandatory financial contributions by platforms. The reform aims to bring clarity to work arrangements and increase social protections for gig and platform workers, while boosting flexible job opportunities and the country's economic growth.

57. OECD (2020), [Individualising training access schemes: France – the Compte Personnel de Formation \(Personal Training Account – CPF\)](#)

58. Ashima Oban and Akanksha Dua (2020), [India: The Social Security Code, 2020](#)

Key provisions related to gig and platform workers:

- **Social Security Fund:** Platforms' mandatory financial contribution is pegged at 1 to 2% of platform service fees excluding federal taxes.
- **Social Security Schemes:** These provide for benefits such as life and disability cover, accident insurance, health and maternity benefits, old age protection and childcare. The schemes will be implemented by the federal government and be linked to government welfare schemes, ensuring economies of scale and maximising benefits for gig and platform workers.
- **National Social Security Board:** The federal government will set up a Board to make decisions on the deployment of the Social Security Fund and the social security cover of platform work.
- **Minimum eligibility criteria:** Workers are eligible for benefits if they have been engaged with one platform for a minimum of 90 days over 12 months. The schemes recognise multi-app working.

These types of laws extend access to social protections or training to independent workers, without attempting to change their classification. They allow workers to benefit from immediately accessible and flexible work opportunities, while allowing them better protections.

A win-win regulatory environment will allow us to do more

People rightly ask why the solution relies on government intervention and why Uber does not do more for workers as well. In short, we do more for workers than a majority of other platforms, as illustrated throughout this report. However, platforms like Uber are limited in their actions by the current legal framework of employment across Europe.

Each time a company provides additional benefits to independent workers, the less independent these workers could become in the eyes of the courts and - without a clear enabling framework - companies will be less incentivised to grow their operations.⁵⁹ European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas Schmit told the European Parliament that “we need more clarity within existing labour law categories”.⁶⁰

As a result, platforms like Uber who provide independent work cannot provide all the support we want to give individuals who choose to offer their services through our apps, lest they lose the very flexibility that led them to Uber in the first place. ‘Clear rules on what is and isn’t true independence - that can be used by workers, platforms and the authorities without having to rely on the courts whose interpretation of the rules may differ - would benefit all. It would allow platforms to know how they can offer their services and workers to freely decide how they want to work and whose services to use.’⁶¹

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed these fundamental flaws and shows that we need to change the status quo, so every worker is supported.

59. Reshaping Work (2021), [Advancing Quality of Work & Working Conditions in the EU](#)

60. Nicolas Schmit (2020), during [Committee on Employment and Social Affairs](#)

61. See an example of the codification of such clear rules in the [European Court of Justice April 2020 decision in the B v Yodel Delivery Network Ltd case](#).



Rising unemployment or under-employment rates make it clear that workers need the immediate and flexible earning opportunities provided by platforms. However, the ongoing health and economic crisis has demonstrated the need for a broader and deeper safety net for independent workers.

Achieving a lasting solution to the challenges posed goes far beyond Uber. These are issues that predate platform work and are of fundamental importance to independent work. Although we can make progress on our own, we will be more effective if we work together with policy makers, other platforms and social representatives to create a common approach

among the industry - as called for by Commissioner Schmit and Commission Executive Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis.⁶²

Clarifying the legal status of platform workers would allow platforms to go further to improve working conditions and access to protections.

Clarifying the labour and employment legal frameworks should not come as a blank check. It should only be granted when platforms respect workers' independence - complete freedom to set their hours, ability to choose unilaterally if, when, where and for how long they connect to the platform, and total freedom to use multiple apps, including competing ones, or to provide their services via other channels. We know that different markets and regions will have different circumstances.

Solutions will need to be tailored to meet country needs, and reflect European social models and workers' rights, promoting the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights.⁶³

We don't want any company to tell us when we can and cannot work. We want to have control. Working with platforms allows us to have it, and if we were full time employees, this would disappear.

An open letter to the Spanish government from the three main courier associations in Spain (June 2020)

62. Nicolas Schmit (2020), written response to [Parliamentary Questions 8 July 2020](#).

63. European Commission, [The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles](#)

In a post-pandemic Europe, we have a responsibility to rebuild our economies stronger and provide platform workers with a better deal. Platform work can continue to be synonymous with immediately accessible and flexible earning opportunities. It can also mean secure, quality work that allows individuals to build skills for their future.

This White Paper showcases some of the efforts we have made to that effect, and we hope it triggers a conversation to build the policies and corporate action platform workers deserve.

The call to action

Platform work is not a zero sum game. With the right framework, it can offer a win-win to those who choose to pursue it - a fair wage, access to relevant benefits and protections, and meaningful representation, while maintaining flexibility and control. We care deeply about the people who choose to work through our platform, and we want to do more and go much further on the issues that matter to them. We want to partner with policy makers, other platform companies and social representatives to agree on legal frameworks which would enable us to do so.

We want to work with the European Union, national governments, other platforms and social representatives to get to a better deal for independent workers.

