

FLEXIBILITY WITH ACCOUNTABILITY: A GIG ECONOMY REPORTING FRAMEWORK FOR GOVERNMENTS

ABSTRACT

The World Bank estimates between 154 and 435 million online gig workers globally (Datta et al., 2023). For most of them, the boss is an algorithm: it assigns their tasks, defines payment, allows workers to be ranked and can deactivate their account. While the gig economy has opened the labour market for millions and lowered barriers, it also exposed workers to weak social protection, excessive working hours, payments below minimum wage and opaque management exercised by algorithms.

ILO Convention 193, adopted in June 2026, raised a global standard for decent work in the platform economy. The European Union Platform Work Directive and Spain's Riders' Law are here to show that regulation is possible. Yet, a gap remains: governments may try to recognize platform workers' rights without having a standardized, low-cost and continuous systematic way to verify compliance from platforms.

We propose the Platform Accountability Report (PAR): a standardized, machine-readable report that platforms must submit to the national labour authorities every six months. PAR translates the principles of decent work into twenty auditable indicators, covering working hours, waiting time, wage, social protection, punishments (deactivations and suspensions), appeals, algorithmic changes, bias audits, contract changes and workers' representation. It is made to be easy to implement by governments, using mostly data platforms already collect.

PAR is supported by the Progressive Platform Safeguards Framework, a tiered implementation model that synthesizes lessons from Fairwork, European Union, Spain and ILO Convention 193. Our framework allows governments to adopt minimum safeguards that can be progressed further, according to their institutional capacity, without eliminating the flexibility of platform work.

We apply the proposal to a 24-month pilot in Brazil, using the country's eSocial infrastructure. The pilot includes implementation stages, economic impacts, effects on stakeholders and measures to mitigate risks. A framework ready to be implemented by any government, converging with the most recent definitions on the theme, with a standardized international model of reporting the data, is, we believe, a pragmatic contribution to ensuring that the future of the gig economy is one in which technology serves decent work, rather than replacing it.

BIOGRAPHIES

Eduardo Munhoz Leite has a bachelor's degree in Leisure and Tourism from University of São Paulo and in Economics from Catholic University of Brasília. He is a master's candidate in economics and finance at Fundação Getulio Vargas. He works as an Executive Manager at Caixa Econômica Federal, where he leads technology projects aimed at expanding access to citizenship and public services. His research interests include behavioral economics, focused on vulnerable populations and beneficiaries of social programs.

Fernando Aldeia Loureiro holds degrees in Civil Engineering and Law. His research focuses on the relationship between infrastructure and the development of local economies. He is a civil engineer, a former member of the Board of Directors of INFRA S.A., and an expert witness and arbitrator in transport infrastructure disputes. He currently works in the Sustainability, Compliance, and Governance program for INFRA S.A.'s infrastructure projects. He also works as an independent infrastructure consultant for municipalities and regional governments. He is pursuing a master's degree in economics and finance at Fundação Getulio Vargas.

Isabela Gonçalves da Rosa is a master's student in Economics and Finance at the Fundação Getulio Vargas. She holds specializations in Tax Law from the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul and a law degree from the Federal University of Rio Grande. She is a researcher at the Brazilian Institute of Tax Law and a member of the Center of Excellence for Women Tax Lawyers of the Brazilian Association of Financial Law. Her professional and research interests include tax law, tax reform, and public finance. She currently works as a tax lawyer.

Karina Eskalaty Cardoso Melgaco Lacerda holds a degree in Law, with specializations in Administration, Neuroscience and Behavior, and People Development. She works in Sustainable Finance and Social Impact Superintendence at Caixa Econômica Federal. She is a master's candidate in innovation in communication and creative economy at Catholic University of Brasília. Her research focuses on necessity-driven female entrepreneurship.

Lucas Guimarães de Souza Ribeiro holds a degree in Actuarial Science and a postgraduate qualification in Finance from Fluminense Federal University, as well as a postgraduate qualification in Data Science from the Pontifical Catholic University. He is currently pursuing a master's degree in economics and finance at Fundação Getulio Vargas, where his research focuses on banking economics, monetary policy transmission, credit, and housing finance. He works as a project coordinator at Caixa Econômica Federal, developing studies and strategic projects in finance, planning, and banking.

Declaration of AI use

Artificial Intelligence was used in this project as an aid tool to search for candidate references and recent published studies. We used ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude and Consensus to search for academic sources, help format the references, extract insights from studied sources and look for grammar inconsistencies in all sections. All arguments, policy proposals and decisions are ours. We are proud to inform that this project was developed by humans.

1. Introduction

In 2010 there were 142 digital labour platforms in the world. A decade later, there were over 700 (ILO, 2021). The World Bank now estimates that between 154 million and 435 million people are online gig workers (Datta et al., 2023), which does not yet include location-based gig workers. Gig economy is defined as a kind of non-standard employment, in which labour is exchanged for money on short-term and payment-by-task basis, with flexible contracting and payment for tasks and ratings. (Datta et al., 2023; Duggan et al., 2020; Meijerink & Keegan, 2019; Niu et al., 2026). Gig work can be physical, such as food delivery, house cleaning and other activities managed by platforms such as Uber, Rappi and others, or digital, with tasks like data-entry, translation and web development managed through platforms such as Upwork and Freelancer (Heeks et al., 2021).

Today, one of the characteristics of the gig economy is that, in many cases, algorithms act as virtual managers, bringing upsides and downsides (Liu & Yin, 2024). Systematic reviews that have studied the impacts of the gig economy often point out benefits such as inclusion (people who could not access the labour market before), flexibility of working hours and the generation of primary or supplementary income. However, negative effects of the gig economy currently outweigh the benefits: excessive working hours, often surpassing daily journeys of 12 hours; low wages, in many countries falling below the legal minimum wage; and excessive performance demands, exerted by algorithms that are automated to prompt the worker to go further, all of which are associated with deterioration of workers' mental health (Alauddin et al., 2025; Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024). The International Labour Organization surveyed 3,500 workers in 75 countries on major microtask platforms and found average earnings of US\$4.43 per hour of paid work, falling to US\$3.31 per hour once unpaid time spent searching and waiting for tasks is considered (Berg et al., 2018).

This is a policy problem, and 2026 is the moment to address it. ILO Convention 193, adopted in June 2026, is the first global standard dedicated to platform work, establishing the rights that platform workers should have regardless of how platforms label them (ILO, 2026). What no existing instrument provides, however, is the standardized architecture that allows any labour authority to verify, continuously and at low-cost, whether those rights are respected. Our project fills that gap.

We propose the Progressive Platform Safeguards Framework and the Platform Accountability Report (PAR). The Progressive Platform Safeguards Framework is a tiered regulatory architecture that governments can adopt according to their institutional capacity. It translates the principles of decent platform work into minimum and progressive safeguards across working hours, wages, social protection, algorithmic transparency, diversity and inclusion, contracts, workers' voice and reporting. Its purpose is not to eliminate the flexibility that makes

platform work attractive, but to make that flexibility compatible with basic standards of decent work.

The Platform Accountability Report is the enforcement engine of the framework. PAR is a standardized, machine-readable report that every platform would submit periodically to the national labour authority, using twenty auditable indicators based mostly on data that platforms already collect. It allows governments to move from reactive enforcement (based on lawsuits, complaints, inspections or journalism) to continuous monitoring of platform work. Together, the framework and PAR provide a practical implementation pathway for ILO Convention 193: the framework defines what governments should require, while PAR shows how they can verify it. We then apply the proposal to a 24-month pilot in Brazil, using the country's existing eSocial infrastructure, and assess its expected economic impacts, stakeholder effects, implementation risks and mitigation strategies.

2. The upsides of platform work in the gig economy

The gig economy and its digital platforms present advantages that must not be ignored.

2.1. Low barriers, diversity and flexible work arrangements

Digital platforms usually have low entry barriers, associated with flexibility of working hours (Alauddin et al., 2025). The freedom to choose what to work on and when is cited by workers as one of the most attractive features of gig work (Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024). Low barriers allow the entrance of groups that are often excluded from the traditional labour market, such as ethnicized youth, people living in remote areas, people with disabilities and people needing to balance family obligations (Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024).

2.2. Global opportunities and matching workers with clients

Digital platforms also handle the matching of workers with clients, opening international market job offers to workers who could otherwise be excluded. Opportunities of remote working allow workers to sell their skills without being tied to a specific location (Alauddin et al., 2025; Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024).

2.3. Income generation and supplementary earnings

Gig work is an accessible source of primary or supplementary income. For many workers, platform earnings complement wages from other jobs, smooth their income and sometimes even represent the first job opportunity, a relevant function in developing economies with high informality and youth unemployment (Alauddin et al., 2025; Datta et al., 2023).

2.4. Simplified transactions and payment infrastructure

Digital platforms often simplify transactions and use secure ways for payment, reducing risk of robbery by eliminating the need to carry cash (Alauddin et al., 2025).

2.5. Potential benefits of algorithmic coordination

There is evidence suggesting that algorithms can show higher efficiency, clarity, precision and accuracy when compared to human-made decisions (Kadolkar et al., 2025). Algorithmic management can also help reduce bias, for example ensuring that the prices charged by hosts at

Airbnb are not different because of their gender or ethnicity, which can reduce income disparities against racial minorities (Kadolkar et al., 2025). Gamification can enhance workers' motivation and help them achieve their goals. Platforms that use techniques such as points, badges and leaderboards can enhance the satisfaction of the workers and their immersion (Kadolkar et al., 2025; Liu & Yin, 2024). Algorithmic management can also monitor and prevent workers' misconduct (Kadolkar et al., 2025; Liu & Yin, 2024). These benefits, however, are dependent on context and coexist with the opacity problems discussed below.

3. The downsides of platform work in the gig economy

3.1. Algorithm surveillance and control

One of the main issues with work platforms, according to multiple systematic reviews, is surveillance exercised by automated algorithms. This occurs for a number of factors. One of them is asymmetric information: workers perceive the manipulation of algorithms to benefit the digital platforms as the main cause of exploitative labour regime; lack of access to how rates and payments are calculated creates additional difficulties (Alauddin et al., 2025; Liu & Yin, 2024). This information asymmetry leads to power asymmetry, reinforced by algorithm opacity (Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024). This opaque decision making, which extends to suspending users without clear criteria, results in negative attitudes from workers (Liu & Yin, 2024).

There are cases in which minorities received lower ratings and are ranked lower in search results than other workers (Kadolkar et al., 2025). Excessive control exercised by algorithms can lead to a series of mental health issues, such as anxiety, which are described further in this project (Liu & Yin, 2024).

3.2. Lack of social protection

Gig workers are often classified as contractors, rather than employees, which often leaves them without traditional benefits such as healthcare or social safety nets (Alauddin et al., 2025). This is even more important when we consider that workers are usually exposed to physical and psychological dangers, such as accidents, violence and harassment (Heeks et al., 2021). It goes beyond: pressure on gig workers increases the physical risks taken, such as driving too fast to complete deliveries (Kadolkar et al., 2025).

3.3. Downward pressure on wages

The intense competition due to low entry barriers and the oversupply of workforce causes workers to bid or accept jobs at lower rates, sometimes even below minimum wage (Alauddin et al., 2025).

3.4. Work-life imbalance and mental health issues

High participation rates and demanding platform requirements often force gig workers to work longer than standard hours (sometimes over 12 hours a day) to maintain income. This contributes to emotional exhaustion, stress and burnout (Alauddin et al., 2025). The ratings and review systems can be arbitrary and biased, pushing pressure on workers (Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024).

The lack of social connections with other workers leads to reduced social interactions, learning opportunities, professional development opportunities and the feeling of social isolation (Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024, Alauddin et al., 2025).

3.5. Income insecurity and job instability

Workers face deep job insecurity, as they are typically paid based on accomplished tasks. Earnings can often be unstable and pre-determined by algorithm, making it hard to predict or to ensure a minimum income (Alauddin et al., 2025).

4. Simple regulation is not enough

While there is a strong debate on how the gig economy should be regulated, specifically the digital platforms, as of today there is substantial evidence that regulation of platform work remains weak or difficult to enforce across countries. Recent findings suggest that policymakers need stronger labour regulations and social safety nets to overcome the downsides of the digital platforms (Alauddin et al., 2025).

Many platforms operate in multiple countries and can restructure their contractual arrangements faster than national regulators can respond (Datta et al., 2023; ILO, 2021). The main object of regulation, the algorithm itself, changes continuously (Duggan et al., 2020; Kadolkar et al., 2025), making it hard to capture future advents and updates with rigid rules. In documented cases, enforcement has primarily been reactive: lawsuits or labour inspections triggered by complaints motivate actions from regulators. We defend that having better rules, though, will not suffice: a permanent and standardized flow of information from platforms to governments can make compliance verifiable at low-cost. This is one of the main gaps that our project addresses.

5. Existing frameworks and regulatory benchmarks

To address this subject, several frameworks have been proposed and adopted. We reviewed four benchmarks: one academic, one supranational, one national, and one global, recently published.

5.1. The Fairwork framework

The Fairwork framework was developed by the Fairwork project and formalized in academic literature by Heeks et al. (2021). It evaluates gig platforms against “decent work” standards. The framework is built upon five core principles. Each of the principles is broken down into a basic indicator and an advanced indicator, consisting of one point each, totaling a scale of up to 10. The framework is designed as an informative tool, allowing consumers to pressure platforms to enhance the treatment of workers, allowing governments to identify deficiencies in decent work standards and offering information for other interested parties, such as workers’ unions, investors and even the platforms themselves.

Fairwork principle	Basic indicator (1 point)	Advanced indicator (+1 point)
Fair Pay	Pays at least local minimum wage after work-related costs.	Ensures workers earn at least a local living wage after costs.

Fair Conditions	Mitigates task-specific risks, such as providing safety equipment or training.	Actively improves working conditions, such as providing insurance or limiting work hours.
Fair Contracts	Clear, transparent terms and conditions are always accessible to workers.	Ensures that no unfair contract terms are imposed.
Fair Management	Due process exists for decisions; workers have clear communication channels to appeal.	Equity in management processes (as anti-discrimination policies) or informed consent for data collection.
Fair Representation	Mechanisms exist to represent workers and there is freedom of association.	The platform recognizes an independent collective body or commits to negotiating with one.

Table 1. Fairwork framework. Source: Heeks et al., 2021.

The Fairwork framework has been applied in multiple countries (Fairwork, 2025; Heeks et al., 2021). In essence, it captures decent work elements in digital platforms and translates it into scores, allowing platforms to be compared. The framework is, however, voluntary: platforms have no legal obligation to publish their scores. Nonetheless, it is a valid and frequently used framework and helps platforms transition to decent work standards.

5.2. The European Union platform work directive

The European Union adopted Directive 2024/2831 in October 2024. This Directive implements a series of actions aimed at improving the working conditions in platform work in the gig economy. It entered into force in December 2024 and must be adopted by all Member States by December 2026 (European Union, 2024). It is one of the first multi-country frameworks addressing platform work.

One of the main implementations of Directive 2024/2831 is that, if platforms exercise control, then the relationship is presumed to be an employment one. Burden of proof is then shifted to the platforms to demonstrate otherwise (European Union, 2024). Of 28.3 million people working through digital labour platforms in the EU, around 5.5 million were likely misclassified as self-employed (European Commission, 2021).

Also, the Directive establishes rules on algorithmic management. Platforms must inform workers about automated monitoring and decision-making systems that affect them. Decisions such as suspension, dismissal or changes in pay must be subject to human oversight and review. On data protection, platforms are prohibited from processing certain categories of personal data, such as the workers' emotional or psychological state, trade union activity and private conversations (European Union, 2024).

The Directive also brings transparency obligations. Platforms must declare the work performed through them to authorities, with number of workers, contractual status, average hours and average income. One of the main points in our project creates a standardized way of reporting to local authorities, creating auditable reporting instruments that can be used by governments.

5.3. Spain's "Riders' Law"

In Spain, the Royal Decree-Law 9/2021 of May 2021 was reflected in Law 12/2021 of September 2021, after dialogue between government, trade unions and business associations

(Government of Spain, 2021). The Law brings the presumption of employment for delivery workers whose conditions are determined by digital platforms. It also brings a right to algorithmic transparency: workers' legal representatives must be informed of parameters, rules and instructions of the algorithms that affect the working conditions and access to and maintenance of employment, including profiling (Government of Spain, 2021), a right extended to all platform work, not only delivery.

While some platforms adapted their business models, the delivery platform Glovo continued to operate with self-employed couriers, accumulating labour-inspection fines until the announcement, in 2024, that they would transition around 15,000 riders to an employment model (Eurofound, 2024).

5.4. ILO Convention No. 193: the new global benchmark

ILO Convention No. 193, the Decent Work in the Platform Economy Convention, was adopted at the 114th International Labour Conference in June 2026 and became the first global standard dedicated to platform work (ILO, 2026). It is comprehensive, covering both online and location-based work, such as delivery and home services. It states that platform workers should receive basic rights and protections, regardless of whether the platform labels them as employees, contractors, partners or self-employed workers. It also addresses minimum wage, timely payment, social protection, safety standards, health insurance, data protection and more, like protection against unjustified suspension or deactivation (ILO, 2026). Recently adopted, the ILO Convention 193 is already the global reference point for what decent work in platform work should mean.

5.5. What we learn from them

The benchmarks studied are complementary. Fairwork paves a path to measure decent work, but it is voluntary. The EU Directive is a strong example of how algorithmic accountability and employment protection can be legislated at scale, but the reporting formats are still undefined. Spain is a good case to show how governments can act and is a good example of how the enforcement takes time to create compliance. The ILO Convention 193 is the new global benchmark. It depends on ratification from governments and enforcement. Their common limitation is the absence of a standardized and machine-readable reporting instrument that lets labour authorities verify compliance continuously. What we bring to the table is a synthesized framework with tiered safeguards for implementation and a standardized way of reporting, followed by a pilot proposal for Brazil.

6. Our project proposal

Our project has two main pillars:

- (i) The Progressive Platform Safeguards framework, a tiered framework with seven different dimensions, with phased implementation, synthesizing the benchmarks studied and ready-to-implement by governments;
- (ii) The Platform Accountability Report, which is a standardized report that every digital platform must submit to the national labour authority periodically, ensuring that every dimension is fully auditable by the government, creating real progress that can be measured over time.

6.1. Progressive Platform Safeguards

Our proposed framework prevents platforms becoming as rigid as formal work contracts; their flexibility is maintained but ensuring conditions for decent work. It is tiered, in ways that its implementation can be phased. It is designed to be simple to understand and to use by governments and authorities, with practical actions. Since it is accompanied by the Platform Accountability Report, the framework's success can be fully measured.

Dimension	Negative effects	Minimum safeguard	Progressive safeguard	Source benchmarks
Working hours	Platforms do not limit amount of hours for workers.	Platforms must ensure that workers do not surpass the maximum working hours allowed in the country.	Time spent by workers waiting for a task to arrive must also be counted as working time.	Fairwork "Fair Conditions"; Brazil's PLP 12/2024; ILO C193 safe and healthy working conditions.
Wages	Workers aren't guaranteed a minimum wage equivalent in their payments.	Value paid to workers must comply with the current minimum wage in the country.	Time spent by workers waiting for a task must also be computed and paid for; minimum-wage compliance must be net of working costs.	Fairwork "Fair Pay"; ILO C193 minimum remuneration and timely payment; Brazil's PLP 12/2024 hourly floor.
Social protection	Workers don't have access to benefits or social protection.	Platforms must require or facilitate access to social protection, such as accident and life insurance.	Platforms must pay for the social protection of its workers or directly intervene, using its market power to bargain better pricing.	ILO C193 social-security protections; Fairwork "Fair Conditions"; EU Directive presumption of employment as an access route.
Algorithmic transparency	Criteria used for ranking, blocking and task distribution are not clear.	Platforms must publish clear guidelines for task allocation, ranking and suspension. Workers must have the right to contest automated decisions such as sanctions, suspensions and deactivations, with human review.	Algorithms must be auditable by the government. Explainable AI techniques must be used. Algorithms must be documented and reproducible, with audit trails that allow authorities to reproduce and contest automated decisions.	EU Directive 2024/2831 algorithmic-management; Spain's algorithm-information right; ILO C193 rules on automated monitoring, explanation and human review of deactivations; Fairwork "Fair Management"
Diversity and inclusion	There are documented cases of minorities receiving lower ratings and rankings; platforms are not required to detect or correct discrimination.	Platforms must periodically run bias audits on their algorithms, such as task allocation and pay across gender, race and disability.	Platforms must provide programs aimed at priority groups, such as unemployed young people, serving as a tool of inclusion in the labour market.	Fairwork "Fair Management" anti-discrimination indicator.
Contract and worker voice	Terms and conditions can be	Contracts must be clear, accessible at all	The platform recognizes and negotiates with an	Fairwork "Fair Contract" and "Fair

Dimension	Negative effects	Minimum safeguard	Progressive safeguard	Source benchmarks
	unilaterally changed and are often inaccessible or unclear. Workers have no collective voice.	times and available in local language, with advance notice of material changes.	independent collective body of workers. Workers' representatives receive a defined subset of the PAR.	Representation"; ILO C193 freedom of association and collective bargaining; Spain's works-council information right.
Standardized reporting	In most countries, governments have no systematic visibility of platform working conditions; evidence emerges only from litigation, inspections or journalism. Where reporting exists, its format and content are not standardized.	Platforms must submit a standardized Platform Accountability Report to the national labour authority at fixed intervals, covering all dimensions of this framework and their respective indicators.	Reports must be machine-readable under an open template. Some key indicators must be published, allowing society to compare platforms.	Materializes EU Directive 2024/2831, ILO C193 and Fairwork's intentions.

Table 2. The Progressive Platform Safeguards framework. Source: authors' synthesis, building on Heeks et al. (2021), European Union (2024), Government of Spain (2021) and ILO (2026).

6.2. Platform Accountability Report: standardized, periodic and auditable

One of our main contributions to the theme is the Platform Accountability Report (PAR). It is a standardized report that every digital platform must submit to the national labour authority periodically (we suggest every 6 months). PAR materializes the proposed safeguards, allowing governments to audit digital platforms and compare their results. It is a ready-to-implement instrument that can be used by all governments, in accordance with ILO Convention 193's principles (ILO, 2026).

PAR consists of 20 different indicators that cover the dimensions of the Progressive Platform Safeguards.

#	Indicator	Unit; breakdown	Dimension
1	Active workers in the period	Headcount; by gender, age band and region	Reporting baseline: every indicator must bring gender, age band and region
2	Median and distribution of hours on task	Hours/week; deciles	Working hours
3	Waiting time between tasks	Hours/week; share of connected time	Working hours / wages
4	Gross effective hourly earnings	Local currency vs. minimum wage	Wages
5	Net effective hourly earnings (after work-related costs)	Local currency vs. minimum wage (describe work-related costs)	Wages
6	Share of workers below minimum-wage equivalent	% of active workers	Wages
7	Social-protection enrolment rate	% of active workers; by protection	Social protection

8	Occupational accidents and insurance claims	Count; rate per 1,000 workers	Social protection
9	Account deactivations and suspensions	Count; rate per 1,000 workers	Algorithmic transparency
10	Appeals filed against automated decisions	Count; % of decisions appealed	Algorithmic transparency
11	Appeal reversal rate	% of appeals upheld for the worker	Algorithmic transparency
12	Median complaint / appeal resolution time	Days	Algorithmic transparency
13	Material algorithm changes affecting allocation, pricing, ranking or evaluation	Count; summary description	Algorithmic transparency
14	Bias-audit outcome ratios	Impact ratios by gender, race, age band, disability	Diversity and inclusion
15	Participants in inclusion programs	Headcount; by priority group	Diversity and inclusion
16	Share of workers exceeding the local working-hours ceiling	% of active workers	Working hours
17	Consequential automated decisions issued (pay reduction, suspension, deactivation)	Count; per 1,000 workers	Algorithmic transparency
18	Exclusivity or multi-platform restrictions in force?	Yes/no; description	Contracts and worker voice
19	Changes to standard terms and advance-notice compliance	Count; % notified in advance	Contracts and worker voice
20	Collective-representation arrangements and agreements in force	Description; workers covered	Contracts and worker voice

Table 3. Indicators of the Platform Accountability Report template. Source: authors.

PAR relies on characteristics that ease implementation and adoption. One of them is standardization. The indicators allow comparability between digital platforms, the identification of outliers and targeted inspections where data suggest the existence of problems. Another characteristic is universal applicability: small platforms and big platforms can both file the PAR with their numbers. It is expected that smaller platforms will file indicators with null values, such as the participants in inclusion programs or number of material algorithm changes. Machine readability allows PAR to be automatically screened by the authorities, while also facilitating comparability, including similar platforms in other countries. Last, the publicity: not all indicators can be published, but PAR works on the transparency pillar of Directive 2024/2831, which already established platforms declare their work to competent national authorities (European Union, 2024), but goes further, by setting the content and the format of the declaration. It materializes the monitoring needs set by ILO Convention 193 (ILO, 2026).

6.2.1. Transfer template

Digital platforms must file PAR through official government channels. The report is an international standard, allowing comparability even across different countries.

6.2.2. Audit-trail

PAR allows authorities to focus on specific indicators and to perform focused audits on digital platforms. Platforms must retain the records that generate the numbers and their reproducible logs, allowing inspectors to verify the figures during audit.

7. Economic impacts

The adoption of our project has economic consequences, and we are aware of it. In fact, as shown below, underregulating also has economic impacts. Our position is that the economic consequences tend to arise in either scenario, but either in a predictable way, with a phased and transparent framework, or in an unpredictable way, with costs of litigation, fines and abrupt restructuring of digital platforms.

7.1. For governments

The cost of implementation is small. PAR uses data that platforms already have for their operations, such as hours, payments, deactivations and algorithm versions. The requirement is that governments create a filing channel, but the standardized template eases this process. In our proposed pilot country, Brazil, eSocial's infrastructure can be used as a channel. Besides that, it is recommended that governments implement a small analytical unit, consisting of five to ten workers, to analyze collected data.

Governments should perceive a positive revenue impact. The European Commission estimated that addressing misclassification of work contracts alone could yield up to €3.98 billion annually in additional tax and social-security contributions across the EU (European Commission, 2021). In Brazil, PLP 12/2024 proposes worker contribution of 7.5% and platform contribution of 20% on contribution base equal to 25% of gross earnings, to be credited to the general social-security fund (Government of Brazil, 2024). IPEA estimates 1.7 million gig workers in Brazil's transport sector alone, with only 23% contributing today (Góes et al., 2023). Uber's state audit in New Jersey assessed US\$523 million in unpaid unemployment and disability contribution for 2014-2018; Uber ultimately paid US\$100 million under a revised assessment (New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 2022).

Governments are already absorbing the economic expenses of gig work. In a survey of 1,700 app couriers in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, 41.3% reported having suffered an accident while working (Ação da Cidadania, 2025). Motorcycles were involved in 13.5 thousand of Brazil's 34.9 thousand traffic deaths in 2023 (IPEA & FBSP, 2025). The social protection safeguard shifts part of this cost back to the business model that generates it.

7.2. For companies

There is a direct impact for companies when adapting to comply with the proposed framework. The European Commission's impact assessment has estimated that addressing the misclassification of workers can increase platforms' costs by €1.9 billion to €4.5 billion per year, due to social-security contributions, insurance and administrative adaptation (European Commission, 2021).

The most relevant comparison, though, is not the cost increase versus zero cost. Glovo did not immediately adapt to Spain's Riders' Law and accumulated labour-inspection fines, became the subject of a criminal investigation and underwent an abrupt transition affecting near 15,000 riders, with an estimated €100 million impact on annual adjusted EBITDA and provisions

of liabilities of up to €770 million; its parent company's shares fell roughly 10% on this announcement (Eurofound, 2024). In the United States, Uber and Lyft paid US\$ 328 million to New York State in 2023 to resolve legal claims (Office of the New York State Attorney General, 2023) and US\$ 175 million to Massachusetts in 2024 in a settlement that also imposed a minimum hourly wage of US\$32.50, paid sick leave and occupational accident insurance (Office of the Attorney General of Massachusetts, 2024).

Instead of the abrupt changes that these companies have been through, our project proposes a predictable path, with known indicators.

7.3. For consumers

We are aware that part of the compliance costs may be transferred to the prices paid by the consumers (European Commission, 2021). However, there is evidence suggesting that its effect is modest. Cohen et al. (2016) conducted a study exploiting variations of Uber's pricing algorithm with nearly 50 million sessions and found that the demand is relatively price-inelastic: consumers kept purchasing at meaningfully higher prices, with each dollar spent on UberX generating around US\$ 1.60 in consumer surplus. A moderate price increase, thus, does not significantly change the value consumers derive from the service offered.

New York City provides us with evidence after a minimum pay standard for app couriers was enforced. Workers hourly earnings rose from US\$ 11.72 to US\$ 19.26, a 64% increase, including tips. Apps raised the per-order fees by an average of US\$2.30, but average tips fell by US\$2.64 and consumer's average total cost per order increased by US\$0.76, about 2%. The number of deliveries grew 8% on a year-on-year comparison (New York City Department of Consumer and Worker Protection, 2024).

Seattle's case, where platforms responded with a flat fee of roughly US\$5 per order, reported falling order volumes and prompted the city council to consider revising the rule (Soper, 2024), shows that the real size of consumer impact depends on how the platforms choose to structure the pass-through.

It is, then, expected that a single digit rise in price will happen, but we do not expect it to erode the market for consumers. On the other hand, workers will have decent working conditions and governments will not suffer from negative externalities caused by the lack of social protection, insurance and the other downsides we mentioned before.

7.4 For workers

The expected economic impact goes beyond higher earnings. Predictability, the reduction of unpaid time, expanded social protection coverage and enforceable rights to contest deactivations and automated decisions are among the benefits of adopting our framework (Alauddin et al., 2025; Datta et al., 2023). We are aware that the transition may bring, as a risk, the reduction of the number of active workers, as any enforcement could; we suggest a phased implementation of the safeguards and monitoring through PAR indicators, giving governments enough evidence to understand the extension to which the formal protection is improving conditions.

8. Pilot proposal: Brazil

Our project is meant to be ready to be implemented. It was designed to be adopted by a single government, without the need to wait for international coordination. It is also made to be able to be applied across countries with different income levels. With ILO Convention 193 in place, adoption can be framed as preparation for, implementation of or ratification (ILO, 2026).

8.1. Design and implementation principles

8.1.1. Phasing

Minimum safeguards and the first PAR cycle should be required within 12 to 24 months of enactment, maintaining consistency with the two-year transposition period of Directive 2024/2831 (European Union, 2024). The progressive safeguards are made to be implemented in sequence.

8.1.2. Institutional enforcement

Labour inspectorate or ministry of labour are the recipients of PAR data. Operating platforms without filing PARs is treated like operating without a license.

8.1.3. Proportionality thresholds

Smaller platforms are not punished. Their size is defined by local authorities, and null values are expected in the beginning for specific indicators. The first reporting cycle must operate as a safe-harbour period: findings lead to corrective orders and technical assistance, instead of immediate fines.

8.1.4. Graduated sanctions

We propose that the enforcement follows through an escalation ladder, in which the first uncompliant findings are subject to notification and correction periods. Fines should be applied for non-compliance repetition. Suspension of the authorization to operate can become a last resort for governments in extreme cases.

8.1.5. Social dialogue

Workers' representatives should receive a defined subset of each PAR, extending Spain's work council information right (Government of Spain, 2021).

8.1.6. Adaptability

PAR is made to be an international standardized report, but each country must parameterize its own minimum wage, working time ceiling and social security architecture. In economies with high informality, PAR has an additional payoff by producing the first systematic dataset on a segment of work that national statistics rarely capture (ILO, 2021; Datta et al., 2023).

8.2. A proposed 24-month pilot in Brazil

Brazil has a substantial number of location-based platform workers (Góes et al., 2023). Brazil has a tradition of data-driven enforcement under the Ministry of Labour and Employment. Brazil has a platform called eSocial, in which employers are required to file labour, social-security and payroll information to the federal government. PAR can make use of this existing architecture.

Brazil's government sent the Congress a bill in 2024 proposing social security inclusion and minimum earnings for mobile app drivers (Government of Brazil, 2024); in other words, gig work regulation is a hot topic. Litigation on worker classification continues in the higher courts, which is precisely the slow, adversarial channel our project aims to replace. A Brazilian pilot is both feasible and demonstrative: if it works in a large federal country with a significant amount of digital platform workers, the transposability claim is credible.

8.2.1. Months 0 to 12: preparation

The government enacts the enabling decree, designates the federal labour inspectorate as the receiving authority, and creates a small unit (five to ten staff) to operate the system. The PAR template and sanction ladders are made public for consultation with platforms, worker organizations and the national data protection authority. Platforms register themselves with the designated authority and the PAR filing channel is built as a module on the existing eSocial infrastructure, instead of creating an entirely new system.

8.2.2. Months 12 to 18: first reporting cycle

Platforms file their first PAR data. The federal unit screens the reports automatically, triages outliers and issues corrective orders and technical guidance to platforms.

8.2.3. Months 18 to 24: second reporting cycle

The second PAR cycle runs with full sanctions in force. The authority publishes the first public dashboard of key indicators and shares the defined subset of each PAR with worker representatives. A full evaluation of the pilot is run at month 24, adjusting indicators and audit frequency based on the two cycles.

8.3. Effects on stakeholders

With the implementation of this pilot project, workers gain decent working conditions, with social protection, guarantee of at least a minimum wage equivalent and other benefits without losing the flexibility they value the most (Dedema & Rosenbaum, 2024). Platforms will face compliance costs but receive predictability through known indicators and a safe-harbour first cycle. Small platforms and new entrants are also protected by the template, assuring that new entrants can enter the field. Consumers may face higher prices with costs being partly passed through, but society benefits from less expenditure with social and health aid and increased revenue from taxes. Unions and worker representatives receive a subset of each PAR, giving them conditions for bargaining and monitoring the working conditions. The labour authority increases its efficiency, with a systematic view of platform working conditions, which allows them to audit platforms with more accuracy.

8.4. Risks and mitigation

We summarize the six risks we consider most likely to materialize, and the design feature that mitigates each of them.

Risk	Description	Mitigation built into the framework
Platform resistance	Platforms lobby against adoption, litigate, or threaten market exit.	Phased adoption and safe-harbour first cycle lower initial compliance costs. The predictability of the framework give compliant platforms a stake in the system. ILO Convention 193 makes resistance cost higher in terms of reputation.
Data manipulation	Platforms underreport hours, misclassify waiting time or smooth data to pass screening.	Standardization makes anomalies statistically visible. Audit trails allow inspectors to verify figures against system logs. Sanctions for inputting numbers that are not backed by audit trails are harsher.
Privacy and data protection	PAR could become a channel of worker surveillance or leak commercially sensitive information.	PAR contains aggregated indicators, never individual worker records. Data that goes public must not report any commercial model or information.
Weak inspectorates	If authorities cannot screen, audit or sanction, the PAR becomes a mere exercise.	PAR is made to be easy to be processed. A small team is required to treat data from PAR. The existence of eSocial infrastructure eases the implementation of PAR.
Cost pass-through	Compliance costs are partly shifted to consumers as higher prices, or to workers as fewer offered tasks.	Phased and predictable costs help smooth the price shocks.
Informality displacement	Regulated platforms lose tasks to unregistered apps or fully informal intermediation, worsening conditions.	Registration is enforced. Unregistered operators must face harsher sanctions. Registered platforms are more attractive to workers. PAR dataset allows authorities to detect displacement. Small entrants are not discouraged by the adoption of the framework.

Table 4. Implementation risks and mitigation. Source: the authors.

9. Conclusion

International Labour Organization's Decent Work agenda, launched in 1999, defines decent work as opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, with security in the workplace, social protection, and freedom for people to express their concerns and organize (ILO, 1999). The gig economy in its modern arrangement delivers productivity but often denies those conditions through underpayment, excessive surveillance and by underprotecting workers, using algorithms that are often opaque.

We believe that the answer is neither to prohibit platform work, nor to force it as a traditional employment contract, but to demand flexibility with accountability. With the ILO Convention 193 as the new global normative floor (ILO, 2026), governments now know what rights platform workers should have, but are still unable to verify if those rights are enforced. Our contribution, thus, is not to define new rights, but to make the newly recognized rights auditable.

The Progressive Platform Safeguards framework synthesizes these rights and is converted into auditable indicators through the standardized Platform Accountability Report. There are economic impacts, but the framework is designed to make them more predictable and more fairly allocated than abrupt shocks generated by litigation and abrupt reclassification. A framework ready to be implemented by any government, converging with the most recent definitions on the theme, with a standardized international model of reporting the data, is, we believe, a pragmatic contribution to ensuring that the future of the gig economy is one in which technology serves decent work, rather than replacing it.

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