

Product market regulation and working conditions within platform work. A comparison between international and regional food delivery platforms in Poland and Italy

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The effects of platforms on employment conditions have been primarily analyzed through the lenses of their interactions with labour market regulation and in isolation with the product market regulation (PMR). Studies in IR tradition suggest that PMR is crucial for understanding employment outcomes (Gall et al. 2011). PMR limits competition between companies based on wages and working standards (Brown 2008&2010), whereas higher competition in (sub)sectors with less PMR weakens the ability of workers to bargain and deteriorates wages and working conditions (Pulignano et al. 2016; Aidt & Sena 2005), with employers using the competition to force concessions from workers (Benassi & Dorigatti 2017). PMR also impacts the employment conditions in labour markets by regulating the way in which services are provided and goods manufactured (Turnbull 2006; Lévesque & Murray 2010).

The paper aims to explore how and why product markets impact employment effects in the context of platform economy. More concretely, we ask: are there differences in the way in which platforms affect employment conditions, and why? How far does the different way in which platforms engage with PMR and are affected by PMR explain the diversity in labour platforms' employment effects?

We answer these questions by studying international and regional food delivery platforms operating across and within Italy and Poland, countries which present differences in both product and labour market regulation. The empirical basis of the paper are narrative interviews with workers (n=50), and expert interviews with policy makers, trade unionists, and platform managers (n=16) conducted in 2020-2021.

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