



# THE VOICE OF FREELANCING PLATFORM WORKERS IN SWEDEN

# Introduction

Freelance work through digital platforms in the EU gives millions of professionals – such as graphic designers, IT and healthcare professionals, child carers, delivery couriers, taxi drivers and many others – the ability to build fulfilling livelihoods on their own terms: freelancers can choose when, where and how they work, and be their own bosses.

Unfortunately this reality is potentially at risk from the EU Platform Worker Rights Directive that is set to be formally adopted in September 2024. The substance of this legislation has been watered down in Brussels, leaving the fundamental provisions to be decided at the national level. It is therefore vital that Sweden takes the correct approach by giving individuals the right to be a freelancer as well as creating flexibility in the labour market.

**In a petition conducted during the fall of 2023, over 12,000 individuals urged EU policymakers to listen to the voices of the workers impacted by the Platform Work Directive process. Demanding that they:**

- ✓ **Give the power to negotiate:** Make it easier for freelancers to negotiate – either individually or as a group – with platforms on their working conditions, including compensation, social protections, and benefits.
- ✓ **Protect flexibility:** Ensure the right to freely choose when to work, without any notice and without any schedules imposed upon freelancers.
- ✓ **Protect independence:** Ensure the freedom to select which tasks freelancers choose to accept or reject, without being directed by a boss.
- ✓ **Protect entrepreneurship:** Provide certainty to operate as self-employed and to build their business by providing services to different partners, including competing platforms.

# Survey Results

Between March and April 2024, we conducted a survey aimed at freelancers in Sweden, asking about their motivations for choosing this lifestyle, their opinions on classification and the Platform Work Directive, whether they feel listened to by politicians, and the biggest challenges that they face. The survey received 200 replies and the findings are reported below.



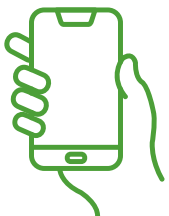
9 out of 10 say that the freedom to choose when, how and where to work is the most important factor in deciding to work on a digital platform.



82% say that the Platform Work Directive should not have the power to force a freelancer to be employed against their own will.



Only 8% say they feel confident that their voice is being heard and respected by national and local politicians.



Only 8% say that they would choose employment over being a freelancer in case this was an option. While 81% want to remain independent.



The biggest challenges that freelancers face are taxation (51%), finding clients (21%), and administration and bureaucracy (16%).

# A Message from Freelancers

These are comments made by freelancers working on digital platforms received in the survey.

Freelancers are not casual workers. They are the future of work

It is important that we can earn our livelihood this way: we need to be part of the decisions.

I pay approximately 4000 Euros in taxes annually through my self-employment, contributing to the pensions and social benefits of others. If restrictions are introduced on the ability to work at one's discretion, I will discontinue my current enterprise, register as unemployed, and subsist on benefits.

The word freelancer comes from the word "free". Freelancers have the power to work when, where, how, with/for whom they think is a best fit for them. Rules from the EU/Brussels should not change that!

I want to work whenever I can and be my own boss. Sometimes I want to work more than 8 hours; sometimes less; and sometimes not at all.

# What should happen in Sweden?

Given the views of freelancers - and within the context of Sweden needing to implement the EU Platform Work Directive over the next two years - crucial areas to address cover definitions; the need for no general presumption of employment; and algorithmic management.

## Definitions should be tightened up

The current vague and expansive definition of a 'digital labour platform' significantly broadens the Directive's scope. This needs to be clarified. If not, then thousands of independent workers from across Sweden will be unintentionally misclassified. This includes a whole host of sectors from IT developers, medical professionals, educators and architects to photographers, cleaners, musicians and artists: everyone who uses online platforms to connect with clients, in effect.

## There should not be a general presumption of employment

The decision on whether individuals should be deemed employees should be made on the basis of clear and specific criteria. It is vital that the Directive does not force thousands of Swedish entrepreneurs, freelancers and one-person companies into employment relationships against their will. A forced shift from an autonomous business model to a rigid employment structure would be terrible for independent talent and severely diminish the flexibility and freedom that is fundamental to why many choose freelancing and platform work.

Classification should also not be left vague for the reason that this would lead to court cases and uncertainty in determining the employment status of platform workers. While great for lawyers, this situation would be an expensive, time-consuming and unwieldy solution that could also be triggered by authorities and trade union representatives irrespective of the individual workers' will.

We urge decision-makers to take these concerns and recommendations into account when discussions begin on how the EU Platform Work Directive will be implemented into national law. We remain committed to collaborating towards policies that support the rights and aspirations of all workers, while promoting innovation and economic growth. In this regard we are open to dialogue with decision-makers and opinion-formers at the national and local levels.

# About Freelance Movement

Freelance Movement is the largest stakeholder initiative in Europe focused on the future of work, with 52 members from across the continent. We understand the role that digitalisation is playing in the future of work and how it is creating opportunities, facilitating growth and driving the economy.

## Our role is to:

- Educate on, explain and quantify freelancing and the future of work.
- Identify challenges and barriers, then with decision-makers and other stakeholders work towards creating policy and regulatory solutions.
- Provide exposure and business opportunities within our future of work ecosystem - as well as a platform - for members and partners.

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