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Gig Work: Assessing Job Stability and Occupational Safety

The gig economy is reshaping work across Europe, offering flexibility, diverse income opportunities, and global reach. However, it also brings challenges like job insecurity, lack of benefits, income instability, and safety risks. Algorithm-driven platforms add to these concerns by limiting transparency and accountability. This article explores both the advantages and risks of gig work and calls for better regulation to protect workers.

The gig economy has experienced significant growth in recent years, reshaping labor markets across Europe. According to the European Council, an estimated 43 million workers in the EU will be engaged in temporary or freelance work by 2025, marking a 52% increase compared to 2022. This trend highlights the evolving nature of employment, where digital platforms facilitate short-term work arrangements. The rapid expansion of gig work raises important questions regarding job security, labor rights, and occupational safety.

Defining the Gig Economy

The gig economy refers to a labor market characterized by temporary contracts and freelance tasks, often mediated by digital platforms. This model enables workers to select assignments based on their availability and skills, providing flexibility and access to a diverse client base. Companies, in turn, benefit from a

scalable workforce, allowing them to adapt to market demands efficiently. The gig economy spans multiple industries, including transportation, delivery services, IT, creative work, and professional consulting.

Advantages of Gig Work

The growth of the gig economy is driven by several key factors, making it an increasingly attractive option for workers and businesses alike. One of its main advantages is flexibility, as gig workers have greater autonomy to set their own schedules, allowing them to balance work commitments with personal responsibilities more effectively. This flexibility is particularly appealing to those seeking a better work-life balance, parents managing childcare, or individuals pursuing personal projects alongside professional engagements.

For skilled professionals, the gig economy presents an opportunity to diversify their income streams by

taking on multiple clients simultaneously. This not only increases their earning potential but also allows them to gain experience in different industries and expand their professional networks. Many gig workers use this approach to complement a traditional full-time job, engaging in freelance work on the side to enhance their financial stability.

Another significant advantage is the reduced barriers to entry compared to conventional employment. Gig work platforms often provide a streamlined hiring process, allowing individuals to secure work opportunities more easily. This accessibility makes it an appealing option for those transitioning between jobs, recent graduates looking to gain experience, or professionals who prefer project-based work over long-term commitments.

For businesses, the gig economy offers a highly adaptable workforce model. Companies can dynamically scale their workforce based on demand, optimizing labor costs without the long-term financial commitment associated with traditional employment contracts. This agility is particularly valuable in industries with fluctuating workloads,

such as creative services, technology, and consulting. Moreover, the gig economy fosters international collaboration, enabling professionals to work with clients and organizations worldwide. This global reach not only expands job opportunities but also facilitates the exchange of ideas, skills, and expertise across different cultural and economic contexts. As remote work becomes increasingly common, the gig economy provides a viable pathway for professionals to develop specialized skills, explore entrepreneurial ventures, and operate outside conventional employment structures.

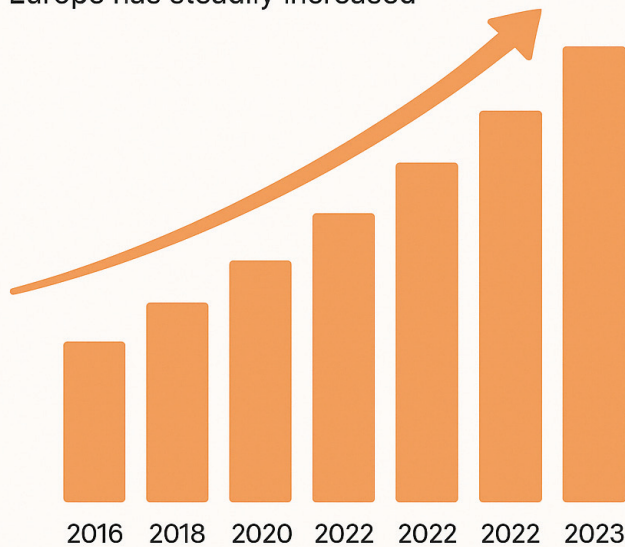
Challenges and Occupational Safety Considerations

Despite its numerous advantages, the gig economy also raises significant concerns related to job security, income stability, and overall working conditions. Many gig workers operate in an uncertain labor environment with limited protections, making it challenging to sustain long-term financial and professional stability.



The Rise of the Gig Economy

The number of gig workers across Europe has steadily increased



One of the primary concerns is the lack of employment protections. Since most gig workers are classified as independent contractors rather than employees, they are typically excluded from standard labor protections such as paid leave, sick benefits, unemployment insurance, and pension contributions. This classification shift places the burden of social security and financial planning entirely on the worker, often leading to precarious situations, especially in times of illness, economic downturns, or reduced job availability.

Another major issue is earnings volatility, as many gig workers experience unpredictable income due to fluctuating demand and inconsistent payment structures. Unlike salaried employees with stable wages, freelancers and gig workers rely on variable work opportunities, which can make it difficult to budget, secure loans, or engage in long-term financial planning.

Additionally, the prevalence of task-based compensation rather than hourly pay can lead to situations where workers must take on excessive workloads just to maintain a livable income.

Algorithmic oversight further complicates gig work dynamics. Digital labor platforms use automated algorithms to assign jobs, monitor worker performance, and even determine rates of pay. However, these systems often lack transparency and may apply arbitrary measures when evaluating workers. Cases of sudden job suspensions or account deactivations without clear explanations are not uncommon, leaving workers without recourse or appeal mechanisms. This reliance on opaque automated decision-making creates a power imbalance between platforms and workers, limiting their ability to negotiate better conditions or challenge unfair treatment.

Additionally, occupational safety and health risks are a pressing concern, particularly for gig workers in physically demanding roles such as delivery services, transportation, or manual labor. Those engaged in high-risk tasks, such as food delivery riders and ride-hailing drivers, frequently work under pressure in unsafe environments, leading to increased risks of accidents, injuries, and mental health issues. The lack of clear employer responsibilities regarding safety measures further exacerbates these risks, leaving workers to navigate workplace hazards without adequate support.

Conclusion

The gig economy represents a transformation in labor markets, offering both opportunities and challenges. While its flexibility benefits workers and businesses alike, robust policies and enforcement strategies are essential to ensure fair and safe working conditions for all participants.

The successful regulation of gig work requires collaboration between governments, platforms, and workers to create a labor market that is both innovative and equitable. By addressing social protection gaps, ensuring fair compensation, and prioritizing OSH measures, policymakers can shape a gig economy that benefits workers and employers alike, contributing to a more sustainable and balanced labor market in the digital age.