

# Chapter 1

## Introduction



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In the twenty-first century, structural transformations in the economy and labour markets have been primarily driven by two converging forces: digitalisation and the green transition. These megatrends—fostered by technological innovation, environmental imperatives, and new forms of economic organisation—are reshaping how work is structured, how employment relations are formed, and how labour is regulated. Across the European Union (EU) and its Eastern and Southeastern neighbours, these developments challenge existing legal frameworks and compel new approaches to social protection, employment governance, and sustainable development.

This book explores the intersection of digitalisation, the green economy, and labour market regulation within the emerging platform economy. Through an interdisciplinary lens that integrates legal, economic, and policy analysis, it examines how labour relations are evolving in response to technological innovation and ecological transformation. Special attention is devoted to platform work, its legal status, working conditions, and the European Union's efforts to ensure a fair and inclusive digital labour market. Comparative insights from post-Soviet and Balkan countries highlight regional disparities and legal fragmentation in adapting to these shifts.

The second chapter investigates the dual effects of digitalisation and greening on the labour market. It explores how robotisation, automation, and platformisation are transforming employment structures, skill demands, and power dynamics between workers and employers. Simultaneously, the green transition—driven by the European Green Deal—introduces new industrial logics, fosters environmental innovation, and redefines job creation. This chapter concludes by analysing the

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combined impact of these transformations, highlighting their synergetic potential and risks of labour market polarisation.

The third chapter delves into the conceptual and practical specificities of platform work. It defines the phenomenon, traces its emergence in the digital economy, and examines the conditions under which digital labour is performed. Key themes include the role of trade unions, the contractual status of platform workers, and the challenges of informality and precarity, particularly in post-Soviet contexts.

The fourth chapter addresses European Union policy responses, focusing on strategies aimed at regulating digital platform work while promoting sustainable economic growth. It examines instruments such as the Digital Agenda, the European Green Deal, and recent EU Platform work Directive, assessing how the EU is attempting to reconcile innovation with social protection in a rapidly evolving labour environment.

The fifth chapter offers a comparative legal analysis of Eastern and Southeastern European countries, including Moldova, Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Albania. These case studies reveal the challenges of adapting national legal systems to the realities of the platform economy, uncovering issues such as enforcement deficits, legal uncertainty, and socio-economic inequality.

The sixth chapter presents empirical findings from a field survey conducted among digital platform workers in Moldova. The data provide grounded insight into workers' income levels, skill usage, employment classification, and access to social protection. These findings serve to validate and enrich the book's earlier theoretical and normative discussions. Moldova was selected as a case study due to its illustrative regulatory, economic, and social context, the limited availability of existing research, and the quality and relevance of the newly collected empirical data. Maintaining this chapter as a distinct section is methodologically justified and contributes to the overall coherence and applied value of the book.

Overall, this book seeks to contribute to ongoing academic and policy debates by offering an interdisciplinary synthesis of law, economics, and social policy that provides a comprehensive understanding of the digital-green-labour nexus. By linking macro-level regulatory and policy transformations with micro-level labour and employment realities, it delivers a multidimensional perspective on how digitalisation and ecological imperatives are reshaping the future of work and law. The study is intended for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners working at the intersection of labour regulation, digital economy governance, and sustainability. It advocates for equitable, adaptive, and coherent regulatory strategies that respond effectively to structural change while promoting social inclusion and decent work in a rapidly evolving European economy shaped by the digital-green transition.

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