Mapping labour platforms in Europe

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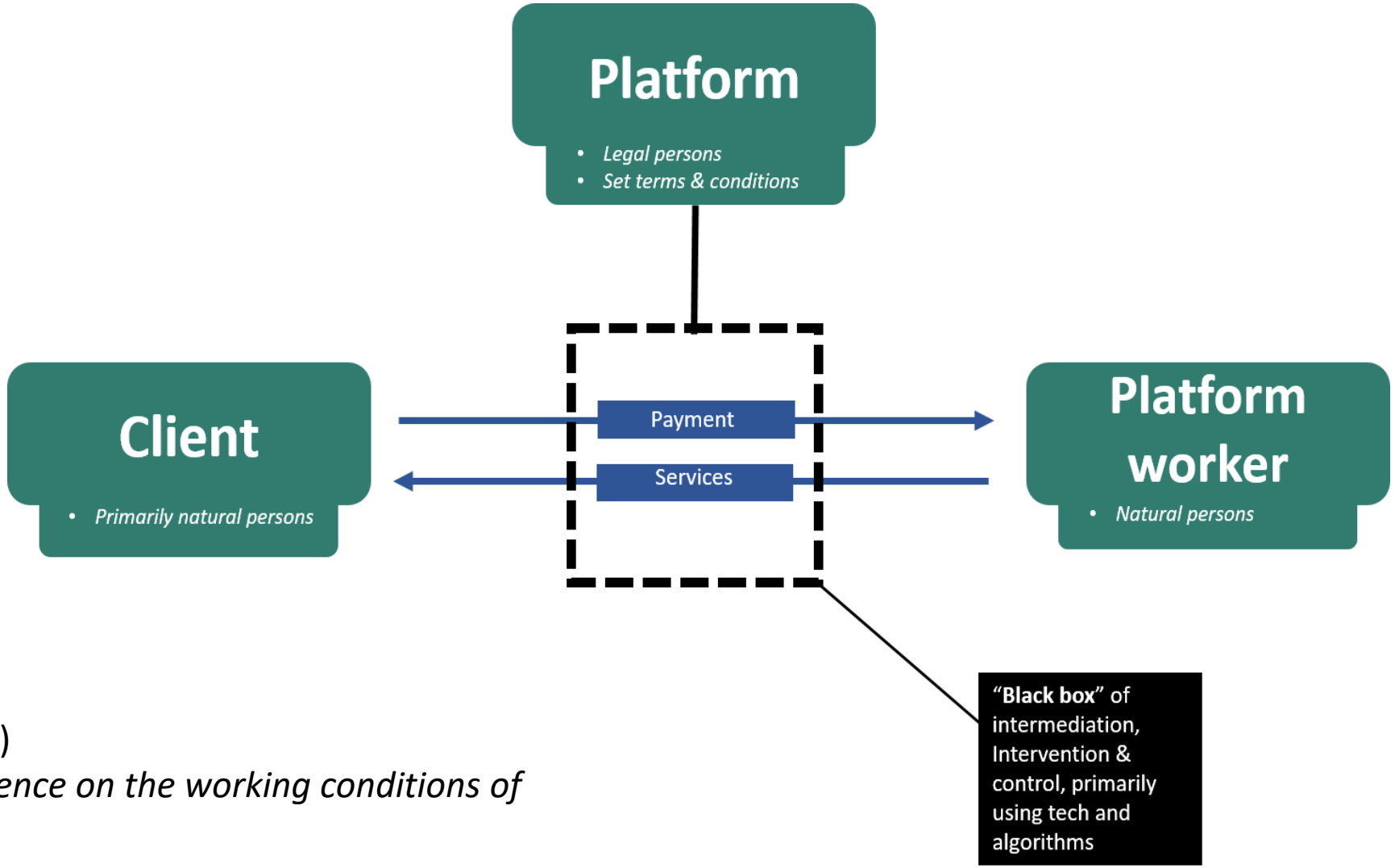
22 April 2021, Webinar

Digitalisation and the world of work: the effects on jobs, occupations and workers

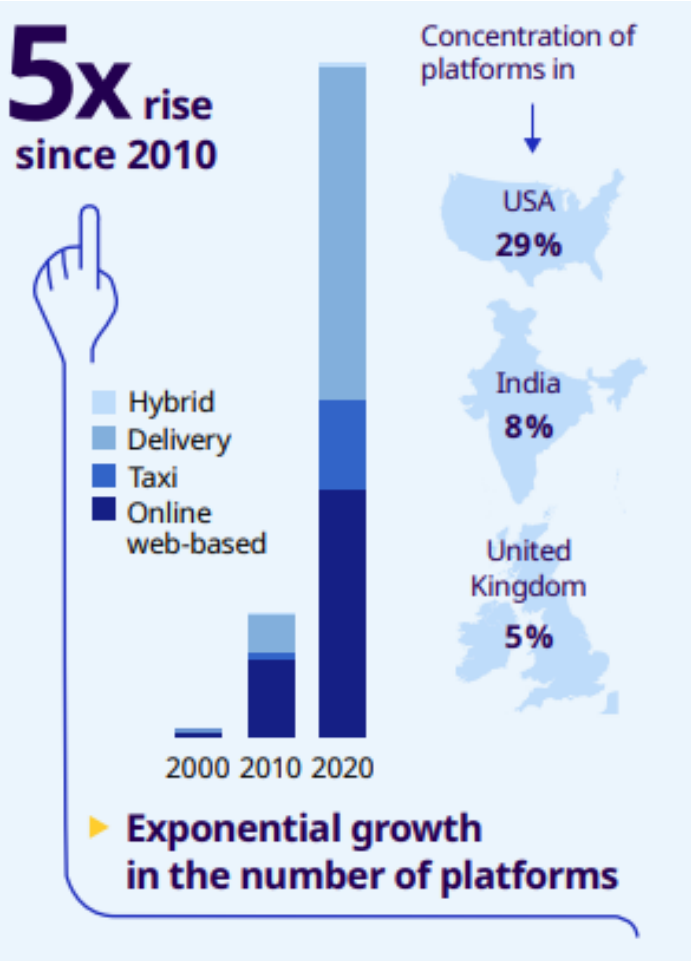
Labour platforms (DLPs, OLPs, etc.)



Kilhoffer et al. (2020)
Study to gather evidence on the working conditions of platform workers

Why map platforms at all?

- Although **all of our data are bad**, DLPs are growing in number,* revenue, profits, number of platform workers
- The online economy, DLPs included, are the future
  - Traditional companies are using DLPs and learning from them
- Let's understand our new platform overlords!



ILO (2021)
World employment and social outlook
The role of digital labour platforms in transforming the world of work

*To be nuanced later.

CEPS conducted two main mapping studies

An overview of European Platforms: Scope and Business Models (JRC, 2017)

- 28 MS
- 200 platforms (2017)
  - Both active/inactive
- Business models – how do they make money?
- 56 data columns per platform

Digital labour platforms in the EU: Mapping and business models (DG EMPL, forthcoming 2021)

- 27 MS (sorry UK!)
- 516 active platforms (2020)
  - 74 inactive platforms
- Contains activity by year
- 255 data columns per platform
- Builds on COLLEEM and Eurofound typologies

Main difficulties encountered/noted

An overview of European Platforms: Scope and Business Models (JRC, 2017)

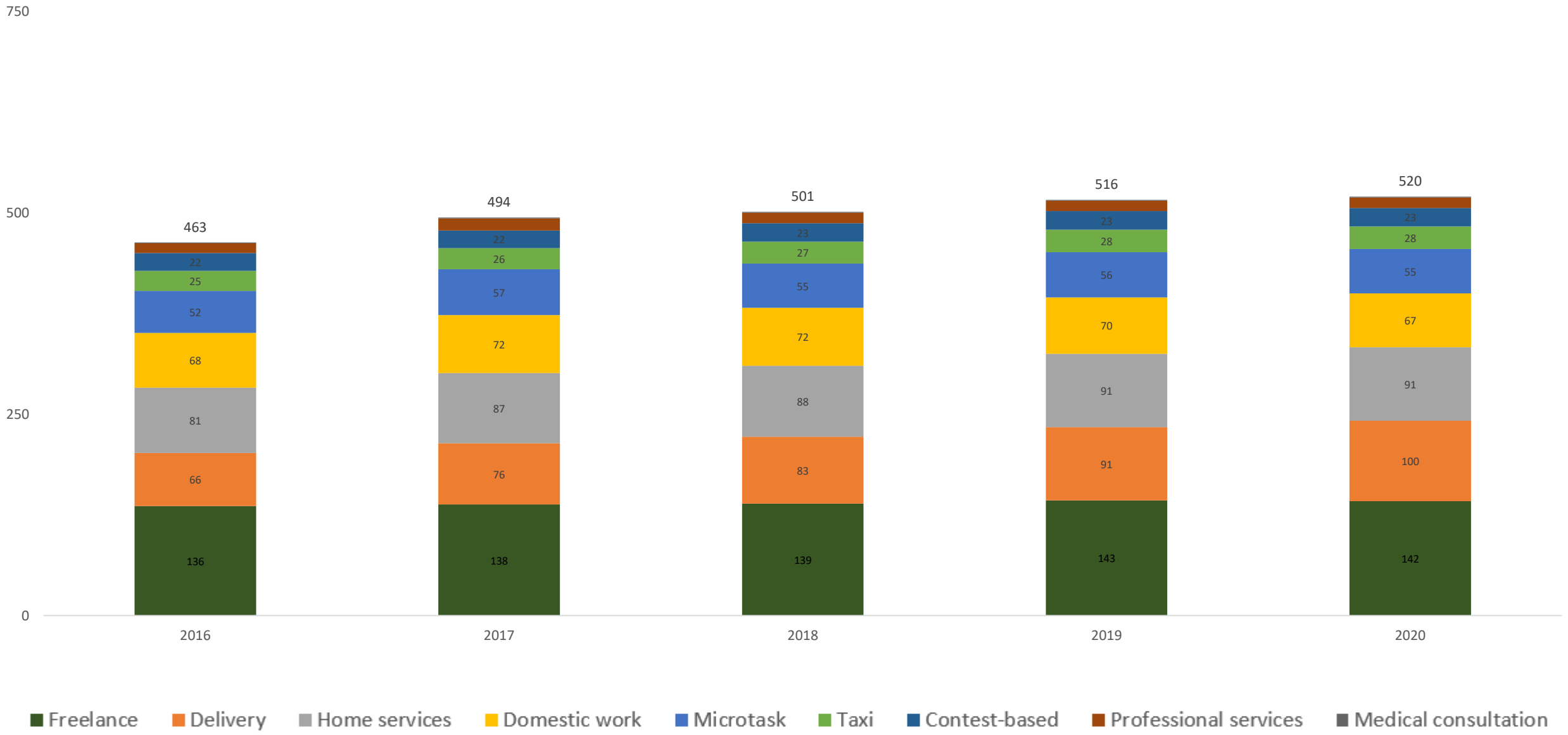
- Intransparency of platforms
  - Missing or suspect figures on number of platform workers, users, revenues
- Quick emergence, merging, and disappearance
  - Difficult to pin down a single platform at a single point in time

Digital labour platforms in the EU: Mapping and business models (DG EMPL, forthcoming 2021)

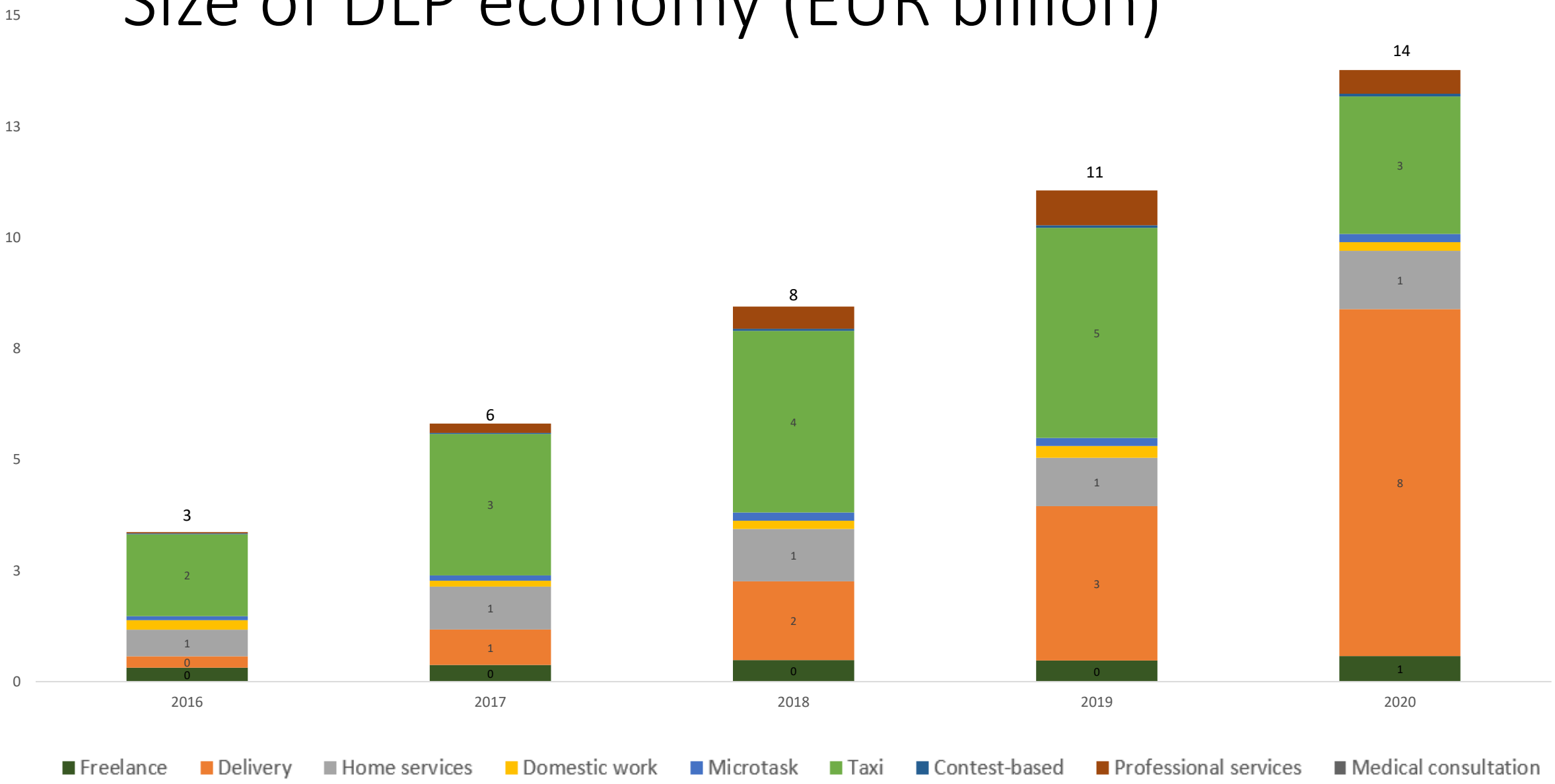
- No single data source is comprehensive
  - Relies on primary and secondary sources to identify DLPs active in EU from 2016-2021
- Decent data only for largest platforms
- Reliance on 'best guesses' for many important points
  - Primary revenue source, how intermediation works, etc.
- Impact of COVID-19

Main findings

DLPs active in EU27 by year, type



Size of DLP economy (EUR billion)



Other findings

- Many DLPs charge the workers in a variety of ways, other shady practices
  - Agrees with ILO (2021) findings
- Difficult to draw the line between
  - Temporary work agency and DLP
  - Tech company and DLP (i.e. translation or marketing services)
- Relative dominance of delivery and personal transport DLPs
  - Differs with COLLEEM findings
- Many platforms have ‘fourth’ parties, additional activities for revenue
  - Harder than ever to simplify platform work

Takeaways

- Keeping such a database up-to-date is a huge undertaking
  - Some sort of Wikipedia-like collaboration could help
- Government sources don’t offer much help at present
  - Belgium’s platform registry has many inactive DLPs, and many which don’t fit our understanding of DLP
- Understanding working conditions for any platform is difficult
  - Much less all of them!
- Best aim for representativeness, not exhaustiveness

Thank you!

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