

Work Package 4 – Deliverable 1

REPORT ON THE LITERATURE REVIEW ON FORMS OF COLLECTIVE ACTIONS IN THE HOME CARE SECTOR

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Funded by DG Employment, Social
Affairs and Inclusion – EMPLA –
Employment and Social Governance
"Improving expertise in the field of
industrial relations –
SOCPL-2022-IND-REL- 01"

Grant Agreement number: 101126007



Co-funded by
the European Union

Care to organise? A review of the literature on collective action of platform-based care workers

1. Introduction

Over the last two decades, the home care sector has emerged as one of the fastest-growing components of health and social care systems worldwide, a process that has been particularly intense in the context of the EU (Kofman and Raghuram 2015). This growth is largely attributed to demographic factors like population aging, the deinstitutionalization of care, and increasing policy emphasis on community-based long-term care services (Daly and Szebehely, 2012). At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic further exposed the essential nature of home care services in sustaining health care systems, especially for older adults and disabled populations. As more individuals seek to receive care in their own homes rather than institutional settings, the need for qualified home care workers, such as personal care aides and home health aides, has dramatically expanded.

Despite the sector's growing significance, home care workers often operate under extremely precarious conditions: in addition to poor working conditions including low wages, informality or lack of job security, they also experience limited training and inadequate social security protections (Sargeant 2014, Green and Ayalon 2017, 2018). These issues are compounded by a persistent lack of recognition and social value for care work despite the positive impact that the pandemic had on the social perception of health workers. This makes home care workers a vulnerable group, whilst also affecting negatively the quality of care provided (Cangiano and Shutes, 2010; Green and Ayalon, 2018). Home care workers frequently lack avenues to express their concerns or influence decision-making processes due to low unionisation and lack of collective representation. Their geographical dispersion and atomized working conditions make traditional forms of collective action and organization difficult, rendering their voices largely invisible in policy debates (Bach, 2020). Additionally, many home care workers are immigrants, adding complexity to their employment experiences, as they may lack access to essential rights and protections (Cangiano and Shutes, 2010; Shutes 2011).

This review of the literature aims at providing an overview of the main topics and issues regarding the organisation and representation of home care workers in digital platforms. The increasing digitalization of home care services has profoundly transformed the working conditions of workers in the sector. Digital platforms, while offering new avenues for service provision, also pose new and significant challenges for the collective action, organization, and mobilization of these workers. This review examines existing research on this topic, highlighting the obstacles, union strategies, and real-world experiences of organizing in the context of digital care platforms. The review draws on a growing body of literature that analyzes the fragmentation of labor (Della Porta et al., 2022), the challenges of data-driven

advocacy (Ming et al., 2025), and the impacts of home-care platform work from a trade union perspective (Murphy et al., 2024).

This review is structured in three sections. The first section discusses the main obstacles and difficulties encountered by home care workers and trade unions to organise these workers. Three aspects are highlighted: the migrant status of many of these workers, the geographical fragmentation and isolation and the emotional content of this job. The second section then discusses the additional challenges brought by the platformization of home care work, paying particular attention to algorithmic management and control, but also to the intensification of individualised employment relations. Then section three analyses collective action strategies deployed in platform-based home care work, including organising and coalition building, training and education, transnational action or the formation of cooperatives.

1. Obstacles to the collective action and organization of home care workers

The collective organization of home care workers, especially in the context of digital platforms, faces a series of obstacles inherent in their work and the characteristics of these platforms. Some of these obstacles have received significant attention in the industrial relations literature. This would be the case of some of the sociodemographic characteristics of this group, most importantly their migrant status, and the isolation and dispersed character of the job performed by these workers. In their work Della Porta et al. (2022), provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the obstacles to collective organizing in the platform economy by identifying five processes of fragmentation in platform labor: legal, technological, organizational, spatial, and social. These barriers to collective action have become more intense with the extension of care platforms. While facilitating the connection between caregivers and users, these platforms introduce new complexities that make even harder collective action. The very structure of these platforms, often designed to maximize flexibility and individualization, undermines traditional organizing efforts. Therefore, to the traditional obstacles facing this sector, we now must add other elements like algorithmic management, and the individualisation inherent to platform work.

1.1. Migrant Status

A very significant proportion of home care workers are migrants, particularly in high-income countries including those in the EU. Migration status has a dual effect: it increases labor supply in the sector but introduces vulnerabilities such as legal precarity, language barriers, and cultural isolation (Anderson, 2007). The structural vulnerabilities faced by migrant home care workers range from lacking the same protections afforded to domestic workers and

experiencing exploitative labor practices due to their precarious immigration status (Shutes, 2011; Green and Ayalon, 2018). As such, their ability to engage in collective action is shaped by different understanding of the role of unions, fears of loss of employment, or even deportation.

Migrant workers frequently report experiencing discriminatory practices and isolation from their (native) peers, further complicating their ability to organize and advocate for better working conditions (Green and Ayalon, 2017; Zhong and Shorey, 2022). Dependence on their employers or platforms for their livelihood, and in some cases, to maintain their legal status, creates a power dynamic that makes it difficult to express grievances or demand better conditions. Furthermore, linguistic and cultural barriers can further isolate these workers, limiting their access to information about their rights and organizing opportunities (Barba et al., 2025; Murphy et al., 2024). Additionally, language barriers and cultural differences often hinder effective communication and solidarity among migrant home care workers. This fragmentation can lead to a lack of shared understanding regarding labor rights and the importance of collective action (Shutes, 2011).

In this context, digital care platforms are intensifying some of the vulnerabilities and problems experienced by migrant home care workers. As pointed out by Rodríguez-Modroño et al. (2022), these platforms fit perfectly in an already informal and devalued care sector and take advantage of inequalities of gender, race, and immigration status to access a precarious workforce. Their results confirm that digital platforms reinforce the 'casualisation' of labour markets as well as their gendered segregation. In so doing, care platforms exacerbate the fragmentation of the workforce, due to the large number of platforms operating and the diversity of employment practices (Bonifacio and Pais 2025).

All these obstacles make it more difficult but haven't precluded the development of forms of collective organisation and mobilisation. As Chun and Cranford (2018) demonstrate, immigrant women's trajectories into home-based elder care are shaped by gendered and racialized labor market exclusions due to precarious and informal jobs. However, ethnic community organizations and trade unions have served as key intermediaries, enabling Chinese migrant women in California to exercise collective voice and challenge unequal structures. Similarly, Peterson (2018) reveals that in Spanish eldercare, domestic workers have achieved greater politicization of their demands compared to family caregivers. Their advocacy is framed around empowerment and rights, which contrast with familial expectations of mutual aid. This underscores how care work remains undervalued but politically contested. Finally, Marchetti et al. 2021) show how domestic workers' movements in Africa, Asia and Europe have put 'intersectionality in action' in representing the interest of various marginalized social groups, including migrants.

1.2. Isolation and Dispersed Workplace

The other element hindering the organization and representation of home care workers is their isolation and geographical dispersion. Unlike hospital or institutional care settings,

home care work is characterized by dispersed work locations, often in individual homes, making it inherently difficult to organize workers who are physically scattered across different locations. Unlike traditional workplace settings, where workers are congregated, the localized contexts of home care often lead to workers feeling isolated and disconnected from one another (Genet et al., 2011). This dispersed nature presents organizational challenges, as unions find it hard to communicate with these workers and require collective presence and visibility to mobilize support effectively (Boris and Klein, 2012). This geographical dispersion also hinders relationship building and the identification of common problems among workers, a necessary condition to build a collective identity (Della Porta et al., 2022; Murphy et al., 2024). The intimate and private nature of home-based work can also create a sense of isolation, making it difficult for workers to realize that their individual experiences are shared by other workers and part of broader systemic issues. Furthermore, employers are frequently individual households or intermediaries, making traditional employer-employee relationships and accountability structures less clear (Cox, 2015). The individualization of tasks within the home setting can further impede the establishment of a collective identity among workers. Each worker's experiences may significantly differ based on their clients, working conditions, and employer practices, which can lead to divergent perspectives on what are the main demands and ultimately the need for collective action. The fragmentation of care provision across public, private, and non-profit sectors adds another layer of complexity to the collective organisation of home-care workers (Da Roit and Weicht, 2013).

1.3. The emotional dimension of care work

In addition to the migrant status and individualization, there are other, less explored dimensions which have received less attention from the point of view of collective action, but that have equally important implications. A key point raised in the literature is that home care involves a deep, interpersonal relationship with a vulnerable individual. This also impacts on the perceptions and inclinations of home-care workers to engage into forms of protest or collective action, for example. Traditional strikes and forms of contestation in other sectors will find an additional obstacle in home care due to the nature of the work done and the emotional link with the dependent person. For instance, a disorganized walkout or any other form of contestation that implies leaving the workplace, could have major ramifications as far as safety and neglect are concerned, and many workers would find it hard to sacrifice client safety to make a point. This ethical imperative means that those organising collective action must adopt different, more nuanced tactics that make a point to the public opinion and the government without 'abandoning' their clients. This is why home care worker collective action often takes the form of "in-place" protests, informational pickets, or leveraging public petitions rather than an all-out walkout (England 2017). This is an ethical and strategic challenge unique to the care sector, requiring organizers to make their point while upholding a moral commitment to their clients.

There are already some works exploring collective action of care workers taking into account these emotional aspects attached to care work (Nelson 2020). As pointed out by Molitor (2025), care and domestic work arrangements can be understood as a (social) exchange of 'love and money' between workers and clients. Using survey data from Germany, she observes a contradiction between worker-client relationships built on continuity, long-termism and reliability, with the on-demand, economic logic characterising other forms of platform work. Similarly, Whitfield (2022) relies on John Kelly's mobilisation framework, to explore workers' propensity towards unionism in England's outsourced social care sector. The research provides a critical assessment of mobilisation based on injustice and shows that paid care provision generates both employment-related injustices and care-related injustices, which lead to divergent collective identities and attitudes towards unions.

2. The role of care platforms and challenges for collective organisation

The extension of digital platforms in home care, not only has intensified some of the traditional challenges to collective action in this sector discussed in the previous section, but it has also added new obstacles to this. Two inter-related aspects are important here; the extreme regulatory individualisation of work and the algorithmic control exerted by in home-care platforms.

2.1. Digital individualisation

Digital platforms for home care services present additional challenges for the representation and collective organization of workers (Katsabian, 2021; Della Porta et al., 2022). The most important one is the individualisation of employment relations, a dynamic that pre-dates the operation of digital platforms, but that has been exacerbated and become more relevant under this type of organisation. By emphasizing a one-to-one relationship between the platform and the worker, these platforms reinforce the atomization of the workforce hence making it harder to extend forms of workplace solidarity that have provided the grounds for trade union action in standard, non-digital organisations. Moreover, as showed by Pulignano et al. (2023), digitally mediated provision of domestic care services perpetuates the invisibility and informality of such work through individualising risk, as shown in their research through the key dimension of unpaid labour. Platforms also make it harder to have physical interactions between workers and complicating even more labor rights enforcement (Apitzsch and Shire, 2021). Because many of these platforms classify care workers as independent contractors, they are excluded from the right to unionize or access collective bargaining (Nisbet and Morgan, 2021).

Notwithstanding a stronger individualisation promoted by home-care digital platforms is observed, a central tension in the academic debate is whether they also provide a potential

solution to it. At first glance, the digital-first nature of the work, which is decentralized and fragmented, can be seen as an additional barrier to building a cohesive workforce. However, an alternative perspective suggests that gig workers are actively using digital communication tools and social media platforms, such as Reddit, Facebook, and WhatsApp, to create their own online communities and support networks (Trenerry et al. 2022). These digital infrastructures, built by the workers themselves, not only may serve to mitigate the loneliness and lack of professional connections that characterize this type of labor, but they can provide the basis for developing organisation strategies.

2.2. Algorithmic management and control

Algorithmic control constitutes another obstacle to collective action and organisation in the context of care platforms (McDonald et al., 2021; Murphy et al., 2024). Algorithms, as a defining characteristic of digital platforms, exert a profound and often restrictive influence on workers' ability to organize and mobilize. This type of control goes beyond traditional supervision, operating through automated mechanisms that dictate tasks, evaluate performance, and manage interactions between co-workers as well as between clients and workers.

The technological dimension of fragmentation, as described by Della Porta et al. (2022), is largely defined by algorithmic management. This form of management, as Aloisi and De Stefano (2020) argue, can be dehumanizing, reducing workers to mere data points in a system optimized for efficiency and profit. This can lead to a sense of powerlessness and resignation, making it difficult for workers to envision the possibility of collective action. The constant monitoring and evaluation by the algorithm can also create a climate of fear and oppression, where workers are afraid to speak out or organize for fear of being deactivated or penalized by the platform.

The diffuse nature of algorithmic control makes it difficult to identify a clear "employer" against whom to direct demands. Algorithms can penalize behaviors that do not conform to their metrics, such as refusing jobs or not being available, which pressures workers to accept unfavorable conditions to maintain their status on the platform. Furthermore, algorithmic control often shifts risks and responsibilities to workers, who bear operating costs and responsibility for service quality, while the platform disclaims accountability (McDonald et al., 2021). The implicit algorithmic control, such as reputational mechanisms, can also disadvantage workers with caring responsibilities (Murphy et al., 2024).

In the case of care platforms, as compared to delivery ones, there is significant diversity regarding the intensity of algorithmic management and the way it is implemented. In many cases, algorithms are only used in selection, for matching demand and supply hence lacking this monitoring dimension. However, they may still introduce biases in selection processes and perpetuate forms of algorithmic discrimination, though in this case the impact on collective action is less evident (Collectif CTCD, 2024, Bonifacio and Pais 2025). As showed

by Akridge et al. (2025), through their accounts, these platforms reinstate the racialized and gendered power dynamics that have long defined domestic labor.

Platform workers have developed various forms of resistance and mobilization against algorithmic control. These responses are often innovative and adapt to the nature of platform work, giving rise to new forms of "data-driven advocacy" and "algorithmic collective action". This involves workers and advocates using technology to collect their own data, reverse the traditional panopticon of surveillance, and build power from the ground up.

First, there are several instances of workers engaging into "algoactivism" and digital resistance, which involves using digital tactics to manipulate or resist algorithmic control (Cobonpue et al. 2024). Even though these responses belong to the type of micro-resistances theorized in labour process theory (Hughes 2024) and don't necessarily entail forms of collective action, they nonetheless provide a first step towards the development of a collective identity. This type of algoactivism can include sharing information on how to "trick" the algorithm to get better assignments, coordinating mass disconnections to protest conditions, or spreading negative information about the platform online.

In line with the above, some scholars argue that algorithmic control can also be a catalyst for worker mobilization. The shared experience of being managed by an opaque and often unfair algorithm can create a sense of collective identity and solidarity among workers (Basualdo et al., 2021). Workers may begin to see their individual problems not as personal failures, but as the result of a systemic issue that may help to overcome the individualization promoted by the platforms. This can lead to the formation of online communities and informal networks where workers share information, strategies, and support. These online spaces can be a crucial first step towards more formal organizing efforts, such as the creation of worker associations or unions (Atzeni, 2016). The challenge for unions and other labor organizations is to find ways to tap into these emergent forms of digital solidarity and translate them into concrete gains for workers.

In Australia, McDonald et al.'s (2021) research on the means of control in digital care platforms reveals the tactics employed by platforms to manage their workforce. However, the identification of these control mechanisms can also serve as a basis for organizing. By understanding how platforms shift risks and responsibilities, workers and their allies can develop strategies to counteract these practices. For example, awareness of the allocation of operating costs to workers can lead to demands for fairer rates or compensation for expenses. Transparency in quality monitoring and task assignment can also be a starting point for collective bargaining and demanding more equitable processes. These experiences, although not always resulting in traditional union victories, contribute to building worker power and shaping a public debate on the regulation of care platforms.

3. Union strategies to organise (platform-based) home care workers

The organisation and representation of digital platform workers has been one of the central topics of discussion in the industrial relations literature over the last decade. This literature has been placed at the intersection of two academic debates: that on trade union revitalization strategies (Frege and Kelly 2003) and the strategies deployed by trade unions to organise precarious workers (Keune and Pedaci 2020). The extension of digital platforms was perceived initially as an additional challenge for trade unions, whose organisations and strategies had been established thinking in the standard employment relationship and workplace. Soon, the literature showed how trade unions were also responding to the new digital platform environment by combining long-standing union strategies with innovative approaches to platform workers (Vanadaele 2018).

Compared to a rich body literature that has explored the strategies adopted by trade unions to organise riders, or the attempts by these workers to develop autonomous forms of organisation, there is still limited evidence of similar strategies by care workers in digital platforms. This could be explained by the more recent extension of this form of intermediation in care services, but it could also be a reflection of the invisibility that experience digital care workers.

As has been mentioned in section 2, the collective organisation of platform-based care workers poses additional challenges to trade unions compared to other platform workers like food-delivery riders. First, platform-based care workers are mostly women with a migrant status, often in a vulnerable position from a legal point of view. This makes it harder to involve this worker in any form of collective action compared to other groups of workers providing services through platforms, like food-delivery riders. Second, compared to riders, that have some spaces to gather and communicate like meeting points etc., the geographical isolation of platform-based care workers is more intense, hence reducing the opportunities to exchange and communicate. Accordingly, initiatives that attempt to engage platform-based care workers share some similarities with those observed in the case of food delivery riders, but at the same time, there are some differences. Generally speaking, attempts to organise platform-based care workers have relied on hybrid strategies combining legal contestation, grassroots organizing, and digital network-building (Rosińska, 2023; Bonner, 2010). To overcome the inherent obstacles to organizing home care workers, unions and labor organizations are adopting innovative, community-based, and coalition-focused strategies.

In order to provide an overview of the initiatives developed to organise platform-based care workers, we rely on Vandaele's (2018) mapping of union strategies to represent and give voice to platform workers. He showed how the emergence of platform work led to the coexistence of mainstream unions and their strategies, together with other unions and union-like organisations. The former follow to a larger extent a logic of influence in their action. By contrast, grass-roots unions and quasi-unions place a stronger emphasis on membership and tend to be more transformative in their strategies.

3.1. Organising and coalition building

3.1.1. Organising in the (platform-based) home care sector

A fundamental strategy in platform-based care work is organizing and coalition building. Following Martinez-Lucio et al. (2017) we understand organising strategies as comprising union practices aimed at engaging, mobilising, and empowering precarious and marginalised workers to build collective voice and representation. Initiatives that would fall under the organising category would include grassroots mobilisation, community alliances, and political engagement, all of them especially important where formal employment structures are weak or absent as is the case of platform work. Even though organising strategies were developed in the context of the extension of non-standard forms of employment during the 1980s and 1990s, care workers and the platform economy pose new challenges to the successful implementation of these initiatives. Without stable employment relationships or shared workplaces, workers face steep challenges in developing collective identity. In this vein, Cranford (2005) describes how the fragmented nature of employment for personal care workers in Toronto—ranging from informal, unpaid arrangements to part-time agency work—poses fundamental barriers to traditional organizing strategies developed by trade unions, which have to adapt organising attempts to the specific characteristics of this group of workers.

Among all the variety of organising strategies, coalition building has gained increasing relevance in the context of platform work (Geelan 2021). Given the fragmented nature of home care work, and the associational weakness of trade unions, they have sought to build alliances with a variety of actors, including community organizations, immigrant rights groups, care consumer organizations, and other labor associations (Niebler 2023). These coalitions allow for pooling resources, sharing knowledge, and amplifying workers' voices. For example, collaboration with immigrant advocacy groups is crucial to address the specific vulnerabilities of migrant care workers, while partnering with care consumer organizations can help frame workers' demands as part of a broader struggle for quality and accessible care. In this regard, Boris and Nadasen (2008) emphasize that the home-based and informal nature of domestic work necessitates community-driven organizing. Despite their isolation and exclusion from labor protections, domestic workers have succeeded in coalition-based organizing to pass reforms, though long-term change remains constrained by limited political power of this group of workers.

Several instances of organising campaigns for domestic workers are found in the US. This was showed by Poo (2011) that documented the successful passage of the New York Domestic Workers Bill of Rights after a campaign where migrant women, won legal protections through coalition-building, public advocacy, and a community organizing model focused on racial and gender justice. Similarly Delp and Quan (2002) analysed California's unionization strategy, which combined grassroots organizing, policy reforms, and coalitions with senior and disabled recipients. This multifaceted approach was pivotal in turning homecare into a formally recognized sector with over 100,000 unionized workers.

Mareschal (2007) and Boris and Klein (2014) showed a successful strategy in Oregon by the Service Employees International Union and community groups that collaborated to organize home care workers. Their innovative strategy included linking home care funding to government responsibility, engaging grassroots coalitions, and using democratic representation processes to secure bargaining rights for isolated workers (Mareschal 2007). Furthermore, organizations such as the "National Domestic Workers Alliance" (NDWA) have implemented comprehensive strategies to advocate for domestic and home care worker rights at both state and national levels. By mobilizing grassroots efforts alongside legislative lobbying, the NDWA illustrates the power of collective action in changing public perception and policy surrounding home care work (Obias 2009). Their campaigns have drawn attention to the unique experiences of home care workers, influencing public discourse and leading to more favourable legislative environments. Unions such as the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in the United States have pioneered campaigns that focus on legal recognition of home care workers as public employees, enabling them to collectively bargain with the state (Smith, 2012)

Another interesting development linked to the implementation of organising strategies in response to the challenges facing digital home care workers, has been the adaptation of community unionism, a model that connects labor organizing to community groups, immigrant rights organizations, and other civil society actors (Rafélis de Broves et al. 2024, Tattersall, 2010). A key aspect of these strategies has been the establishment of alliances between union representatives and community-based organizations, which can enhance outreach and support efforts. By mobilizing community resources, unions have been able to extend their influence and provide assistance to home care workers, particularly those who may feel marginalized or excluded from traditional union structures.

3.1.2. Coalition building

Following Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman (2013), coalition building is playing an increasingly important role as part of repertoires of action followed by weak trade unions. These strategies have also been applied by unions in the home-care sector where they've tried to build broad coalitions that include not just workers, but also the service users and families who depend on their care. This approach is a direct response to a no-win exploitation situation whereby home care workers are underpaid and lack protections, but the people who rely on these services are often on fixed incomes and state assistance, making it difficult for them to afford higher wages for their caregivers. This dynamic creates a potential conflict of interest between the worker and the care recipient. Successful campaigns, such as those led by the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA) and Caring Across Generations, address this by reframing the conflict not as a dispute between two parties, but as a shared political problem (Nelson 2020). By uniting both groups in a common struggle, these organizations demand better funding and a new care economy from the government and society, transforming an interpersonal tension into a collective political

movement. The strategies employed include public campaigns, petitions, and direct protests to pressure employers and governments.

The “Living Wage for Home Care Workers” campaign in New York City successfully managed to increase wages and improved working conditions for home care workers through unified community action and advocacy efforts (Sterling et al., 2020; Reckrey et al., 2024). This campaign illustrates the potential for coalition-building between workers, unions, and social justice organizations to enact meaningful change in hiring practices and remuneration. Another example can be found in the UK, where the Ethical Care Charter campaign combined the efforts of UNISON and local authorities to advocate for decent standards in commissioning home care services (UNISON, 2016).

3.2. Education and training

Education and training of workers is another key strategy deployed by trade unions in order to collectively organise platform-based care workers. Many home care workers, especially migrants, may not be familiar with language or cultural norms, not to mention their labor rights or with the laws and regulations governing their sector and platform work. The strategic use of education and training is a core component of modern union organizing that directly counters the individualizing and de-skilling effects of the platform economy. For a workforce that has historically been undervalued and treated as “unskilled” labor, union training provides a vital pathway to professionalization and empowerment. However, the impact of training goes beyond acquiring basic job skills. The literature shows that these programmes may also help building relationships with other workers and contribute to socialize them and create working-class consciousness (Perrett et al. 2012, Laroche and Dufour-Poirier 2017). By raising awareness about their rights, they may also contribute to understand the importance of collective action, and develop the skills necessary to advocate for their interests. Moreover, by facilitating peer networks and connecting workers with others in similar situations, unions can help build solidarity and encourage engagement in collective bargaining initiatives.

Trade unions can develop several initiatives with this objective, including organising online or offline workshops and elaborating educational materials on topics such as minimum wages, working hours, employment security, and the right to organize. Even though face-to-face training initiatives like workshops may not only serve the technical purpose of improving skills and knowledge of platform-based care workers, but also to become an instance of socialization, exchange and communication, trade unions may find it hard to organise them. First, because of the isolated and dispersed character of these workers, but most importantly, because of a feminised workforce working long-hours and family obligations. Furthermore, training can include the development of digital skills so that workers can better navigate platforms and use online communication tools to connect with each other. By increasing workers' awareness and capacity, their ability to identify problems, articulate demands, and actively participate in organizing efforts is strengthened.

Furthermore, union strategies increasingly focus on addressing the specific needs of migrant workers. By promoting inclusive practices and providing materials in multiple languages, unions can create a welcoming environment for these workers, allowing them to participate actively in collective action efforts (Shutes, 2011; Green & Ayalon, 2017). Additionally, offering support services such as legal assistance for workers facing exploitation or abuse can help alleviate fears surrounding participation in union activities and bolster collective bargaining power.

There are some examples of these initiatives for home-care workers. In Italy, the Associazione Domina and other advocacy groups have provided institutional support for migrant domestic workers, helping them access legal support, social security registration, and training. Their collaborative approach with municipal governments has been cited as a model for integrating care work into formal policy (De Vita and Corasaniti 2022). In the US, the NDWA similarly focuses on developing leaders and building skills through a range of training and resources. This strategic use of education explicitly re-formalizes and re-professionalizes care work, which the gig economy devalues by framing it as unskilled and subject to a "gamified" system of ratings. This process of re-skilling and re-socialization directly counters the self-exploitation and isolation promoted by the platform model.

Related to the issue of training, trade unions are also leveraging technology to organize and empower workers, in a proactive move to use the tools of the digital economy for their own ends. NDWA, through its "NDWA Labs" innovation arm, has developed tools like "Alia," a portable benefits platform that allows clients to contribute to paid time off and accident insurance for domestic workers. NDWA has also deployed "La Alianza," a Facebook Messenger chatbot that communicates with its community of 177,000 Spanish-speaking domestic workers, providing real-time data and a channel for communication at scale. This demonstrates a strategic adoption of digital tools to bridge the gap between a dispersed workforce and the union (Rosińska and Pellerito 2022).

3.3. Transnational action

Despite the transnational character of the care sector, which has intensified with the extension of care platforms often operating across national borders, there are few examples of initiatives aimed at developing forms of transnational action and solidarity. Given the globalized nature of domestic labor markets, transnational strategies have become crucial (Hardy et al. 2015). International instruments like ILO Convention 189 have helped formalize domestic work as a labor category deserving rights and protections (Blackett, 2015). Transnational action has also taken the form of regional domestic worker networks and global federations, which foster knowledge exchange and support policy lobbying across borders (Schwenken and Hobden, 2021). This transnational action seeks to establish minimum labor standards and protections for platform workers in different jurisdictions, preventing companies from exploiting regulatory differences between countries. Transnational solidarity can also provide support to workers in countries where organizing

is more difficult or dangerous, and facilitate the exchange of best practices and lessons learned from different contexts.

Migrant domestic workers often benefit from coordinated support across sending and receiving countries. For example, unions and NGOs in Europe have built bilateral agreements with their counterparts in origin countries to provide pre-departure training and support services upon arrival (Da Roit and Weicht, 2013). Transnational alliances also help circumvent national limitations by appealing to human rights standards and generating international visibility (Blofield, 2012).

3.4. Care cooperatives

Another initiative that may help promote collective action among platform-based care workers is the establishment of worker cooperatives. These cooperatives have gained increasing relevance among domestic and care workers. The creation of care cooperatives allow workers to have a direct stake in their working conditions and pay rates, therefore enabling workers to collectively make decisions regarding their employment, thereby fostering a sense of empowerment and shared responsibility. By collectively owning and managing their work environment, home care workers can mitigate the challenges often associated with traditional employment models, particularly within a sector marked by high turnover and exploitative practices (Minguela-Recover et al., 2022).

A notable example is the case of care cooperatives in the Basque Country (Barba et al., 2025). This study highlights how, unlike uberized platforms that tend to reduce workers' autonomy, cooperatives emerge as a model that can improve labor autonomy, especially for migrant women workers. These cooperatives, with different levels of digitalization, demonstrate that it is possible to organize home care in a way that prioritizes the well-being and rights of workers, offering a counterpoint to the dominant platform model. The key to their success lies in democratic governance and worker participation in decision-making, which fosters a sense of ownership and solidarity.

Other studies have also explored the positive impact of these cooperatives (Berry and Bell 2018). Minguela-Recover et al. (2022) show how job vulnerability and exposure to violence in home care reinforce the appeal of cooperative structures. These settings can address both safety and autonomy concerns. In Japan, the National Confederation of Trade Unions (Zenroren) has organized care workers by focusing on local networks and fostering "care collectives." Ito (2019) discusses how Japanese trade unions formed "care collectives" based on emotional solidarity and mutual support rather than economic demands alone. These collectives reflect alternative organizing logics rooted in cultural context.

4. Experiences of care platforms organisation

As has been already mentioned, compared to other types of platforms and platform workers, there is still a limited number of works that have analysed the collective organisation of platform-based care workers with some exceptions. So far, most of the studies about these initiatives refer either to non-platform mediated care work or to platform work in sectors like logistics and food delivery. Even though these studies can still provide useful lessons to engage collectively platform-based care workers, there is a need to extend knowledge about the specific conditions facing platform-based care workers. In this section, we provide an overview of works and initiatives specifically devoted to collectively organised care workers in digital platforms.

While the organizing of platform-based home care workers remains nascent, a few initiatives offer promising insights. In the United States, worker centers and advocacy groups have stepped in to support platform-based care workers who are excluded from traditional labor protections (Rosińska and Pellerito, 2022). These organizations provided legal aid, lobbied for inclusion in relief programs during COVID-19, and developed community-based digital support networks. In Spain, efforts to organize care workers working through platforms have emphasized the dual need for visibility and legal reform (Barba et al., 2025). Apitzsch & Shire (2021) report that while traditional unions in Germany struggled to access platform-based care workers, new hybrid forms of representation—combining associations and online advocacy—have emerged in response to the digital shift in the welfare market.

Not all organizing efforts are however successful, and the literature points to significant setbacks, often stemming from power unbalances of workers in relation to the platform and the legal and structural hurdles they exploit. One of the primary challenges is that traditional legal frameworks, which were designed for an industrial economy, fail to keep pace with technology, leaving workers in a state of legal limbo. The FTC's action against Care.com for deceiving caregivers about wages and job availability highlights the lack of regulatory oversight and accountability in the sector.

5. Concluding remarks

This report has aimed at providing a review of the literature about the obstacles, conditions and experiences of collective action for platform-based home care workers. A first point is that there are still few studies analysing the organisation of platform-based domestic workers. This makes it hard to provide an assessment of those factors facilitating collective action and the key to a successful organisation of platform-based care workers. However, we may extract some valuable insights from combining two streams of literature. That on the collective action of non-platform domestic workers on the one side, and that on the organisation of platform workers in sectors others than care. Insights from the first stream should consider the additional obstacles brought by the platform, like algorithmic control

and more intense individualisation. The second stream should consider the specificities of home-care work.

Despite all these limitations, there are still some valuable insights that can be learnt from this literature and experiences. First, the analysis shows how organizing home care workers presents significant challenges, particularly due to the structural vulnerabilities encountered by migrant workers and the dispersed nature of the workplace. This requires trade unions adopting approaches and initiatives beyond those used to organise workers in standard employment and workplaces. There is accordingly an agreement about the importance of organising tactics to collectively organise platform-based collective workers. The review demonstrates the value of strategic alliances and coalitions between trade unions and other civil society actors in order to enhance the political power of home care workers and help them reach their demands. Digital platforms also create new spaces of mobilization, including WhatsApp groups, Reddit communities, and peer-rating resistance tactics (Cobonpue et al., 2024). As shown in other sectors, these informal connections can be leveraged by unions and worker alliances as stepping stones toward more structured forms of organization. Moreover, home care workers cooperatives have also proved useful as forms of collectivisation of experiences of home care workers and improvement in their working conditions. There is less evidence about the positive impact of other strategies like training or transnational action.

These experiences demonstrate that collective action in the digital home care sector is possible, although it often requires innovative approaches and a deep understanding of platform dynamics. The combination of legal, organizational, and public awareness strategies is crucial to advance the protection and empowerment of these workers.

A critical methodological gap is the overreliance on research from male-dominated platform sectors as a proxy for the entire gig economy. Platform work is often analyzed through male-dominated occupations like ride-hailing or food delivery, rendering the experience of racialized, migrant women in care work comparatively invisible. This creates a significant "gendered data gap" and an "uneven development in the literature," as the unique experiences of the predominantly female workforce in the domestic and care sectors are not adequately captured. Furthermore, much of the research is cross-sectional, lacking the longitudinal perspective needed to track how workers' careers evolve and how platform governance changes over time.

6. References

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