‘Algorithm breakers’ are not a different ‘species’: attitudes towards trade unions of Deliveroo riders in Belgium

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Contents

Abstract 4

Introduction 5

1. The end of the SMart arrangement 8

2. Rider mobilisation and the long-standing unions 10

3. Riders' profile: male, young and student; but also migrant 14

4. A very low unionisation rate 17

5. Prevailing lack of trade union exposure 19

6. Platform-based food delivery is complementary to unionisation 22

7. Individual 'fit' and intention to unionise 24

8. Labour market 'fit' and intention to unionise 27

Conclusion 30

References 33

Appendix 37

Abstract

This working paper investigates a rare case of platform work performed in the realm of regulated employment and explores the attitudes of platform workers towards collective representation. The argument is developed that workers' attitudes and their propensity to engage in collective action can be related to their demographic and socio-economic characteristics, and to their experiences of job quality. The empirical analysis is based on a case study of Deliveroo, a place-based food delivery platform. In Belgium, Deliveroo used another labour market intermediary, SMart, to organise, manage and legalise workers' employment status. Thus, effectively, Deliveroo riders worked as dependent employees but were hired by SMart, not Deliveroo. This arrangement was unilaterally terminated by Deliveroo during the period under analysis, sparking discontent and active protests among its riders. The results show that platform workers, in our case predominately young students, are not essentially different to their peers in their views on trade unions and their inclination to unionise. They do not generally hold negative views towards unions, and do not consider unions incompatible with platform work. Instead, the results point to a lack of union activity in reaching out to riders as a reason for their non-membership. Engaging with them may offer trade unions a window of opportunity to win trust and demonstrate the added value of union membership in their school-to-work transitions.

Introduction

Digital labour platforms are defined by market-making through the matching of clients with service providers (Drahokoupil and Piasna 2017). However, their role in the labour market goes well beyond the provision of automated task allocation. It often also includes performance management and control over remuneration. Platforms thus provide different forms of 'algorithmic management' (Aloisi 2016), shifting a range of managerial responsibilities from humans to machines.[1] To gain an understanding of the opportunities and incentives for work organisation, it is essential to appreciate that platforms are diverse (Drahokoupil and Fabo 2016). A major distinction is typically made between geographically-dispersed platforms that organise the provision of digitally-delivered services and place-based platforms that facilitate physically-delivered services. In contrast to cloud-based work on dispersed platforms, work through place-based platforms requires local human input and interaction (Finkin 2016). They often also deploy managerial staff locally to manage relations with regulators, clients and workers who are all concentrated locally. Place-based platforms are directly affected by local regulations and institutions, with the latter also influencing the working conditions and pay of workers contracted by such platforms.

Place-based platforms, with food delivery as a prominent example, thus provide opportunities and incentives for workers to organise collectively. As their business model is based on building consumer base and loyalty around their brands, food delivery platforms need to exert a high degree of control over the work process to ensure consistent quality of service associated with the brand (Kalleberg and Dunn 2016). Their business model also requires control over the fees charged to consumers and restaurants, as well as over the remuneration of delivery riders, or couriers. The high degree of control over working conditions and pay by the platforms creates incentives for riders to target them with collective action in the pursuit of their interests and needs. Mobilising and organising strategies by trade unions, based on combining offline one-on-one recruitment with digital community-building, in the process fostering group identification and gaining network effects, can be potentially effective in such a context.

Indeed, examples of grassroots actions by place-based platform workers are not lacking (Vandaele 2018a). This is particularly illustrated by Deliveroo, the

1. In this process, aspects of human resource management, like the evaluation of platform workers, are also outsourced to clients via rating systems.

app-based, food delivery service. Founded in 2013, Deliveroo is probably one of the most visible and well-known place-based platforms in major cities across western Europe. The first-ever strike over pay was initiated by its riders in London in the summer of 2016. Later on, direct action by the riders also targeted other food delivery platforms in the United Kingdom (UK), and spread across borders to several other European cities (Animento *et al.* 2017; Cant 2017, 2018a; Degner and Kocher 2018; Tassinari and Maccarrone 2017, 2018; Vandaele 2017; Zamponi 2018). Akin to Hobsbawm's analysis of workers' machine-wrecking and rioting in the nineteenth century (Hobsbawm 1952; Wood 2015), protesting riders could be labelled 'algorithm breakers'. It could be claimed that their grassroots actions against the algorithmic management of work organisation are neither desperately futile nor retrograde. Like the Luddites, actions are eventually aimed at the state, especially at the local level, and are focused on pressing for the better regulation of employment terms and conditions. It is a struggle that continues today, not without success (see Table 6 in the Appendix), and, as demonstrated by a nationwide strike in October 2018, also includes an industrial alliance between platform-based food delivery workers and fast food workers in the case of the UK.

This working paper builds upon the work of Drahokoupil and Piasna (2019). It provides an explorative case study of Deliveroo riders in Belgium and is based on a survey, conducted in co-operation with the labour market intermediary *Société Mutuelle pour artistes* (SMart), between December 2017 and January 2018. A complete database of the email addresses of all riders registered through SMart in the period from September 2016 to August 2017 (N=3,279, of which about 1,000 were active in that period) was used to distribute a link to a self-completed online survey. Respondents could choose between three language versions: Dutch; English; and French. After sending out an invitation email and two follow-up reminders, a total of 544 responses to the survey was obtained. For the purposes of the analysis, only those respondents who answered questions about trade unions were selected, resulting in a final sub-sample of 289 riders, yielding a response rate of 8.8 per cent. This is representative of the entire population of Deliveroo riders active through SMart in the period in question in terms of gender (p=0.37, FET) and type of employment (p=0.81, FET).

Focusing on a worker perspective, we thus introduce new empirical evidence in examining the trade union attitudes of Deliveroo riders in Belgium, and their propensity to unionise. We argue that platform workers, *at least in this type of place-based platform work in Belgium*, are not essentially different to their peers in their attitudes towards unions and in their likelihood to join a union. Predominantly young students, Deliveroo riders in Belgium do not greatly differ from what is known about the attitudes towards unions of young people in general. This does not imply, however, that riders should be considered and organised as an entirely homogenous group defined by age; we identify that there are other important differences within this workforce. Moreover, their subjective understandings of their job quality shape their attitudes towards collective organisation and trade unions (Goods *et al.* 2019). Consequently, such diversity and subjectivity entail different opportunity costs for unions and

prompt the advancement of diverse, tailor-made union organising strategies either embedded in young people's school-to-work transitions (Vandaele 2018b) or beyond this life phase.

This working paper is organised as follows. For a better understanding of the survey results, sections 1 and 2 provide contextual information about Deliveroo riders in Belgium, i.e. the SMart arrangement for employing riders, and their mobilisation against the termination of this arrangement, undertaken within the Riders Collective and with the support of the long-standing unions. Section 3 provides information about the demographic and other characteristics of Deliveroo riders. This is followed by data on the trade union density of the riders in section 4. Their attitudes towards unions are analysed in section 5. Section 6 focuses on the propensity of the riders to unionise. This propensity is further analysed by introducing the subjective understandings of the riders of their job quality in section 7. Section 8 puts their job quality into the broader perspective, i.e. the context of platform-based food delivery, and how this labour market context influences intentions to unionise.

1. The end of the SMart arrangement

Deliveroo entered the Belgian labour market in September 2015. It had a strong incentive to provide work to students. According to local regulations, employed students in formal education, irrespective of their nationality, could work for up to 475 hours per year while paying only 2.71 per cent social insurance contribution and no tax. Employers' social insurance costs were also substantially lower for students: thus, the overhead charge for a student was only nine per cent of gross income in contrast to 55 per cent for other workers. However, and despite being in full control of hiring and shift allocation, Deliveroo did not opt to employ riders directly, following its general policy of avoiding being classified and perceived of as an employer. Instead, as of May 2016, Deliveroo riders could either bill their services through SMart, a labour market intermediary providing support to artists and other project-based workers seeking to organise discontinuous careers (Xhauflair *et al.* 2018), or work on a self-employed basis and invoice the platform directly. The riders, the majority of them being students, opted to work through SMart and thus benefit from employment status and the tax advantages for students (Drahokoupil and Piasna 2019). This put SMart into a position to negotiate, with Deliveroo and another food delivery platform, Take Eat Easy, a joint protocol that standardised pay structures and introduced some worker protection. Thus, crossing the boundaries between traditional labour market actors (Xhauflair *et al.* 2018), SMart took responsibilities which were partly those of an employer and partly those of trade unions by establishing an employment relationship with riders but also voicing their concerns *vis-à-vis* the platform – in the latter case, it acted as a quasi-union (Vandaele 2018a).

According to the agreement between SMart and Deliveroo, SMart provided riders with employment status and, therefore, as a formal employer, had to comply with the legal minimum standards required in Belgium. Thus, riders employed through SMart had access to social security, were guaranteed a minimum wage and received partial reimbursement for the use of their mobile phones. They were also guaranteed minimum three-hour shifts, which were paid in full even if a technical problem or accident prevented a rider from finishing a shift. SMart employees also received safety training and were covered by work-related accident insurance and third-party liability insurance (financed from the 6.5 per cent fee invoiced to the platforms). As a legal employer, SMart also administered a salary fund that provided insurance against the bankruptcy of the platform or late payments. The fund was soon tested as Take Eat Easy could not compete with Deliveroo and went bankrupt in July 2016. SMart disbursed €400,000 from its salary fund to pay the

affected Take Eat Easy riders, gaining considerable legitimacy from riders for its model (Dufresne *et al.* 2018).

Claiming that riders would benefit from greater flexibility, Deliveroo announced, in October 2017, its intention to change its work allocation algorithms, alter its remuneration approach to a per-delivery pay system and terminate its partnership with SMart. The transition towards a self-employment model lasted until January 2018 and it coincided, remarkably, with the expansion of policies promoting platform work in Belgium (the so-called De Croo Law) (see Lenaerts *et al.* 2017; Vandaele 2017). This new framework for platform work offered tax relief to self-employed platform workers and, from Deliveroo's perspective, was as financially attractive as relying on workers with employed student status. Using self-employed labour gave Deliveroo the flexibility to change its pay system and working conditions without having to negotiate conditions with SMart, and without dealing with the other 'constraints' of an employment relationship. Deliveroo thus avoided the prospect of being covered by the collective agreement that was being negotiated at the time.

The Deliveroo case sparked a political debate about the employment categorisation of app-based platform workers in Belgium, but this did not stop Deliveroo from terminating its co-operation with SMart. More importantly, however, this unilateral move by Deliveroo caused resentment among riders, giving new impetus to their self-organisation and creating opportunities for the long-standing trade unions to support their protests.

2. Rider mobilisation and the long-standing unions

Belgium has been no exception when it comes to protests by food delivery riders in western Europe against bogus self-employment, precarious employment and payment models based on piece rates. The long-standing Belgian trade unions have, since 2017, been engaging with them via support for the Riders Collective (Koerierscollectief/Collectif des coursier.e.s). This Collective was initially a self-organised network of food delivery riders with no particular focus on socio-economic grievances, being informally set up in 2015 (Dufresne *et al.* 2018). Protests against the employment practices deployed by Take Eat Easy took place in 2016, but the Riders Collective rose to prominence in particular for its defence of riders' interests in the settlement of Take Eat Easy's bankruptcy. It is clear that the bottom-up morphology of the Collective, shaped by and embedded in the broader framework of the platform economy, is quite different from that of the long-standing unions. Differences between the Riders Collective and the unions comprise, among others, organisational form and ideological identity, the membership domain, and both its conception of membership and its relationship with its members – see Table 1.

Table 1 **Comparing the long-standing unions and the Riders Collective in Belgium**

Main features	Riders Collective	Long-standing unions
Union organisation	Network-based	Workplace-based
Membership		
Domain	Occupational-based	Industry-based
Concept	Free	Monthly membership fees Reduced fees, or free membership for certain member categories
Representation	Logic of membership	Logic of influence
Ideological identity	Neutral	'Pillarisation': catholic, liberal and socialist identities

Source: authors' own typology.

Regarding organisational form, the Riders Collective can be conceived of as a self-organised, network-based or decentralised, online and offline occupational community of 'rider-activists' facilitating the mobilisation and organisation of other riders. The Collective could be perceived as being in its 'organic phase' given its recent establishment (Boxall 2008). Such an evolutionary perspective, based on organisational ecology, would imply that, if its leadership and organisation were successful, the Riders Collective would 'mature' into a union, fairly similar to conventional organisational forms of workplace-based

unionism. Alternatively, the Collective could be categorised as an 'alt-union' in the platform economy, i.e. its organisational form resembles to a great extent that which is considered as alternative labour ('alt-labour') in the US context: worker advocacy groups filling a void in industries where the traditional labour movement is not present and which are 'typically modest in size, with few staff and limited financial resources' (Milkman 2013: 656; Oswalt 2016). If the relationship between the Riders Collective and the unions (further) strengthens in the future, then the Collective could be seen as an 'orchestrating' shell of the more bureaucratic long-standing unions in mobilising and organising this social media-based network of riders (Heckscher and McCarthy 2014; Pasquier and Wood 2018; Wood 2015). Another option would be that the Riders Collective, in collaboration with unions or otherwise, sets up a rider- or union-owned cooperative.

Whether the Collective will be a long-lasting form of unionism remains to be seen, but it is certainly not completely idiosyncratic in its form: union formation in platform-based food delivery in several other, although not all, west European countries looks quite similar in terms of representation structures – see Table 5 in the Appendix.

Membership of the Riders Collective is free, irrespective of riders' employment status, and it is sufficient to 'like' its Facebook page to be considered a member.[2] In practice, its membership is occupational-based in contrast to the industry-based membership of the long-standing trade unions in Belgium. Although membership in the unions is also free for students, the concept of formal union membership, involving member registration and administration, is thus not applicable to the Collective. Its membership is self-evidently complementary to membership of the longstanding unions such that overlapping membership cannot be excluded. This could especially be expected of those riders who have spells of unemployment, which provides incentives to unionise since unions are involved in the provision of unemployment benefits (Van Rie *et al.* 2011). Simultaneously, 'liking' the Facebook page of the Riders Collective offers an opportunity to unions to engage with riders online.

The Collective is ideologically neutral whereas the unions are, in contrast, historically rooted in the traditional ideological 'pillars' of Belgian society, although this rivalry has blurred to a more pragmatic stance today (Faniel 2010). This reminds of the early days of unionism in Belgium, when small craft unions were equally free from any political ideological demarcation (Strikwerda 1997). The ideological neutrality of the Riders Collective implies that it is, on paper, open to cooperation and alliance-building with all unions whether catholic, socialist or liberal. Indeed, while being an 'alt-union' in the platform economy, this labelling does not imply that there is a default position of resentment between the Riders Collective and the unions.

2. 1,771 people have 'liked' the page at the time of writing (25 March 2019). See https://www.facebook.com/collectif.coursiers/

Thus, the Collective could reckon upon the experience of the long-standing trade unions in negotiating a collective agreement for improving the terms and conditions of the riders employed by SMart. While concluding a company agreement would have been a kind of derivation of unions' traditional bargaining focus at industry level, with the company level as additional, it would still be embedded in their dominant logic of the pursuit of influence (Vandaele 2018a). In anticipation of the regulatory employment classification of riders, the unions considered SMart as a second-best option, or the 'lesser evil' in this case.[3] Apart from the National Centre of Employees (Centrale nationale des employés, CNE),[4] the Belgian Transport Union (Belgische Transportarbeidersbond/Union belge du transport, BTB/UBT) and Horval, organising in transport and in food and catering respectively, and both affiliated to the socialist General Federation of Belgian Labour (Algemeen Belgisch Vakverbond/Fédération générale du travail de Belgique, ABVV/FGTB), were also involved in the negotiations on a collective agreement, which were suddenly halted after the decision of Deliveroo to end the SMart arrangement.[5]

Prior to the termination of the arrangement with SMart, there had already been a rapprochement between the Riders Collective and the unions. Thus, a first 'symbolic action', by about thirty riders, took place in Brussels in July 2017, with the logistical support of CNE and the transport workers union CSC-Transcom, both affiliated to the Confederation of Christian Unions (Algemeen Christelijk Vakverbond/Confédération des syndicats chrétiens, ACV/CSC) (Dufresne *et al.* 2018; Vandaele 2017).[6] The riders were protesting against their working conditions and, especially, the offshoring to Madagascar of Deliveroo's call centre for its service for French-speaking customers, which resulted in lay-offs. Moreover, about 200 union activists were also protesting at McDonald's in Brussels as part of the international solidarity campaign behind the 'Fight for $15' movement in the fast food sector in September 2017. McDonald's had been selected as a campaign target as this fast food company had been cooperating with Uber Eats, which stood accused of working with 'independent contractors'.

After Deliveroo's unilateral decision to change contractual terms, the Riders Collective organised an 'altershift' involving forty riders in Brussels on 25 November 2017. This proto-strike was supported by the Christian unions, in a low-profile manner, but the Collective was also open to the involvement of

3. The relationship between SMart and the unions (but also the employers' associations) is at least stressful in the other industries in which SMart operates.

4. CNE works closely with CSC-Transcom as the latter is considered the most appropriate union for organising food delivery riders. CNE is involved in the negotiations as the riders have been on a 'white-collar' employment contract with SMart.

5. The socialist white-collar union (Bond van Bedienden, Technici en Kaderleden/Syndicat des employés, techniciens et cadres, BBTK/Setca) and the youth section of the socialist union confederation are watching platform-based food delivery with interest, too. The latter also holds true for the youth section of the CSC.

6. Apart from having some members within Deliveroo's call centre in Brussels, CNE also had members within SMart, facilitating the joint protocol between SMart and the food delivery platforms.

other unions. Riders also saw the support of 'Critical Mass Brussels'[7], as both self-organised groups share vulnerabilities as cyclists on Brussels streets. Strike actions in Brussels, including the occupation of the Deliveroo building by 15 to 20 riders, and in other cities against the obligation to move to self-employed status were organised throughout January 2018, for which a strike fund was set up (Cant 2018b). Although the actions were able to disrupt food delivery, despite riders' interchangeability, Deliveroo did not alter its payment model and did not made any other concessions.

To conclude, most actions by Deliveroo riders have thus been concentrated in Belgium's capital, where a critical mass of them are members of the Riders Collective. While combining smartphones with street protest has been rather ephemeral in Belgium, this has not been the case in in several European countries where the protests continue.

7. This is a citizens' initiative reclaiming the streets for cyclists via protest rides on the last Friday of every month.

3. Riders' profile: male, young and student; but also migrant

Deliveroo riders were mainly young and male and were, mostly, students.[8] Table 2 summarises some of the demographic and other characteristics of the surveyed riders. The vast majority were in formal education and, hence, worked on fiscally more favourable student contracts, while the rest are referred to in this working paper as 'salaried workers'. The age structure of food delivery riders is very skewed: their median age was 22 years (n=273), although the median age stood respectively at 21 and 28 for students (n=227) and salaried riders (n=46). Compared to men, women had a higher level of educational attainment (p=0.02, FET). More than one-third of the riders were migrant workers, with 11 per cent from outside the European Union. Migrant riders were older (M=24.5, SD=5.1) than Belgian-born ones (M=22.2, SD=4.1) (t(271)=4.09, p=0.00) and their educational attainment was also higher ($\bar{x}$(2)=18.19, p=0.00). Most riders still lived with their parent(s) (see Drahokoupil and Piasna 2019: 14), with differences in terms of age ($\bar{x}$(3)=66.10, p=0.00) and educational attainment (p=0.00, FET): unsurprisingly, especially young riders with a non-tertiary level of education (or lower) still lived with their parent(s). Equally, students were more likely to live with their parent(s) (p=0.00, FET) than were salaried riders. Finally, there was quite a degree of geographical concentration in the survey sample: more than one-half of riders were working in Belgium's capital. The major cities outside Brussels for Deliveroo riders were Ghent (n=52), Antwerp (n=32) and Liège (n=31); followed at some distance by Leuven (n=9), Bruges (n=8), Waterloo (n=5) and Mechelen (n=2).

At face value, working for Deliveroo fits the vision of the platform economy, offering workers freedom and flexibility. Entry barriers are indeed very low and working hours extremely flexible. However, riders expressed grievances that the flexibility of platform work was largely one-way, at the cost of greater precarity in their working lives (Drahokoupil and Piasna 2019). Riders often found that the flexibility they wanted and expected, in the form of control over where and when they worked, was in fact not the flexibility they got. As one rider put it in the survey: 'We did not get work when we wanted.' This was because Deliveroo maintained tight control over shift patterns, and unilaterally adjusted these in response to rising and falling demand. Riders were often unable to book their preferred shifts and sometimes got disconnected entirely from the app after rejecting too many shifts. Riders also perceived their position *vis-à-vis* the platform as relatively weak, with limited scope for voicing their concerns: 'Deliveroo does not consider the advice of "its" couriers.'

8. The gender imbalance is similar to the generally low share of women in transport-related activities in Belgium (Drahokoupil and Piasna 2019: 13).

Table 2 **Demographic and other characteristics of Deliveroo riders in Belgium**

Characteristics	Percentage
Gender	
Female	13
Male	87
Age groups	
<=24 years	70
>=25 years	30
Education	
Non-tertiary education or lower	61
Bachelor	25
Master	14
Nationality	
Native-born	65
Migrant	35
Employment contract	
Salaried worker	16
Student	84
Household status	
Lives with father or mother, or both	67
Lives with spouse or partner	18
Lives with house- or room-mates	11
Other	3
City	
Brussels	52
Outside Brussels	48

Source: Survey results.

Their perceived vulnerability was aggravated by the decision of Deliveroo to terminate the cooperation with SMart. One rider asserted: 'This is the end of workers' rights.' This also highlights a lack of awareness among the riders of alternative ways of representing their interests:

> 'This is a bad thing because SMart was the only organisation able to protect our rights in a more or less acceptable way.'

> 'I think it is a shame; whilst working with SMart we had a sense of security and felt we were being defended by them. Now we are out in the open and we never know how much we'll earn.'

> 'I don't think workers will have much negotiating power from now on – not that we had plenty of it beforehand.'

The very limited autonomy that we have acknowledged in riders' ability to choose their shifts (in practice, there was a lack of transparency in shift allocation as a result of the algorithm) was not compensated by income security, since work for Deliveroo was characterised by low and intermittent

pay, insufficient and variable hours, and short-term involvement: half the respondents had been working for Deliveroo for seven months or less. Riders worked 23 hours in a month, on average, with a median of 17 hours. Short working hours translated into relatively low monthly incomes: average gross monthly income was €249, with a median of €177.

4. A very low unionisation rate

Although trade union membership growth has recently halted, Belgium is still a country where the social custom of unionisation is relatively strong with union density of about 55 per cent (Vandaele 2017). No recent data on density in transport or restaurants are available. Yet, it can be assumed that unionisation is high in transport due to the dominance of blue-collar workers, who display above-average unionisation rates (Faniel and Vandaele 2010), and quite high in restaurants because of the involvement of the longstanding unions in the provision of unemployment benefits, the so-called 'Ghent system' (Van Rie *et al.* 2011). Even so, the majority of Deliveroo riders in our survey (n=272) were not unionised and direct experience of trade unions was also very limited: 3 per cent (n=8) of the riders reported that they had been a union member in the past, while about 4 per cent (n=12) had attended a union gathering or meeting. Although the cost of union membership could hardly be an issue in joining, as membership is free for most riders (see Section 2), only seventeen Deliveroo riders were unionised at the time of the survey, corresponding to a union density of 6 per cent in the survey sample. Fourteen out of the seventeen unionised riders were male; thirteen had Belgian nationality. Nine of the unionised riders were working in Brussels and five of them in Liège.

In general, however, offering free membership seems to convince only a minority of young people to unionise in the Belgian context (Delespaul and Doerflinger 2018). Nevertheless, the youth organisations of the long-standing unions are successful in terms of membership, and the unionisation rate among young people is close to that of adults (Vandaele 2018b). In Deliveroo, it was salaried riders in particular who were union members (p=0.00, FET), pointing thus to the presence of other motives among riders for union membership in Belgium. It is likely that such riders are in a relatively more precarious labour market position, associated with higher risks of unemployment. They are, therefore, probably more likely to join a union because of the 'Ghent system'. Indicative of this logic is that the median age of unionised riders stood at 27, and that eleven of the unionised riders had a non-tertiary education or lower; while four of them had a bachelor's degree albeit none a master's. This reasoning does not exclude, however, that the union membership of riders could also simply reflect the existence of reasons for membership outside the context of the platform economy.

No distinction was made in the survey questionnaire between the long-standing trade unions, with free membership for students, and the Riders Collective, with free membership for all riders irrespective of employment type.

Although it could not be known if the riders in the questionnaire survey made such a distinction themselves, it is reasonable to assume that they approached this question in terms of the long-standing unions given their manifest role in Belgian society (Faniel 2010). In fact, it is an open question as regards the extent to which the Collective was well-known by riders at the time of the survey (Lenaerts 2018). Notwithstanding that the relationship between the Collective and the unions is not entirely free from tension, it is far less conflictual than in some other countries, for example Italy (Tassinari and Maccarrone 2018), such that the non-specification of organisational form is less problematic for the analysis here.

5. Prevailing lack of trade union exposure

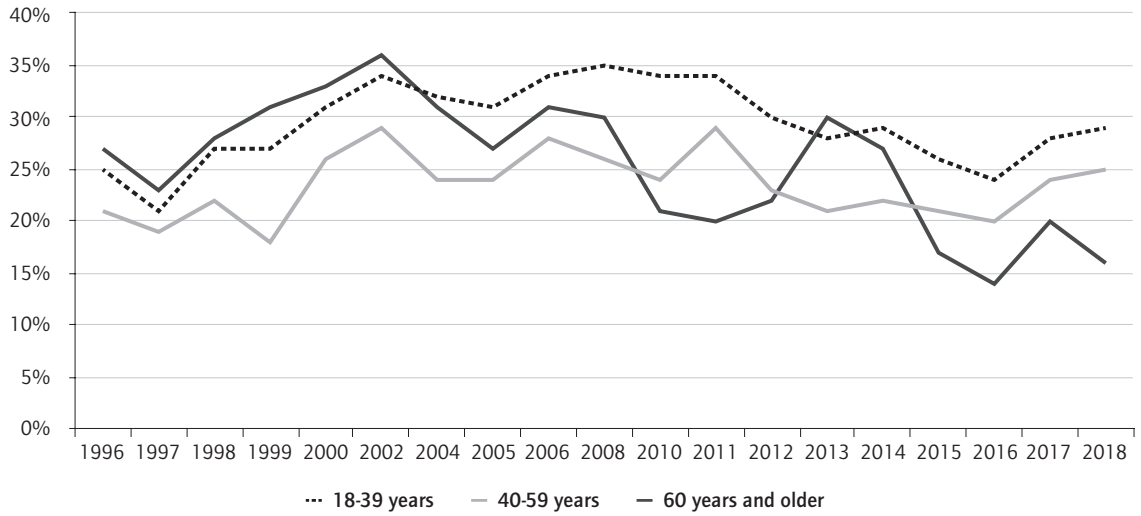
As far as worker characteristics are concerned, Deliveroo riders in Belgium were predominantly male and young, typically students, and often came from a migrant background (see Section 3). This profile is not necessarily a drawback for trade unions: in general, they can still rely upon a relatively high level of social legitimacy especially among social groups exposed to economic vulnerability, such as young people and migrant workers (Frangi *et al.* 2017; Gorodzeisky and Richards 2019). Indeed, research on the attitudes and beliefs that young people possess towards unions has repeatedly demonstrated that the disconnect is largely a matter of a lack of awareness of, and knowledge about, unions – but not of anti-unionism, at least in western Europe and in English-speaking countries in the Global North (Tapia and Turner 2018; for an overview, see Vandaele 2018b). Moreover, the literature points to the presence of (critical) support for unions, pointing to a frustrated or unmet demand for unionisation among young people; only a small minority of whom hold negative opinions about unions in principle.

International findings such as these also hold true in a Belgian context, where positive or critical trade union support is still widespread, although weaker in Flanders, while the traditional social custom of union membership has become a less important motive for unionisation among younger age categories (Swyngedouw *et al.* 2016). While, to our knowledge, no recent survey results are available in the Belgian context similar to ours about the propensity to unionise (see however, Vendramin 2007), Figure 1 depicts the percentage of people having '(very) much' trust in trade unions among three age groups in Flanders as a means of contextualising and illustrating the argument developed in this working paper.[9] The direction of trust develops fairly similarly among the age groups, although there are some exceptions, but the main point is that trust in unions among the 'youngest' age group has been higher than the two older age groups since the mid-2000s. Unless Deliveroo riders in Belgium genuinely differ from their peers, there is little reason to believe that their attitudes towards collective representation would considerably diverge from those of workers outside the platform-based food delivery sector. It is acknowledged, however, that labour market institutions, country diversity in

9. Four caveats should be made. First, the survey question is about trust in trade unions and not about propensity to join a union. Second, the survey relates only to Flanders yet, as already mentioned, it can be assumed that trust in unions is even higher in French-speaking Belgium. Third, no distinction is made between respondents' different employment statuses. Again, union trust will be higher among employees in employment than it will be among, for instance, people in management positions, entrepreneurs or business leaders. Finally, and importantly, the age groups are very broadly defined.

the organisational landscape and riders' ideological leanings and subjective understandings of their own (occupational) identity can all influence the decision on choosing a particular collective organisation for representing their needs and interests (Jansen 2017; Tassinari and Maccarrone 2018; Newlands *et al.* 2018).

Figure 1 **'(Very) much' trust in trade unions by age group, Flanders, 1996-2018**



Note: No data for the years 2001, 2003, 2007 and 2009.
Source: Based upon publicly available data from the 'Vlaamse survey Sociaal-Culturele Verschuivingen (SCV-survey)'.

Attitudes towards trade unions of the riders in the survey may be gauged indirectly in response to the question 'What is the main reason why you are not currently a trade union member?'[10] Table 3 demonstrates that there are three main individual motives, of which two are almost equal in their relevance: riders had not chosen to become a member either because they did not know much about unions; or because they had never felt the need to do so. Compared to native-born riders, a higher percentage of migrants considered that they lacked knowledge about unions, while fewer of them questioned their utility. The third most important reason was that Deliveroo riders, whether Belgian-born or otherwise, had simply not been asked to join. This is closely linked to the motive for non-membership amongst riders that Deliveroo did not have union representation. Outspokenly negative feelings about unions, including people who judge them outdated or no longer relevant, were found only among a small minority. Additionally, some riders preferred to talk directly to management or had doubts about the performance of unions either because of their weakness, or because of a perceived lack of understanding of the needs and interests of riders.

10. Respondents could tick only one option, while the options were randomised for each respondent. The answer options and wording were inspired by Huiskamp and Smulders (2010) and Tailby and Pollert (2011).

Table 3 **What is the main reason why you are not currently a trade union member? (n=264)**

Reasons	Percentage
Lack of trade union exposure	**56**
'I don't know much about trade unions and what they do'	30
'I haven't been asked by a trade union to join'	18
'There is no trade union active within Deliveroo'	8
Trade union ignorance	**30**
'I never felt the need to join a trade union'	28
'I prefer talking directly to management'	2
Trade union 'hostility'	**14**
'I don't like trade unions in general'	7
'I don't think trade unions are relevant'	3
'Trade unions are too weak to make a difference'	3
'I don't feel trade unions understand my needs'	1

Source: Survey results.

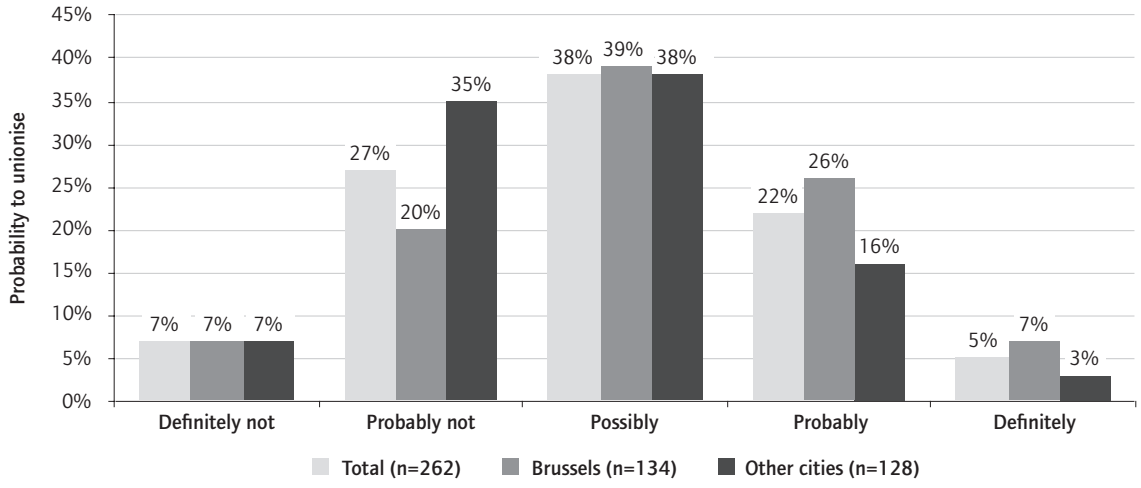
Grouping these motives into three major groups, lack of union knowledge or agency (i.e. 'lack of union exposure') was the main motive for not being a member, followed by ignorance of unions and then 'hostility' to them. Students significantly more often referred to ignorance of unions, whereas the union attitudes of salaried riders rather reflected a lack of union knowledge or agency and were also rather more marked by union 'hostility' (p=0.02, FET). Salaried riders thus had a more ambivalent understanding of unions. We found no significant differences between union attitudes in terms of gender, age, educational attainment, nationality or household composition.[11]

11. Household composition is too rough a proxy to measure parental union socialisation as no information is known of the unionised status of either father or mother. Nevertheless, there is some anecdotical evidence that such a socialisation might have played a role in riders' awareness about long-standing union, especially if they are a student, as parents may have advised them to contact unions after Deliveroo's decision to end the SMart arrangement.

6. Platform-based food delivery is complementary to unionisation

In response to riders becoming mobilised, Deliveroo commonly claimed that they were not representative of all workers. Yet, while the number of mobilised riders might indeed be small, this is not surprising from a historical-sociological perspective since union formation starts only once a critical mass has been gained. Moreover, Figure 2 shows that almost forty per cent of riders believed it possible that they might become a member, indicating that their union attitudes are likely to be rather malleable. Put differently, a large part of riders was undecided on whether or not to unionise, in accordance with their main motive for not joining a trade union, i.e. their lack of knowledge of unions. The survey results also demonstrate that, in general, only a small percentage of riders was strongly oriented against unionisation, while a similarly small percentage was, on the other hand, strongly convinced that they would join. Finally, about one-quarter thought that they would probably not unionise should they have a problem in their food delivery job, while an almost comparable percentage believed that they would become a member in such a case.

Figure 2 **Would you join a trade union if you had a problem in your Deliveroo job?**



Source: Survey results.

Based on the grouped union attitudes, then riders with a lack of trade union exposure had a mean level of 3.1 (n=147; SD=1.0) on a sliding scale towards unionisation ranging from one (lowest) to five (highest), while this level stood at 2.6 for riders characterised by union ignorance (n=78; SD=0.9) or union

'hostility' (n=37; SD=1.1). There were no significant differences in propensity to unionise when it came to gender, age, educational attainment, nationality or employment contract.

All in all, such findings stand in contrast to the powerful Deliveroo narrative stressing workers' control and flexibility; that riders as 'independent contractors' are not at all interested in unionising.

If a distinction is made between Brussels and the other Belgian cities where Deliveroo was operating at the time of the survey, then the percentages shift.[12] About one in four riders in Brussels believed that they would probably or definitely not unionise, whereas this percentage stood at 42 per cent in the other cities. The percentage of riders that would possibly unionise is similar in and outside Brussels. Consequently, the percentage of riders outside the capital who would probably or definitely join a union stood at 19 per cent, with the figure in Brussels being 14 percentage points higher than this. There were, however, no significant differences in the grouped attitudes towards unions of riders in and outside Brussels (p=0.42, FET). The geographical bifurcation in the likelihood of unionisation (p=0.03, FET) might reflect the intensity of the riders' mobilisation in Brussels, where a critical mass of them are members of the Riders Collective, while this mobilisation was rather in its infancy in the other Belgian cities at the time of the survey.[13]

The importance of union agency is further buttressed in that those riders who had been in direct contact with trade unions, either because of previous membership or by having attended a union meeting, were more likely to report that they would join (M=3.40, SD=0.88) compared to riders without such past union contact (M=2.86, SD=0.99) (t(261)=-2.34, p=0.02). The survey results also hint at the importance of existing, prior action networks, like the Riders Collective, network effects and group identification among riders. Riders who had worked for other delivery platforms, such as Take Eat Easy or Uber Eats, had a higher probability of contact with unions (p=0.00, FET). Riders who had experience of different platforms were older (M=25.7, SD=5.7) than Deliveroo-only riders (M=22.4, SD=4.1) (t(271)=-4.83, p=0.00); and were also more likely to be salaried (p=0.00, FET).

Individual and labour market perspectives on job quality will next be brought into the equation in order to further understand riders' propensity towards unionisation.

12. Cities outside Brussels are collapsed in the analysis as observations for each individual city are low in number.

13. Male riders were more present in Brussels than women compared to cities outside Brussels (p=0.00, FET).

7. Individual 'fit' and intention to unionise

Seen from the outside, Deliveroo riders work in very similar conditions and the quality of their jobs is comparable, being influenced by the very same app-based technologies shaping their work arrangements and by the riders' own bargaining power (Rubery and Grimshaw 2001). The level of job quality they experience is also influenced by the 'fit' between the individual circumstances of the riders, including their life stage and need for income, and their expectations of work and platform-based food delivery (Goods *et al.* 2019). Subjective understandings of job quality are multi-dimensional at the individual level. Three particular dimensions have been identified ethnographically in the context of the platform-based food delivery economy: (1) economic security; (2) autonomy over the work (see also Ivanova *et al.* 2018); and (3) enjoyment at work. These dimensions are marked by interactions and tensions within and between them, especially between 'workers' subjective enjoyment of riding, the need to make money and work-related risks' (Goods *et al.* 2019: 14). These three dimensions of job quality are operationalised for our purposes as follows (for details, see Drahokoupil and Piasna 2019).

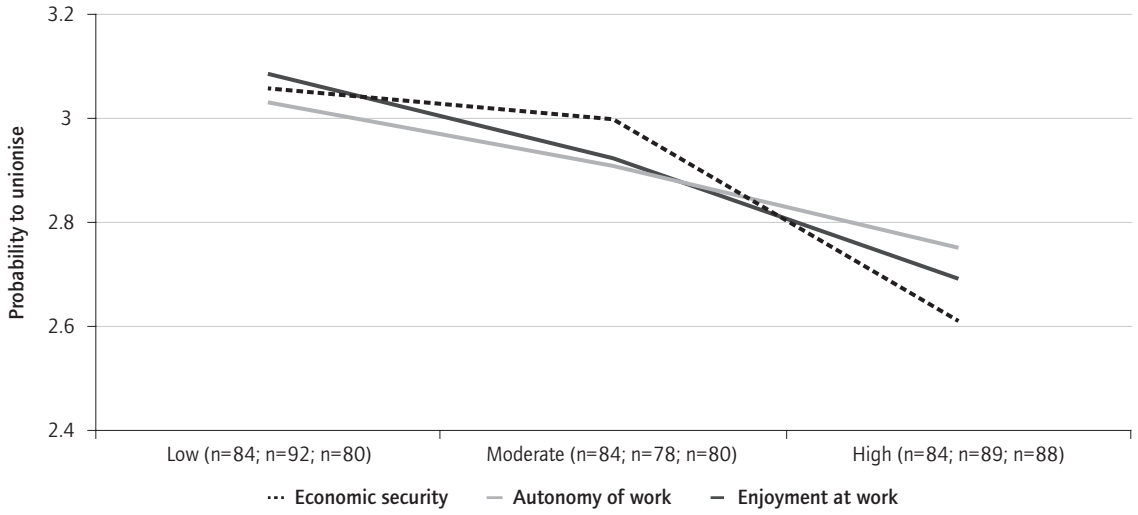
Economic security refers to pay, income variability and economic risk, with its assessment based on the question of how riders would cope with an unexpected expense of €300. Four potential answer scenarios were set: 'I would find it very difficult to find the money'; 'I could cover it myself by cutting back on other expenditure or via a loan'; 'I could cover it with the help of my family/others' and 'I could cover it myself without difficulties'. One-third of the surveyed riders (n=91) said they would find it very difficult to cover an unexpected expense of €300, which puts them in a category of 'low' economic security. One-quarter of the riders (n=69) would only be able to cover it with help from family or others, while 16 per cent (n=44) could cover it by cutting back on expenditure; these two scenarios are regarded as 'moderate' in terms of economic security. A further one-quarter (n=70) said they would be able to cover such an expense themselves without difficulty; their economic security is considered 'high'.

Autonomy over the work is considered on the basis of a Likert-type scale (Cronbach's Alpha: 0.67), constructed from the following items: 'I have control over the pace of my work'; 'I have control over the scheduling of my work'; 'I work under time pressure'; 'Work is stressful'; and 'Work has a negative impact on my health and/or safety'. Thus, the items mainly refer to riders' subjective understandings of their working time.

Enjoyment at work reflects the opportunities for social interaction with riders, restaurants and customers; as well as cycling itself. In the context of this working paper, this enjoyment dimension could be measured only indirectly via perceptions of the degree of social justice behind Deliveroo's algorithmic management, including its surveillance and discipline pressures, with the engagement of the following items (Cronbach's Alpha: 0.67): 'I have been able to communicate in a timely and effective way with Deliveroo in order to solve problems'; 'Considering all my efforts and performance, I get paid appropriately by Deliveroo'; 'Deliveroo adequately contributes to the costs of my equipment (bike, clothing, mobile phone)'; and 'Deliveroo has a fair system of evaluating couriers'.

The cut-off points are set at 33 per cent and 66 per cent in order to create three equal groups for these autonomy and enjoyment dimensions.

Figure 3 **The multi-dimensionality of job quality and propensity to unionise**



Source: Survey results.

Trade unions are seen by workers as providing a collective voice regarding the improvement of job quality (Freeman and Medoff 1984; Hartley 1992), and so it is hypothesised that negative perceptions among Deliveroo riders on the three dimensions will be associated with a higher propensity to unionise. Figure 3 depicts the relationship between the three dimensions of job quality, each categorised in terms of 'low', 'moderate' or 'high' job quality, and the means of the expressed likelihood of riders to unionise on the basis of our scale from one to five.

This demonstrates that willingness to join a union is indeed visibly higher where there is stronger discontent among riders, i.e. where there are lower levels of experienced job quality. The differences are significant for economic security ($\bar{x}(2)=8.03$, $p=0.02$) and enjoyment at work ($\bar{x}(2)=5.78$, $p=0.06$),

although the latter only at the 10 per cent level, whereas the subjective understanding of autonomy over the work is not significant ($\bar{x}(2)=2.36$, $p=0.31$). There are no differences in terms of gender, age, educational attainment, household composition and grouped union attitudes for the three dimensions.

Three significant differences could, however, be observed. The proportion of migrant riders with strong economic security was lower compared to Belgians ($p=0.02$, FET); riders from outside Brussels were relatively more negative about their perceived autonomy over the work ($M=3.0$, $SD=0.6$) compared to riders in Brussels ($M=3.2$, $SD=0.5$) ($t(279)=-3.19$, $p<0.01$); and salaried riders were more critical of the algorithmic management of Deliveroo ($M=2.4$, $SD=0.7$) than students ($M=2.8$, $SD=0.8$) ($t(268)=3.01$, $p<0.01$).

8. Labour market 'fit' and intention to unionise

It is not only an individual assessment that influences the job quality of Deliveroo riders, but also the labour market context and the wider socio-political context (Goods *et al.* 2019).[14] Whether riders perceive platform-based food delivery as a labour market 'fit' will depend on their attachment to the platform economy, i.e. their relative labour market position and their perceived labour market alternatives or options.

We use the following indicators for assessing labour market 'fit'. Labour market attachment is measured by two continuous variables: the number of hours per week that the riders had worked for Deliveroo in the past month; and net monthly earnings from Deliveroo in the past month. In addition, the answer categories to the question 'Have you looked for another paid job since you started working for Deliveroo?' measure whether riders have available labour market alternatives, and consist of 'no', 'yes, in addition to the Deliveroo job' and 'yes, to replace the Deliveroo job'. Finally, the intention to continue working for Deliveroo after the termination of the SMart arrangement is based on the answer categories 'no', 'yes', and 'I don't know'.

Table 4 **Statistically significant associations between labour market 'fit' and riders' characteristics**

Riders' characteristics	Labour market attachment			End of SMart arrangement
	Hours	Earnings	Alternatives	
Gender	n.s.	0.03	n.s.	0.01
Age	0.00	0.00	0.05	0.01
Education	n.s.	0.05	0.03	n.s.
Nationality	n.s.	0.05	n.s.	n.s.
Employment contract	0.00	0.00	n.s.	0.00
Household status	0.00	0.00	n.s.	n.s.
City	0.01	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.

Note: n.s. = not significant.
Source: Survey results.

14. The research design did not allow for assessing the wider socio-political context, i.e. the questions of how and to what extent the platform economy should be regulated, especially regarding employment classification, which would indirectly influence the costs and benefits of unionisation.

Table 4 provides an overview of the statistical significance between the four indicators of labour market 'fit' and the demographic and other characteristics of our respondents. Looking at gender, female riders were less attached to the platform-based food delivery sector (M=232.6, SD=425.6) than men (M=399.4, SD=208.9) in terms of earnings (t(242)=2.14, p=0.03). In other words, their net monthly income from Deliveroo in the past month, at the time of the survey, was lower. Women were also less likely to continue with Deliveroo after the end of the SMart arrangement (p=0.01, FET). There were no gender-based differences regarding labour market attachment based on hours and labour market alternatives.

Concerning age, older workers tended to have a stronger labour market attachment in terms of hours (r(262)=0.27, p=0.00) and earnings (r(245)=0.51, p=0.00). Compared to younger riders, older riders were more likely to be looking for work to replace the Deliveroo job ($\bar{x}$(2)=6.15, p<0.05), and they were also more likely to stop after the end of the SMart arrangement ($\bar{x}$(2)=9.63, p=0.01). Regarding educational attainment, there were differences in labour market attachment based on earnings ($\bar{x}$(2)=6.15, p<0.05) since riders with a master's degree had a higher monthly income than those with a bachelor's degree. Also, riders with a master's degree were more likely to be searching for a job as an alternative to their Deliveroo job (p=0.03, FET). There were no differences concerning hours and the SMart arrangement.

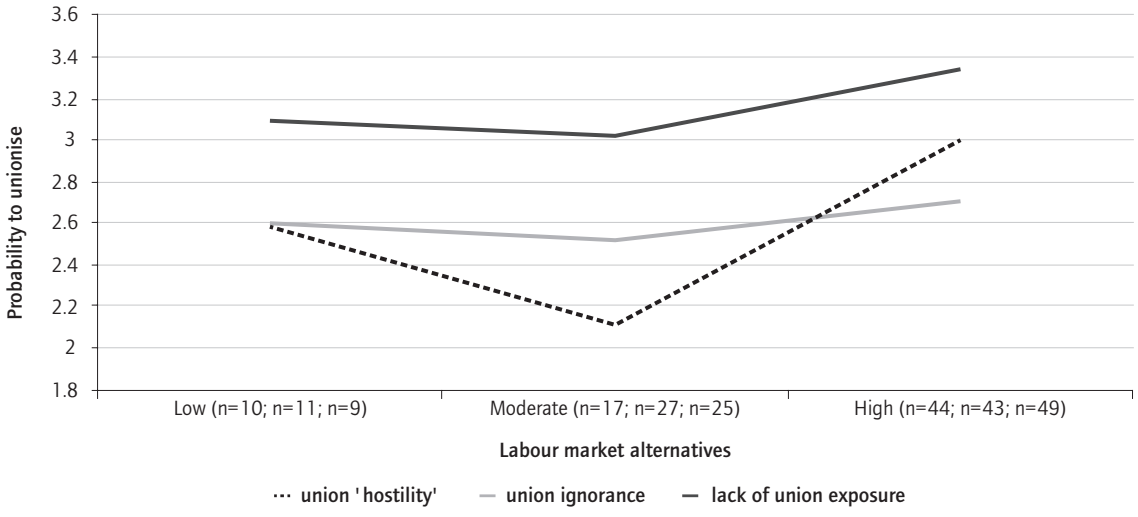
Migrants were more attached to platform-based food delivery (M=453.6, SD=390.1) than Belgian riders (M=344.1, SD=414.0) (t(246)=2.01, p<0.05) in terms of earnings, but there were no other differences between them. Regarding the employment contract, salaried riders were working more hours per week on average (M=29.7, SD=34.9) than students (M=11.7, SD=22.7) (t(273)=-4.43, p=0.00). Equally, salaried riders also earned more (M=793.6, SD=618.23) than students (M=288.1, SD=269.3) (t(256)=-8.7, p=0.00). Put differently, salaried riders had a stronger labour market attachment than students, although there was no significant difference between them when it came to labour market alternatives. Students were also less likely to continue working for Deliveroo after the termination of the SMart arrangement (p=0.00, FET). Riders living with their father or mother, or both, were working less than those who lived with a spouse or partner who, in turn, worked less than riders living with house- or room-mates ($\bar{x}$(2)=19.5, p=0.00). The same pattern holds true for average monthly income ($\bar{x}$(2)=25.05, p=0.00). Finally, riders from Brussels were working more hours (M=19.7, SD=34.2) than riders in other cities (M=9.5, SD=10.5) (t(273)=-3.3, p=0.01).

What does all this imply for riders' propensity to unionise? Platform-based food delivery is a highly transient sector: most riders, especially students, perform platform work for a short time and tend to see food delivery as a side 'gig' in their school-to-work transition (Drahokoupil and Piasna 2019; see also De Groen *et al.* 2016; Jan 2018). Given their short labour market tenure and the presence of fewer labour market alternatives, the latter being composed substantially of 'exit' possibilities, it is hypothesised that riders will choose to cope temporarily with low job quality, i.e. that they will remain loyal to Deliveroo,

thus lowering their incentives to invest in collective representation, and reducing the likelihood that they will view organisations of collective representation as providing them with a voice mechanism (Freeman and Medoff 1984).

There is indeed some indication that the stronger the labour market attachment based on hours and earnings, the higher the propensity to unionise. Yet, attachment in terms of hours worked ($\bar{x}(4)=8.42$, $p=0.08$) and earnings ($\bar{x}(4)=8.20$, $p=0.08$) are only significant at the 10 per cent level. Concerning the intentions of riders to seek labour market alternatives, there are no significant differences in propensity to unionise between riders who were not looking for a new job, those who wanted to replace their Deliveroo job and those who were searching for a job additional to Deliveroo. There are also no differences in intention to unionise between riders who wanted to stay with Deliveroo after the end of the SMart arrangement, those who wanted to quit and those who did not yet know. These results are somewhat encouraging from a union perspective as they indicate that organising campaigns are not necessarily doomed to fail due to high labour turnover.

Figure 4 **Propensity to unionise by labour market alternatives and union attitudes**



Source: Survey results.

Figure 4 depicts mean levels in the propensity to unionise for each combination of labour market alternatives and riders' attitudes to unions – although it should be noted that the number of observations is very low for several groupings. Nevertheless, it is again demonstrated that riders with a lack of union exposure had a higher intention to unionise compared to riders with other attitudes towards unions. Moreover, riders who were thinking about finding another job than Deliveroo were also more willing to unionise, while this was less likely to be the case for riders who were simply staying in their Deliveroo job. In other words, thinking about exit is not exclusive to collective voice, while loyalty to Deliveroo means indeed that collective representation and voice are relatively less appealing.

Conclusion

This working paper has explored issues of collective action and unionisation in the platform economy. The aim was to investigate whether platform workers are substantially different from the offline workforce in their attitudes towards trade unions, and whether the possibilities for organising them would also be fundamentally different. In doing this, Deliveroo, a place-based digital labour platform operating in the Belgian food delivery sector was studied. We conducted a survey among Deliveroo riders and analysed the Belgian context in terms of the regulatory framework and the mobilisation actions undertaken by riders within the Riders Collective, being similar to the 'alt-unions' in the US-context, and with the support of the long-standing unions.

Our analysis shows that the low rate of unionisation in this group of platform workers is largely a matter of a lack of knowledge about trade unions, and a lack of contact with them as opposed to union ignorance or 'hostility' towards unions. Put differently, the predominately young student workers working for Deliveroo do not greatly differ from their peers in terms of their attitudes towards unions. They are not essentially hostile towards unions and do not perceive unions as ill-suited to represent them *vis-à-vis* the platform; and we indeed observed several grassroots initiatives for collective action in the period under investigation.

The results also confirm that subjective understandings of job quality play an important role in influencing riders' decisions about joining a union. In particular, a perceived lack of economic security provides a strong incentive to unionise among riders, whereas the impact on unionisation of autonomy over the work and enjoyment at work is less clear-cut. We also find partial support for the argument that platform workers, similar to workers in general, view unions as a positive, collective voice for improving job quality. The influence of labour market context on the propensity to unionise can thus be downplayed, which is somewhat encouraging from a union perspective since it indicates that developing tailor-made strategies for organising platform-based food delivery workers is not necessarily ill-fated due to high labour turnover. Trade unions can act as a stable actor offering continuity of experience and knowledge in this fluid sector.

Our findings cannot be generalised to all types of platform work because there are other barriers to collective mobilisation inherent in platform work, which is not place-based (Newlands *et al.* 2018). Grassroots action is particularly present in the delivery- and transport-based platform economy (Vandaele 2018a). Despite many similarities with other types of digital labour platforms,

such as workers' atomisation, hyper-flexibility and algorithmic management, workers' demographic and other characteristics, such as their power resources and capabilities, are different. Yet, Deliveroo riders are not a different 'species' in comparison with young people in general, which is likely to imply, *ceteris paribus*, that workers in other types of digital labour platforms will not substantially differ in their union attitudes from workers in an employment relationship *within the same sector*.

In addition, a number of other factors not included in the analysis could also influence the propensity to unionise, such as the occupational identity of riders and their ideological or political beliefs. There might also be measurement errors because the study coincided with a mobilisation amongst riders following the termination of the SMart arrangement. This might, in part, explain their generally 'positive' attitudes towards unions; yet, as already noted, those attitudes are very much in line with those of young people in general.

Furthermore, the Belgian regulatory arrangements regarding the platform economy and its trade union context evidently differ from other countries in which the relationships between riders, their self-organised structures and long-standing unions can be more contentious. The recently-founded Transnational Federation of Couriers in October 2018, set up by riders' 'alt-unions', whether or not supported by the long-standing unions, and grassroots unions, from eleven west European countries (Dufresne 2018), might offer a forum in which to exchange experiences and views, and might stimulate mutual learning.

The absence of union agency and tailored union organising strategies at the time of the study points to the novelty of the platform economy in Belgium. Although still relatively marginal in terms of employment (Lenaerts 2018), the case of food delivery platform work might offer opportunities for Belgian unions to rediscover a more systematic organising approach based on managed activism, and to set up small-scale organising experiments, not bound to a physical workplace and beyond the union's traditional realm, as a means of creatively engaging with this specific group of workers. Unions might support riders with leadership training and education programmes, which would also help to overcome the lack of union exposure, potentially turning them into future union activists. Belgium's long-standing unions are catching up in this domain (Wartel 2018) by developing organising and other strategies towards freelancers.

Finally, the riders in our study were predominately young and were students: engaging with them can offer unions a window of opportunity to win trust among young people and demonstrate unions' relevance in their school-to-work transition, particularly as those formative experiences could influence future attitudes towards unionism (Vandaele 2018b). It remains to be seen, however, if such an active engagement will result in unionisation once students enter stable careers in other sectors. Moreover, platform-based food delivery enables trade unions also to reach out to migrants and to more precarious salaried workers with a stronger attachment to platform work. It could also

provide unions with new legitimacy in other sectors confronted with digital labour platforms. Organising riders, building collective identity and fostering solidarities between them will require imagination, tactical creativity and tailored long-term strategies centred around, for instance, dimensions of job quality, which take into account the individual and labour market 'fit' of these machine-breakers of the twenty-first century and which, ultimately, advances the cause of social justice in the platform economy.

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All links were checked on 01.04.2019.

Appendix

Table 5 **A non-exhaustive overview of trade unions active in platform-based food delivery in western Europe**

Austria
– Long-standing union: WhatsApp groups of Foodora riders are supported by Vida
Belgium*
– Alt-union: Riders Collective – Long-standing unions: BBTK/Setca, BTB/UBT, CNE, Horval and LBC-NVK
Finland
– Alt-union: Finnish Courier Collective (FCC), running the 'justice4couriers' campaign (Oikeutta läheteille). The Foodora Take Responsibility campaign (Foodora Vastuuseen) was a predecessor of this campaign. – Long-standing union: Service Union United (Palvelualojen ammattiliitto, PAM)
France*
– Alt-unions: Bikers Nantais (from Nantes), Collectif des coursiers de Lille Métropole (CCLM, Lille), Collectif des livreurs autonomes de Paris (CLAP) and Syndicat des coursiers à vélo de la Gironde (SCVB, Bordeaux). Coordination d'actions vers l'autonomie des livreurs (CAVAL) is a national structure providing national coordination for the different rider-based alt-unions in terms of mobilisation and information. – Grassroots union: SUD commerces et services (SUD stands for solidaires, unitaires, démocratiques) – Long-standing union: French Democratic Confederation of Labour (Confédération française démocratique du travail, CFDT) and General Confederation of Labour (Confédération générale du travail, CGT)
Germany
– Grassroots union: Deliverunion, set up by the Free Workers' Union (Freie Arbeiterinnen und Arbeiter-Union, FAU) – Long-standing union: Liefern am Limit, as a project of the Food, Beverages and Catering Union (Gewerkschaft Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststätten, NGG)
Italy
– Alt-unions: Deliverance Project (from Turin), Deliveroo Strike Riders (from Milan), Deliverance Milano, Riders on the Storm – Padova, Riders Union Bologna and Riders Union Roma – Grassroots union: (initially) SI-COBAS (in Turin)
Netherlands
– Long-standing union: The Riders Union, which first started as an alt-union, joined the Federation of Dutch Trade Unions (Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging, FNV).
Norway
– Long-standing union: Oslo Transportworkers' Union (Oslo Transportarbeiderforening), being part of the Norwegian Transport Workers' Union (Norsk Transportarbeiderforbund, NTF)
Spain
– Alt-unions: Riders X Derechos – Grassroots union: Intersindical Alternativa de Cataluña
Sweden
– Grassroots union: Örestad LS
Switzerland
– Alt-unions: Collectif des Coursiers/Livreurs de Genève and Velo-Kurierplatform Notime Zürich – Long-standing unions: Syndicom and UNIA, which supports the alt-unions.
United Kingdom
– Grassroots unions: Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (IWGB) and Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)

Note: *The platform cooperative Coopcycle is also active in these countries.
Source: authors' own typology, based on Degner and Kocher (2018), Dufresne (2018) and grey literature.

Table 6 **Non-litigation successes of riders in platform-based food delivery in western Europe**

Austria
– A works council was founded in Foodora in Vienna in 2017.
Germany
– A works council was elected in Foodora in Cologne in 2017 and established one year later. Riders have also elected a works council in Deliveroo in Cologne in 2018, but its establishment was obstructed by means of a phasing-out of riders' employment status from being based on part-time contracts to 'self-employed contractors'. Foodora riders also elected a works council in Hamburg in 2018. Equally, it looks like a works council is on its way in Nuremberg as an election committee (Wahlvorstand) has recently been set-up, in March 2019.
Italy
– A charter was signed between Riders Union Bologna in May 2018, the three main trade union confederations, the centre-left city council and the local food delivery platform Sgnam e MyMenu. The charter, labelled Charter on fundamental digital work rights in the urban context (Carta dei diritti fondamentali del lavoro digitale nel contesto urbano), sets, on a voluntary basis, a framework of minimum standards covering remuneration, working time and insurance cover to be respected by the signatory platforms. International platforms, such as Deliveroo, Foodora and JustEat, have not signed the Charter.
Norway
– The Norwegian Transport Workers' Union and with Foodora Norway are currently, i.e. March 2019, negotiating a collective agreement. The riders are accepted by Foodora Norway as employees (see Jesnes *et al.* 2019).
Switzerland
– Syndicom signed a collective agreement with the courier employer's association Swissmessengerlogistics (SML) in February 2019.[15] It is claimed that the agreement is the first for delivery riders in urban settings in western Europe. The agreement sets minimum standards for approximately 600 riders. Since the agreement has not (yet) been extended, platform-based riders are not covered by it, although the agreement aims to avoid 'social dumping' by the digital labour platforms engaged in food delivery.

Source: authors' own compilation, based on grey literature.

15. For details, see https://www.letemps.ch/suisse/coursiers-velo-auront-cct-un-salaire-minimal-20-francs

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