



- Between June and November 2020, 101 interviews were conducted in five European countries: Bulgaria, France, Germany, Italy and Spain. The respondents were selected for being slash workers and based on the level of skills required by the (main) job; and the nature of their two (or more) work activities (both online, both off line and one online and others offline). The research team developed the fieldwork within a pandemic context. Most interviewees responded to medium-highly qualified job profiles -doubling the number of low-qualified profiles- and more than half of them developed offline work. Respondents generally possess multiple qualifications. Their diplomas or certifications cover a wide range of disciplines, not always related to their primary occupation. This diversity seems to facilitate the slash conditions allowing the respondents to develop different jobs.
- Although the essential requirement for interviewees was to combine at least two activities, it is not uncommon to handle three and even four activities. Some respondents declare that the 2008 crisis pushed them to slash work. In the pre-covid period, some had abandoned -or were abandoning- this status due to burnout, but also because they had achieved more economic stability.
- Even though holding more than one job simultaneously is not a new phenomenon, the current labour market trends place this phenomenon in a renewed context. In particular, two recent developments justify approaching the upsurge of slash workers from a differentiated analytical perspective: the rise of the gig economy and the spread of new values and expectations attached to work.
- According to the country reports and broadly speaking, we can distinguish two main types of reasoning behind the decision to become slash workers: financial motivations and “passionate” justifications. This distinction evidences the differences in meanings and implications for workers of labour market flexibility and fragmentation.
- The financial reasons stress the importance of economic factors as the main driver behind the decision to engage in different paid activities. This category includes slash workers with very diverse circumstances and motivations. They could be positioned on a continuum from the strict need to combine jobs to survive to the desire to obtain extra income to spend on hobbies or unpredictable expenses, placing those for whom the additional paid employment constitutes a safety net in case of possible adverse circumstances in the main activity in an intermediate position. For most of those interviewees who argue financial reasons for engaging in an extra-job, becoming a slash worker has not been a choice; it is more of a survival strategy. Two types of circumstances lead to this strategy: extreme precariousness and a specific and temporary need to increase income.

- For those who claim “passionate” reasons, their primary motivation is not financial but to enrich their work experience by developing their creative nature, artistic concerns or vocational activity. Still, the economic reason is always present. The most widespread profile among them is those trying to find the balance between self-fulfilment at work and economic sustainability by adopting a “double life” (Taylor & Littleton, 2012). A second, less numerous profile, is that of those who prioritize diversity in job tasks. They don't just look for meaning and purpose in their work experience; they seek, besides and above all, variety.
- Within the “passionate” driver, all country reports suggest a notable presence of slash workers who perform at least one of their jobs in the arts, entertainment or culture industries. These workers' motivations, reasonings, and labour practices represent the “new mystique” (Taylor, 2015) attached to work, affecting a growing number of workers in all sectors.
- Many of our interviewees have accessed their additional job through digital platforms. The outcomes of the SWIRL project seem to evidence a bidirectional relationship between platforms and slash work. On the one hand, platforms generate job opportunities that ease workers to diversify their paid activities, thus fostering the spread of slash workers. On the other hand, the extension of slash workers helps create the social conditions for the platform work model's sustainability as it is currently operating, since a second job in the “conventional” market provides the job security and income sufficiency necessary to make digital work desirable.
- The interviewees create their own “employment ecosystem” using their educational, personal and professional backgrounds, interest and talents. Some have maintained a slash status throughout their working life. Others, after a series of periods in specific or several sectors, begin to combine different activities.
- Country reports describe a complex and diversified network of contractual arrangements leading to a multifaceted scenario in terms of rights and access to social protection and labour related benefits. Nevertheless, none of our interviewees have expressed specific requirements for social protection or collective representation as slash workers. The protection gaps described and the types of organizations they feel represented by are related to the particular situations or conditions of each of their work activities or employment situations.
- Being a slash worker reduces the perception of insecurity concerning protection against social risks. This observation may be conditioned because in all the countries involved in the study the selected sample includes a high proportion of informants with open-ended contracts in their primary activity. However, social protection is a prominent issue among those who have temporary contracts, for

those who are self-employed or freelancers and, especially in Bulgaria, for those who work in the informal economy. Generally, except in the cases where all the jobs are carried out under these work situations, our results do not suggest specific problems related to social protection rights inherent to slash worker status.

- In terms of schedules, a common and almost inevitable experience for slash workers are heavy workloads and very long working days or weeks, varying according to their status and whether they combine various part-time activities or a full-time main activity with secondary activities. One primary requirement for slash work is that the different jobs need to be compatible. Usually, this relates to the flexible or seasonal nature of one or two of the activities performed, which allow workers to manage their time. Actually, flexibility, together with skills and task diversity and autonomy, can be considered almost one precondition for slash work. Janu's face of this is the tiring set of activities and side roles related to the different jobs that heavily increase their workload.
- Concerning income, there are a (very) few cases in which the primary activity or the combination of activities provides a satisfactory and more than sufficient to live. However, in many others, the discourses around income point at underpayments, difficulties in covering expenses, uncertainty, and variability. This instability not only relates to income but also constitutes an overarching issue that characterizes slash work, particularly for non-permanent workers and self-employed.
- Slash work is done at the expense of free time and other responsibilities; therefore, the family may intensely condition work choices. It does not seem easy for many interviewees to maintain a healthy balance between work and other spheres of life, particularly caregiving obligations. Given persisting gender inequalities in care and unpaid work distribution, this situates women in a challenging situation.
- Slash workers' involvement in collective representation or labour or professional mobilizations is somewhat limited in all countries. The few cases in which this involvement has occurred are related exclusively to a single job, usually the primary one. Unions' internal organization's sectoral base suggested by all country reports can constitute an obstacle for the organization of workers who, like slash workers, operate in different fields.
- Still, there is an apparent demand for forms of representation that fit slash workers' specific needs. On the one hand, they are interested in protecting matters such as labour law compliance, disagreement and conflicts with the employer, job security issues, working hours arrangements, or labour conflicts. On the other hand, they demand alternative organizations that allow them to have contacts with colleagues, training, and help with fiscal and administrative issues.

- The corona crisis has had adverse effects on at least one of almost all the interviewees' jobs. Even many of those who did not see their earnings deeply affected reported mild anxiety about the future. The online workers might have been the least affected by the Covid-19 crisis. The offline workers, not developing on essential services, were, in general, more heavily impacted by the situation, although many of the high skilled ones could turn to telework. Within the online and offline workers, usually, one of their jobs was hit by the crisis, frequently the offline job if it required face-to-face interaction with other people.
- In general terms, self-employed and temporary workers have experienced particularly detrimental impacts due to the pandemic situation. Conversely, salaried employees with open-ended contracts did not undergo particularly disruptive effects, given the possibility of teleworking or being eligible for the specific socio-economic anti-crisis measures. In any case, it seems that, for many of the interviewees, the slash status has been like a lifesaver.
- Concerning family and household relations, having other income earners who balance the Covid-19's crisis harmful effects of job loss or fluctuation is mentioned as a protecting circumstance. Additionally, we have observed substantial gender inequalities in how this crisis is experienced; female respondents declare that extra family responsibilities derived from school closure were additional stress factors, particularly in telework.