



FAIRWORK AI PRINCIPLES

The standard every assessment is measured against.

FIVE PRINCIPLES. TEN THRESHOLDS.

Each principle is assessed against two thresholds: a first point that sets the baseline standard, and a second point that sets a higher standard.

01 FAIR PAY

- 1.1 Pays at least the local minimum wage
- 1.2 Pays at least the local living wage

02 FAIR CONDITIONS

- 2.1 Ensures safe working conditions
- 2.2 Ensures paid leave and a safety net

03 FAIR CONTRACTS

- 3.1 Provides decent contracts
- 3.2 Ensures secure and continuous work

04 FAIR MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Provides fair treatment and due process for decisions affecting workers
- 4.2 Creates clear and effective systems for data management, explanations, and appeals

05 FAIR REPRESENTATION

- 5.1 Assures freedom of association and the expression of worker voice
 - 5.2 Supports democratic governance and collective bargaining
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FAIR PAY

1.1 Pays at least the local minimum wage

Fair pay is a core component of decent work. Workers must receive compensation that reflects all time and effort required to perform their work, and wages must be sufficient, transparent, and reliably delivered. This includes ensuring that pay calculations are fair in both time-based and piece-rate systems, that all work performed is properly recognised and compensated, and that workers have clarity and recourse in relation to their earnings. To achieve this point, companies must take appropriate steps to ensure the following:

- Workers, regardless of their employment status or contract type, must earn the local minimum wage¹ or the wage set by collective sectoral agreement (whichever is higher) for all hours worked.² Remuneration must meet this threshold after work-related costs, such as fees, equipment, software, internet, insurance, or other necessary expenses, are taken into account. Platforms must take reasonable steps to ensure that workers are not required to spend excessive amounts of unpaid time searching for, applying for, or competing for work on the platform.³
- For piece-rate work, workers must be provided with a reasonable time estimate for each task before accepting it.⁴ The piece rate must be set so that payment for completing the task equals at least the local minimum hourly wage multiplied by the estimated time. Where assessments to qualify for a project, corrections, revisions, or redoing of work may be required, workers must also be provided with a reasonable estimated time and corresponding compensation for that additional work. Workers must not be required to complete unpaid corrections, revisions, or repeat work unless the original submission is demonstrably incomplete or fraudulent.
- Workers are paid on time and in full, within an agreed timeframe. Workers receive clear and accessible information on how their wages are calculated, including base rates of pay, overtime rates, bonuses or allowances, and any deductions applied. They must have access to accurate wage records detailing the amounts paid and the period of work covered. Companies must maintain effective mechanisms to ensure that all completed work is properly recorded and compensated.
- On platforms, workers must be able to receive payment in their local currency or in a widely accepted international currency, such as USD, EUR, or GBP. Workers must be able to withdraw funds from their account on a regular basis, without unreasonable delays, fees, or withdrawal thresholds.

1.2 Pays at least the local living wage

Minimum wage can be insufficient to ensure workers and their dependents a basic but decent standard of living. The living wage exists to set the benchmark of what is required to enable this decent standard of living.⁵ To achieve this point, companies must take appropriate steps to ensure the following:

- Workers, regardless of their employment status or contract type, must earn at least the local living wage or the wage set by collective sectoral agreement (whichever is higher) for all hours worked. Remuneration must meet

this threshold after work-related costs, such as fees, equipment, software, internet, insurance, or other necessary expenses, are taken into account. For platform work, remuneration must also not consistently fall below this threshold once time spent searching for, applying for, competing for, or waiting to secure paid work is taken into account.

- For piece-rate work, workers must be provided with a reasonable time estimate for each task before accepting it. The piece rate must be set so that payment for completing the task equals at least the local living hourly wage multiplied by the estimated time. Where corrections, revisions, or redoing of work may be required, workers must also be provided with a reasonable estimated time and corresponding compensation for that additional work. Workers must not be required to complete unpaid corrections, revisions, or repeat work unless the original submission is demonstrably incomplete or fraudulent.

FAIR CONDITIONS

2.1 Ensures safe working conditions

Workers face several risks in the course of their work, including strain, exhaustion, and exposure to traumatic content. They have a right to protection from these risks.⁶ Companies must show they are aware of task-specific risks and take steps to mitigate them. To achieve this point, companies must satisfy the following:

- There are policies and processes in place to protect workers from risks that arise from the processes of work. Companies must ensure that job-related health and safety risks, including psychological and psychosocial risks, are systematically identified, assessed, and addressed through appropriate mitigation measures and ongoing monitoring. These policies and practices must, at a minimum, account for well-evidenced task-specific risks, including:
 - High job strain, which can lead to a range of negative health impacts, including cardiovascular disease and mental health disorders
 - Secondary traumatic stress, which can arise from repeated exposure to traumatic or distressing content
 - Musculoskeletal injuries, which may emerge as a result of unsuitable equipment, excessive workload, repetitive tasks, or perverse incentivisation structures in physical or repetitive work.
- Risks related to a specific job are flagged to workers before they accept a role or project (such as indicating that they might be exposed to violent content).
- Where there is an employment relationship, the employer places a maximum limit on standard working time that meets either the applicable national regulation or, in cases where there is no applicable national regulation, the ILO standard of 40 hours a week.⁷
- Where there is an employment relationship, workers are entitled to take breaks during working time that is defined under the applicable national regulation, or in cases where there is no applicable national regulation, is equivalent to a minimum of one hour for every eight hours worked.
- If the work arrangements require workers to work in shifts, companies must have a clear policy outlining how reasonable accommodations can be made for workers with additional needs due to health, safety, and other personal reasons (such as pregnancy, care requirements, disability, and other health conditions).
- For work involving exposure to explicit, distressing, or otherwise potentially traumatic content (such as content moderation), companies must adopt additional, trauma-informed safeguards.⁸ In the absence of such provisions, companies must refrain from participating in projects that require workers to handle disturbing or explicit material.

2.2 Ensures paid leave and a safety net

Workers are vulnerable to the possibility of losing their income as the result of unexpected or external circumstances, such as sickness or injury. Most countries provide a social safety net to ensure workers don't experience sudden poverty due to circumstances outside their control. However, not all workers might qualify for the social safety protections due to their own personal circumstances (e.g., visa status, residency status). In recognition of the fact that most workers are dependent on the income they earn from their work, companies must ensure that workers are compensated for any loss of income due to an inability to work. To achieve this point, companies must ensure the following:

- Where there is an employment relationship, workers have access to paid time-off (such as bereavement, parental, sick, and annual leave).
- Where core medical treatment is not provided by a public system, such as a national healthcare scheme, in cases where there is an employment relationship, the employer makes a meaningful provision for the healthcare costs of its workers.⁹
- Where workers are self-employed, platforms take meaningful steps towards the social protection of its workers.
- Where workers are self-employed and are unable to work for an extended period due to unexpected circumstances, their standing on the platform is not negatively impacted.

FAIR CONTRACTS

3.1 Provides decent contracts

Fair, transparent, and enforceable contractual terms are a fundamental component of decent work. Workers must have clear understanding of their rights, obligations, and working conditions, and must not be subject to unfair or non-transparent contractual arrangements. Companies are required to comply with all applicable local laws and regulations. The thresholds outlined below apply in addition to legal requirements and establish higher standards for fair and responsible employment practices. To achieve this point, companies must meet the following:

- Workers must enter into a valid contract or provide informed consent to the applicable terms and conditions when signing up and upon each subsequent renewal or extension. Substantial changes to working conditions, contractual terms, or terms of service must not be introduced unilaterally. Before implementing such changes, companies must provide affected workers with reasonable advance notice and conduct transparent consultation with worker representatives, including elected representatives, trade unions, or recognised worker bodies. Where no such representation exists, companies must consult a representative sample of affected workers.
- The contract or terms and conditions are presented in full, in clear and comprehensible terms, and provided to each worker in a language workers are proficient in.
- The contract or terms and conditions are easily accessible to workers in paper and/or electronic form. If these conditions differ for different contract types, reasonable steps are taken to inform workers about the differences in contract types.
- Non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) and other contractual or policy provisions must not prevent workers from reporting health and safety concerns, seeking support, or exercising their right to organise collectively, nor require workers to waive their right to reasonable legal recourse.
- Except in cases where the worker is in a standard employment relationship, the platform makes clear to workers and clients that:
 - Working schedules cannot be imposed upon workers¹⁰
 - The worker retains the freedom to choose which tasks to accept or refuse
 - When workers choose not to accept tasks, this does not punitively impact their rating or reputation.¹¹
- Where part or all of the work is subcontracted, or where platforms rely on intermediary agencies, vendors, or outsourcing partners to recruit, manage, or supervise workers, the platform must implement reliable mechanisms to monitor and ensure compliance with the same labour and working-condition standards that apply to the platform itself.
- Clients should provide workers with clear and timely information about the purpose, intended use, and expected outputs of the work prior to or at the point of engagement, where this is reasonably foreseeable.

3.2 Ensures secure and continuous work

Fair and secure working arrangements are a fundamental component of decent work. While the form of security may differ across employment relationships, companies have a responsibility to minimise avoidable insecurity, provide continuity where work is ongoing, and ensure that workers are not subject to arbitrary loss of income or work opportunities. To achieve this point, companies must meet the following:

- Where there is an employment relationship, workers with three years or more of consistent short-term employment should be provided with the option to move onto permanent contracts if they so desire.
- Workers working on long-term or ongoing projects should be offered reasonable assurance of continued work aligned with the project's expected duration.
- Workers must not be subject to unreasonable post-employment or post-engagement restrictions that limit their ability to secure future work or earn a livelihood.
- In cases of justified redundancy, the employer should provide workers with severance allowance commensurate with tenure at the company and retraining opportunities. In cases where redundancies are made for economic, technological, structural, or similar reasons, workers or their representatives are consulted, and steps are taken to minimise the resulting redundancies. Where no such representation exists, companies must consult a representative sample of affected workers.¹²
- If desired, workers should be able to invite worker representatives to their end-of-contract meetings with the relevant HR departments.

FAIR MANAGEMENT

4.1 Provides fair treatment and due process for decisions affecting workers

The working relationship is an unequal one, with companies being afforded significant legal and economic sources of power not available to most workers. The interests of these two groups may diverge, leading to sometimes opposed immediate interests in the workplace. This dynamic can lead to unfair management practices. To achieve this point, companies must ensure the following:

- Workers are treated with respect and dignity. Management should refrain from deploying any form of depersonalised bullying or mobbing in order to ensure organisational goals are met.¹³ There are policies in place that guarantee that any form of harassment and discrimination at work, including on the grounds of racial, ethnic, social or minority background, caste, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, language, gender, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, geographical location, or any other status, will not be tolerated and ensure that incidents are dealt with promptly, fairly, and without retaliation.
- Employers using AI systems for evaluation, monitoring, or performance management must inform workers and conduct regular impact assessments to identify and mitigate risks of bias or discrimination.
- Companies must ensure transparency and fairness in any algorithmic or AI-managed pay systems by providing workers with understandable information about how pay is determined, regularly auditing systems for errors or bias, and maintaining effective mechanisms for workers to challenge and correct underpayment, delays, or inaccurate pay decisions.
- Workers have access to a fair and transparent process to get information on and appeal to dismissals, deactivations, and other disciplinary measures, including in relation to those made by AI. This channel is documented in policies that are easily accessible to workers, and communications are responded to within a reasonable timeframe. The process must include safeguards against retaliation, with particular attention to workers in precarious or short-term arrangements. Workers are not disadvantaged for voicing concerns or appealing disciplinary actions.

4.2 Creates clear and effective systems for data management, explanations, and appeals

Contemporary workplaces are increasingly defined by data. The use of AI systems and automated management processes exacerbates both the incentives for employers to gather data from the work process and diminishes the

importance of workers' existing rights to receive explanations, appeal decisions, and access/own their data. To achieve this point, companies must meet ALL of the following:

- Where AI systems are involved in work, companies must create explainability mechanisms such as transparency reports, question and answer processes, and measures to ensure human oversight that allow workers to understand both the model behaviour of the system as a whole and specific decisions.¹⁴
- Workers have access to a fair and transparent process to obtain information about and appeal decisions that materially affect their work, working conditions, earnings, opportunities, discipline, suspension, deactivation, or dismissal, including where such decisions are made or supported by algorithmic or AI systems.¹⁵
- Workers are consulted on the setting and review of task rates, productivity targets, performance metrics, and methods used to manage and allocate work (including when algorithms are used). These mechanisms must allow workers to raise concerns and proposals, and companies must demonstrate how worker feedback has been considered in decision-making.
- Workers must not be subject to excessive data collection or monitoring and should be informed about the personal data collected about them. Companies must apply the principle of data minimisation, collecting only the minimum amount of personal data necessary for a legitimate business purpose. Invasive monitoring technologies, such as continuous webcam monitoring, biometric surveillance, or persistent keystroke and screen tracking, must not be used unless strictly necessary and proportionate.
- Workers must have the right to access and review their personal data, to request corrections or deletions where appropriate, and must be able to opt out of non-essential data processing without risk of penalty, discrimination, or loss of employment.
- Workers' personal data must not be shared or sold to third parties without a lawful reason and the worker's informed consent. Where such sharing is optional, workers must be able to opt out without risk of penalty, discrimination, or loss of employment.

FAIR REPRESENTATION

5.1 Assures freedom of association and the expression of worker voice

Freedom of association is a fundamental right for all workers and is enshrined in the constitution of the International Labour Organisation and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The right for workers to organise, collectively express their wishes – and importantly – be listened to, is an important prerequisite for fair working conditions. To achieve this point, companies must satisfy ALL of the following:

- There is a documented mechanism for the expression of collective worker voice that allows ALL workers, regardless of contract type or duration, to participate in collective groups without risks.¹⁶
- There is a formal, written statement of willingness to recognise, and bargain with, a collective, independent body of workers or trade union, that is clearly communicated to all workers, and available in a durable, accessible format (for example, in a terms and conditions document, contracts, or an internal company document).¹⁷
- Freedom of association is not inhibited, and workers are not disadvantaged in any way for communicating their concerns, wishes, and demands to the company management, or expressing willingness to form independent collective bodies of representation.

5.2 Supports democratic governance and collective bargaining

To realise fair representation, workers must have a say in the conditions of their work. This could be through a democratically governed cooperative model, a formally recognised union, or the ability to undertake collective bargaining with the employer. To achieve this point, companies must satisfy at least ONE of the following:

- Workers play a meaningful role in governing the company through a democratically governed cooperative model or equivalent structure.
- The platform or employer formally recognises and engages with an independent collective body of workers, an elected works council, or trade union, and has not refused to engage with collective bodies seeking representation and/or bargaining. This recognition is not exclusive and, where the legal framework allows, any significant collective body seeking representation should be recognised.¹⁸ New workers are informed of the existence of these bodies.
- Where no such body exists, or no such body has requested recognition, the platform or employer has engaged in a formal process of dialogue with local and/or international representative bodies of workers to discuss what structures and processes of representation could look like.

ENDNOTES

Numbered notes referenced throughout the principles.

1 The ILO defines minimum wage as the “minimum amount of remuneration that an employer is required to pay wage earners for the work performed during a given period, which cannot be reduced by collective agreement or an individual contract.” Minimum wage laws protect workers from unduly low pay and help them attain a minimum standard of living. The ILO’s Minimum Wage Fixing Convention, 1970 (No.131) and Minimum Wage Fixing Recommendation, 1970 (No. 135) establish the conditions and requirements for setting minimum wages and encourage all ratifying countries to ensure effective implementation. Minimum wage laws exist in more than 90 per cent of the ILO member states.

2 This means not only that the rate of pay agreed with workers reaches that statutory level, but also that workers are accurately compensated for all hours worked. “Working time” includes any period during which a worker is required to be available or engaged in work-related activities, such as downtime or waiting periods beyond the worker’s control, mandatory onboarding or compliance training, eligibility tests or assessments, job application or task-access processes required to secure work on a platform, wellbeing sessions, participation in company governance activities, and administrative tasks essential to the role. Underpayment (also known as ‘wage theft’) is a pervasive problem, with evidence suggesting that huge sums of value go unpaid due to unpaid overtime and incomplete or inaccurate wage payments.

3 PLATFORM: Here, the term ‘platform’ is used to refer to a ‘cloudwork platform’ (Woodcock and Graham 2020). Cloudwork platforms are one of two broad types of ‘digital labour platforms’. There are two points of note here. First, a ‘digital labour platform’ is a company that uses digital resources to mediate value-creating interactions between consumers and individual service-providing workers, i.e. that digitally mediates transactions of labour. Digital platforms like Airbnb or eBay, where goods are exchanged, are not included within this definition. Second, among digital labour platforms, there are two broad types. In the first, ‘geographically-tethered’ or ‘location-based’ platforms, the work is required to be done in a particular location (e.g. delivering food from a restaurant to an apartment or driving a person from one part of town to another). In contrast, in the second, ‘cloudwork’ platforms, the work can, in theory, be performed from anywhere via the internet (e.g. data categorisation or online freelancing). In these principles, the term ‘platform’ refers only to the second category of cloudwork platforms.

4 Time estimates must be reasonable and evidence-based, drawn from actual task completion data across the worker population. Platforms may not set artificially low estimates that would result in workers effectively earning below the local minimum hourly wage in practice. Where task completion times vary significantly across workers, estimates should reflect the experience of a typical worker rather than the fastest.

5 In 2024, the ILO published the Report of the Meeting of Experts on Wage Policies, Including Living Wages. The report defines a living wage as “the wage level that is necessary to afford a decent standard of living for workers and their families, taking into account the country circumstances and calculated for the work performed during the normal hours of work.” The conclusions emphasise that methodologies for estimating a living wage should follow a set of principles, including: (a) estimation of the needs of workers and their families through evidence-based methodologies; (b) consultation with representative employers’ and workers’ organisations to ensure local ownership and social dialogue; (c) transparency of data sources and methods, which must be open to scrutiny and replicable; (d) robustness and representativeness of data collection methods; (e) timely public availability of estimates and methodologies; (f) clarity on whether estimates are gross or net, and whether they include social security contributions; (g) regular adjustments to reflect changes in the cost of living and consumption patterns; (h) quality control through technical review and periodic updates; (i) promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination; (j) consideration of local socio-economic and cultural contexts. Fairwork’s approach to identifying and applying living wage benchmarks is informed by these principles. In contexts where no official living wage estimate exists, Fairwork uses the most appropriate available data to identify a benchmark, drawing on sources such as the Global Living Wage Coalition, WageIndicator, or regionally published figures from reputable research institutions, labour organisations, or social partners.

6 The ILO recognises health and safety at work as a fundamental right. Where the company directly engages the worker, occupational safety and health obligations should be interpreted in line with the ILO’s Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No.155). This stipulates that companies shall be required “so far as is reasonably practicable, the workplaces, machinery, equipment and processes under their control are safe and without risk to health”, and that “where necessary, adequate protective clothing and protective equipment [should be provided] to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, risk of accidents or of adverse effects on health.”

7 As endorsed by the ILO’s Forty-Hour Week Convention, 1935 (No. 47) and the Reduction of Hours of Work Recommendation, 1962 (No.116)

- 8 For work that exposes workers to explicit or distressing content, safe content moderation should include measures such as: providing full transparency about the nature of the work during recruitment for projects; setting reasonable limits on exposure to distressing material and enabling task rotation; integrating harm-reduction features in moderation tools; allowing workers to request reassignment from distressing tasks without penalty; ensuring productivity metrics and performance targets account for task complexity and worker wellbeing; offering mandatory, trauma-informed training for moderators and managers; ensuring access to confidential mental-health support and counselling services; and enabling worker input into the design, monitoring, and improvement of occupational health and safety measures. Companies are encouraged to consult UNI Global Union, The People Behind the Screens: Why Tech Companies Need New Protocols for Safe Content Moderation (2025) for detailed guidance and best practice implementation examples of these measures.
- 9 To be considered a meaningful contribution to worker health care, employer-provided or subsidised coverage must include: access to a network of hospitals equipped with emergency and specialised services, such as intensive care units; coverage of both outpatient and inpatient care, without excessive exclusions or co-payments; inclusion of mental health and rehabilitation services; and a clear, transparent claims process and easily accessible policy information.
- 10 The platform shall encourage clients to adopt working time arrangements that are consistent with the contractual terms of the worker-client relationship. While workers may be required to meet project deadlines or to attend meetings, in the absence of an employment relationship, the platform shall discourage clients from unreasonably interfering with a worker's ability to choose their own working time schedule.
- 11 When a worker drops out from an ongoing job, this does not punitively impact their rating or reputation if it is for a reasonable cause, or if the worker leaves the job before it started and if the requester has been given sufficient notice. Platforms might choose to categorise, filter and order inactive profiles without directly changing their reputation score or rating on the platform.
- 12 The ILO Termination of Employment Convention, 1982 (No. 158) defines worker representative consultation as sufficient when the employer provides "the workers' representatives concerned in good time with relevant information including the reasons for the terminations contemplated, the number and categories of workers likely to be affected and the period over which the terminations are intended to be carried out" and gives "in accordance with national law and practice, the workers' representatives concerned, as early as possible, an opportunity for consultation on measures to be taken to avert or to minimise the terminations and measures to mitigate the adverse effects of any terminations on the workers concerned such as finding alternative employment."
- 13 Depersonalised bullying is a form of workplace mistreatment where employees are unfairly treated not because of who they are, but because of the organisation's system or structure. It constitutes a situation where harmful behaviour, like intimidation or aggression, are applied impersonally across the workforce by supervisors or managers in the name of achieving company goals.
- 14 Workers have a right to understand how the use of AI impacts their work and working conditions. Organisations must respect this right and provide detailed, understandable resources to allow workers to exercise it.
- 15 The automation of decision making can lead to reductions in accountability and fairness. But building in human oversight into a decision-making loop does not solve this problem. Instead, the subjects of those decisions need to be empowered to challenge them, and a renewed emphasis should be placed on the liability of those stakeholders who direct the development and deployment of AI systems in the workplace.
- 16 "Collective" refers to an independent, worker-led body that represents shared worker interests and engages in dialogue with management. It can take multiple legal or organisational forms but must be free from company control or interference and able to determine and communicate shared positions on workplace issues. This mechanism can be in physical or virtual form (e.g., online meetings) and should involve meaningful interaction (e.g., not surveys). It should also allow for ALL workers to participate in regular meetings with the management.
- 17 For example, "[the company] will support any effort by its workers to collectively organise or form a trade union. Collective bargaining through trade unions can often bring about more favourable working conditions."
- 18 If workers choose to seek representation from an independent collective body of workers or a union that is not readily recognised by the company, the company should then be open to adopt multiple channels of representation, when the legal framework allows, or seek ways to implement workers' queries to its communication with the existing representative body.



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