

Worker struggles with gig economy giants

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A rider for Just Eat online food order and delivery brand, rides a bicycle in Turin on December 11, 2022.

In the battle between workers and gig economy giants, Uber notched up a rare win Monday when a court in California upheld a state law letting the company treat its drivers as independent contractors rather than employees.

The ruling bucks a broader trend of courts ordering app-based, on-demand companies like Uber and Deliveroo to boost the labor rights of their drivers and riders.

AFP looks back at some of the cases that have made headlines in recent years:

UK wins union protection

In May 2021, Uber agreed a "historic" pact with a British trade union to represent its 70,000 drivers in the UK, after a [court](#) ruling granted them workers' rights.

Under the pact Uber ensured its British drivers [worker](#) status with benefits including a [minimum wage](#) and paid leave.

In June 2022, Uber also cut a deal with Australia's Transport Workers Union, to give its 100,000 drivers and delivery workers more protections.

Spain pioneers 'rider law'

Spain was the first country to regulate the status of the people who deliver food by bicycle or scooter.

The August 2021 "Rider Law" ordered that they be treated as employees, and not self-employed freelancers.

Deliveroo pulled out of Spain shortly afterwards.

In February 2023, the attention turned to Amazon, with a labor [court ruling](#) that over 2,000 people who use their own vehicles to deliver

packages for the company should be put on the company's payroll.

France clamps down

France's top court ruled in March 2020 that contract between Uber and its 28,000 drivers in the country is an employment contract.

Two years later, a Paris court fined Deliveroo 375,000 euros (\$405,000) for "undeclared labor", saying its freelance riders should have been classified as employees.

Deliveroo has appealed the ruling.

Minor gains in Italy

In December 2021, food delivery companies in Italy agreed to spend millions improving conditions for their 20,000 riders in order to avoid a threatened 730 million euros in fines.

Most of the riders are still considered as [independent contractors](#), however, with only a small proportion of Just Eat riders hired on contracts that gives them the right to the minimum wage.

Platforms score in Belgium

While recent rulings have been broadly favouring workers, there have also been wins on the other side.

In Belgium, two [court rulings](#) since 2021 have backed Deliveroo and Uber's contention that their riders and drivers are independent contractors, not employees.

Both rulings have been appealed.

EU-wide push

The European Commission in December 2021 unveiled a proposal to help about five million platform workers across its 27 member states determine their employment status.

The criteria include whether an app determines pay levels for workers, makes demands on their appearance or restricts their ability to refuse jobs.

The draft rules were approved by European lawmakers in February but have yet to approved by member states.

California

US President Joe Biden's administration in 2021 blocked a rule handed down under former US president Donald Trump that would have prevented gig workers from demanding a minimum wage or overtime, signaling a potential boon for workers' protections.

California has been at the center of the battle between platforms and lawmakers.

In 2019 the state voted to recognize gig economy workers as employees but digital giants including Uber and Lyft bankrolled a referendum that effectively overturned it a year later, in a move upheld by an appeals court this week.

Brazil combats 'slave labor'

Brazil's left-wing President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has declared that working for the likes of Uber, taxi firm 99 or food delivery services iFood and Rappi "borders on slave labor" and vowed reforms.

In Sao Paulo, the government has launched an Uber competitor that will begin operations this month and which will give drivers a larger percentage of the earnings.

China joins struggle

China's transport ministry in December 2021 called on the country's answer to Uber, Didi, and other platforms to improve conditions and wages for their workers.

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