

EU waters down law on app gig workers' conditions

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EU officials said negotiators struck an agreement on Thursday on rules that seek to improve conditions for those working through apps, but member states could still reject the deal.

The European Union wants to approve the world's first law covering the gig economy in a bid to give clarity to the status of millions of workers.

The draft text had already been agreed in December. But days later a France-led resistance blocked the deal during a meeting of member states' ambassadors.

EU states and lawmakers returned to talks and over several weeks held many painstaking negotiations to reach an agreement, which officials announced on Thursday.

Negotiators "just found a provisional agreement," Belgium, which holds the rotating EU presidency, said on [social media](#). "We hope that this can be a first step towards better protection of platform workers."

The issue is not out of the woods yet. Multiple sources including EU diplomats poured cold water on any assumption that the deal would be approved by member states.

"It has to be voted on by EU countries and it's unlikely to pass. If they don't get approval by February 16, the directive is postponed until after the European elections" later this year, a source close to the matter told AFP.

EU officials hope the EU's 27 states will discuss the text on Friday, before a vote next week, and that there will be no further obstacles to formal adoption.

"Hopeful for a positive outcome... next week," said the EU's jobs and social rights commissioner, Nicolas Schmit, referring to a meeting of ambassadors on February 16 where the agreement will be on the agenda.

The text will only become law after formal adoption by states and the

parliament.

'Fails to deliver'

The legislation has faced an uphill battle since last year.

Under the original deal in December, many platform workers in Europe could be reclassified as employees if they met two out of five criteria.

Thursday's agreed text removes this, meaning there are no longer European criteria. Instead, it will be up to member states to define what makes a worker an employee.

This change is, however, fraught with risks of fragmentation in the EU's single market, an EU diplomat said, since it would not mean bloc-wide criteria.

This was a compromise by negotiators after states wanted to make it more difficult to classify a [worker](#) as an employee.

Move EU, a European association of ride-hailing platforms representing companies including Uber, called on EU states to reject the agreement.

"Today's provisional [agreement](#) is not the result of more than two years of deliberations, but of a rushed process to agree to any Directive at any price, despite lack of support from many Member States," a Move EU statement said.

"The deal fails to deliver on the goals of the Directive and address the needs of drivers, platforms and passengers," it added.

There are around 28 million gig workers in Europe, and the number is expected to rise to 43 million by 2025. The parliament believes at least

5.5 million people could be wrongly classified as self-employed.

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