



# Uber Files 2 in Brussels

## Driving EU Lobbying

*Study conducted by the Observatoire des Multinationales*



# Foreword

Far from surprising, the Uber Files revelations of July 2022 confirmed what I have seen since my election to the European Parliament in the context of my commitment to the rights of digital platform workers. Namely, that Uber and digital platform lobbies were weaving their webs within the institutions to shape the legislation in their interest, and that they benefited from political support in Macron's political sphere to do so. From my first meetings with Uber and Deliveroo lobbyists in Brussels at the start of the legislature, their enthusiastic statements about the president of France struck me. Subsequently, throughout the legislative process, the French government and its representatives in Parliament did everything they could to spare platforms from assuming their responsibilities as employers. I quickly understood that if Emmanuel Macron devoted so much energy to defending the interests of Uber and the fraudulent use of the self-employed status for workers, it was because he had perceived the opportunity of a Trojan Horse to unravel the wage system, its labour laws and social protection in the long term. An ideological convergence of interests that begins by institutionalising the uberization of employment for pizza deliveries or in the mobility sector, to then generalise it economically.

Despite the stubbornness of Macron and the lobbies, on 9 December 2021, the European Commission published a proposal for a directive stipulating platform workers would be legally presumed employees from the moment they found themselves in a relationship of subordination. This amazing social victory for workers was largely the result of the emergence of a rather unexpected counter-lobbying movement in the institutions of the European Union. The eruption of mobilisations, demands and the voices of the workers themselves in Brussels has in fact made it possible to reverse the balance of power and defeat the strategy of the platform lobbies. Since 2019, the three "Forum of alternatives to uberization" – where we brought together in the heart of Parliament, a hundred couriers, drivers and platform workers from 25 countries – played a decisive role in securing one of the greatest social advances in the history of the European Union. Faced with this new kind of lobby, the European Commission was forced to yield, this time, to the influence of workers' interests rather than to that of traditional lobbies.

And yet, the battle isn't over. While the legislative proposal is currently being negotiated in the European Parliament and the Council, platform lobbies are on the offensive more than ever, after a first round they never thought they could lose.

This report clearly illustrates how lobbies influence the legislative process and how they hinder parliamentary work and political decision-making. But first and foremost, it aims to serve as a tool in the ongoing fight for platform workers' rights, and more generally against the breakdown of wage labour and the emergence of a new servitude in the 21st century. Beyond that, it is also a concrete contribution to the citizens' movement taking back control of democratic political representation as private interests work to confiscate it. Because Uber, Deliveroo and the platform lobbies are like vampires: they fear light. So for the public good, let's shed light on the drivers of lobbying!

### **Leïla Chaibi**

Member of the European Parliament



# Introduction

Digital platform companies' (providing ride-hailing, meal delivery and others services) lobbyists have long been seen walking around the EU quarter in Brussels. The 'Uber Files' revelations shed light on the industry's close ties with decision-makers, including French President Emmanuel Macron and former EU Commissioner Neelie Kroes. But since Ursula von der Leyen put the issue on the political agenda, their numbers have increased significantly. In 2021, the European Commission started working on digital platforms and their working conditions with a view to drafting a European legislative proposal. This triggered a major lobbying offensive by the biggest companies in the industry – Uber and Deliveroo, as well as Bolt, Wolt, Free Now, Delivery Hero and Glovo – to influence the legislative proposal which threatened their economic model based on flexibility, low costs and few social rights for their supposedly self-employed workers.

This report is based on public information and official documents obtained from the European Commission and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). It aims to expose this lobbying offensive and to show how digital platform companies are working to shape the future European law seeking to improve working conditions in the industry.

**In 2021, more than  
28 million people were  
working for digital  
platforms in the  
European Union.**

**This number could reach  
43 million  
by 2025.**



*" I will look at ways of improving the labour conditions of platform workers. "*

Ursula von der Leyen,  
President of the European  
Commission, 2019<sup>1</sup>

1. European Commission A Union that strives for more. My agenda for Europe. Political guidelines for the next European Commission 2019-2024 [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/political-guidelines-next-commission\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/political-guidelines-next-commission_en_0.pdf)

# The digital platforms lobby in Brussels

## Lobbying in Brussels

It is estimated that more than 25,000 lobbyists work in the EU quarter of Brussels. For context, around 32,000 people work in the European Commission,<sup>2</sup> the institution which prepares legislative proposals. 25,000 is an estimate, as it is not mandatory for lobbying companies to disclose their clients, budgets, the number of their employees or their names – except if they wish to meet a European Commissioner and/or a member of their cabinet.

Lobbying is often defined as activities aimed at influencing, directly or indirectly, a decision-making process to benefit specific interest groups. It includes various communication tools and influence strategies, aimed at convincing decision-makers to support or oppose political proposals.

Among the 25,000 lobbyists in Brussels, some work for the public interest (for example unions, consumer organisations, environmental NGOs, etc.) but the vast majority are employed by private companies. Every day, they work to put pressure on the European Commission, the European Parliament, the European Council and permanent representations of national governments in Brussels to ensure EU laws do not harm their private interests.

In Brussels' EU quarter, unity is strength. To lobby more effectively, companies of a given sector work together in industry groups and associations which employ their own lobbyists. Bolt, Deliveroo, DeliveryHero, Doordash, Glovo, UberEats and Wolt are all members of Delivery Platforms Europe,<sup>3</sup> while Move EU brings together Bolt, Free Now and Uber.<sup>4</sup>

Many consulting firms in Brussels also offer lobbying and public relations services, and the vast majority of companies use them to complement direct lobbying. Many law firms also provide discreet services to lobby EU institutions, in addition to their usual activities of legal representation and advice. Finally, think tanks have also become influential in the “Brussels bubble”. Some of them offer lobbying services to businesses in a convenient and apparently neutral way – through meetings and studies.<sup>5</sup>

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2. [https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-commission/organisational-structure/commission-staff\\_fr](https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-commission/organisational-structure/commission-staff_fr) (Website consulted on 23 August 2022)
  3. <https://deliveryplatforms.eu/> (Website consulted on 30 August 2022)
  4. <https://www.move-eu.eu/our-members>
  5. <https://multinationales.org/Les-think-tanks-francais-et-l-Europe-un-partenariat-public-privé-loin-des>

## Who hides behind the platforms?

According to the EU Commission, in December 2021, more than 28 million people in the European Union were working for digital platforms. This figure could reach 43 million people by 2025. The vast majority of them are freelancers.<sup>6</sup> The digital platforms sector is new and not very regulated. Uber may be the most well-known and controversial of these companies, but it's not alone in the market.

**Uber** is a mobility platform based in the United States. Google<sup>7</sup> is a shareholder in the company, and executives from Nestlé, Mattel and Saudi Arabia's investment fund sit on its board of directors.<sup>8</sup> In 2014, Uber received investments from Jeff Bezos (Amazon) and Goldman Sachs. In France, Xavier Niel (Free) invested \$10 million in Uber and Bernard Arnault (LVMH) also invested in the platform.<sup>9</sup>

**Deliveroo** is a British food delivery platform. Amazon is a shareholder.<sup>11</sup> Lord Wolfson, a multi-millionaire member of the House of Lords (the upper house of the Parliament in the United Kingdom) and chief executive of the Next clothing chain, sits on its board of directors.<sup>12</sup>

**Bolt** is an Estonian company specialising in ride-hailing services and electric scooters. Its investors include the German automobile company Daimler in 2018, and the European Investment Bank in 2020.<sup>13</sup>

**Wolt** is a Finnish food and groceries delivery platform. Goldman Sachs is also an investor, among many others.<sup>14</sup>

**Free Now** is a German platform specialising in ride-hailing services and electric scooters. It is a joint venture of BMW and Mercedes-Benz.<sup>15</sup>

**DeliveryHero** is a German food delivery company. DeliveryHero is the main shareholder of Glovo (nearly 94% of shares),<sup>16</sup> a Catalan meal delivery company.

*"We don't need their money per se, but they could be **useful allies to win France**"*

Mark MacGann, former Uber lobbyist talking about Bernard Arnault<sup>10</sup>

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6. European Commission (2021) Commission proposals to improve the working conditions of people working through digital labour platforms [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_21\\_6605](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_6605)
  7. Le Monde (2022) « Uber Files » : le réseau souterrain des géants de la tech à l'appui de la start-up américaine [https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2022/07/14/uber-files-le-reseau-souterrain-des-geants-de-la-tech-a-l-appui-de-la-start-up-uber\\_6134713\\_4408996.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2022/07/14/uber-files-le-reseau-souterrain-des-geants-de-la-tech-a-l-appui-de-la-start-up-uber_6134713_4408996.html)
  8. <https://www.uber.com/fr-BE/newsroom/leadership/>
  9. ICIJ (2022) How Uber won access to world leaders, deceived investigators and exploited violence against its drivers in battle for global dominance <https://www.icij.org/investigations/uber-files/uber-global-rise-lobbying-violence-technology/>
  10. ICIJ (2022) How Uber won access to world leaders, deceived investigators and exploited violence against its drivers in battle for global dominance <https://www.icij.org/investigations/uber-files/uber-global-rise-lobbying-violence-technology/>
  11. <https://corporatewatch.org/deliveroo-we-profile-the-dodgy-delivery-firm-set-to-cash-in-on-the-stock-market/>
  12. <https://corporatewatch.org/deliveroo-we-profile-the-dodgy-delivery-firm-set-to-cash-in-on-the-stock-market/>
  13. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolt\\_\(company\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolt_(company)) (Website visited on August 31, 2022)
  14. Commissioner Schmit. Meeting with Wolt CEO Miki KUUSI. Bilateral discussion on the platform work initiative Virtual meeting, 09/06/2021. Document available on demand.
  15. <https://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/consultation/displaylobbyist.do?id=106050028535-35> (Information du 23 août 2022)
  16. <https://about.glovoapp.com/press/delivery-hero-welcomes-glovo/>

## Their presence in Brussels

*“I was the one talking to governments, I was the one pushing this with the media, I was the one telling people that they should change the rules.”*

Mark MacGann, former Uber lobbyist, July 2022<sup>17</sup>

	Number of lobbyists	Annual budget
<b>Uber</b>	5	€ 700,000 - 799,999
<b>Wolt</b>	9	€ 400,000 - 499,999
<b>Bolt</b>	6	€ 300,000 - 399,999
<b>Deliveroo</b>	2	€ 100,000 - 199,999
<b>Delivery Hero</b>	3	€ 100,000 - 199,999
<b>Free Now</b>	2	€ 50,000 - 99,999
<b>Glovo</b>	2	€ 25,000 - 49,999
<b>Move UE</b>	3	Undisclosed
<b>Delivery Platforms Europe</b>	7	Undisclosed

Source: European Union Transparency Register

These figures are provided by the platforms themselves and may obscure part of their lobbying activities in the European capital. The fact that Move EU and Delivery Platforms Europe fail to disclose their annual lobbying expenditure shows transparency is not the sector's top priority.

Wolt joined the European register of lobbyists in June 2020. At that time, the Finnish company declared only one lobbyist, compared to 9 today.<sup>18</sup>

Bolt registered in 2019, to declare 3 lobbyists, compared to 6 today.<sup>19</sup> In 2016, according to the "Uber Files", Uber spent \$90 million on lobbying activities around the world.<sup>20</sup> Uber joined the European Transparency Register in 2014, reporting €50,000 in annual lobbying expenses. Today its annual expenses are above €700,000.<sup>21</sup>

17. The Guardian (2022) The Uber whistleblower: I'm exposing a system that sold people a lie. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2022/jul/11/uber-files-whistleblower-lobbyist-mark-macgann>

18. <https://www.lobbyfacts.eu/datacard/wolt-enterprises?rid=987241938472-54&sid=120219> (Website visited 23 August 2022)

19. <https://www.lobbyfacts.eu/datacard/bolt?rid=995377734447-25&sid=97151> (Website visited 23 August 2022)

20. <https://corporateeurope.org/en/uber-eu-lobby-profile>

21. CSC (2022) Uber files : Il n'est jamais trop tard pour se rendre compte qu'il y a un loup dans la bergerie <https://www.lacsc.be/page-dactualites/2022/07/15/uber-files-il-n-est-jamais-trop-tard-pour-se-rendre-compte-qu-il-y-a-un-loup-dans-la-bergerie>

# The battle for the directive on platform workers' rights

*“The platforms (and some of their allies) know that they’re defining the rules of work for the future. Because soon, their rules will be the rule, everywhere.”*

Confédération Syndicale Chrétienne (Belgian Union), July 2022<sup>22</sup>

This rapid increase in their lobbying activities and spending shows how the draft directive on platform workers is a key priority for the sector. This legislation could reduce the profits of platform leaders and shareholders, which are based on a precarious workforce.

Throughout 2021, the European Commission prepared its legislative proposal on the working conditions of people working for digital platforms. This proposal was published in December of the same year and sent to the European Parliament and EU Council. Once amended and approved by these two bodies, this directive will define the status and rights of workers of present and future platform companies in 27 European countries.

There are two opposing forces on this legislative proposal in Brussels. On the one hand, there are those that represent workers who want to become employees, with an employment contract with paid holidays, sick leave, and other social rights for workers. As soon as they are in a subordinate relationship with the platforms, they are entitled (like all “subordinate” workers) to a salary, better social protection (paid leave, sick leave in the event of an accident, etc.) and greater control

over the algorithm that sets the pace and quality of their work. They must benefit from the same rights as any other employee, most importantly in terms of labour law, which ceases to apply from the moment they are falsely considered to be freelancers.

On the other hand, digital platforms do not want their current workers to be redefined as employees, so that they remain under their precarious status of freelancers (*auto-entrepreneurs* in France), while still maintaining them in a relationship of subordination.

***“We do not provide salaries to the people using the application to offer their services”.***

Uber France spokesperson<sup>23</sup>

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22. CSC (2022) Uber files : Il n'est jamais trop tard pour se rendre compte qu'il y a un loup dans la bergerie <https://www.lacsc.be/page-dactualites/2022/07/15/uber-files-il-n-est-jamais-trop-tard-pour-se-rendre-compte-qu-il-y-a-un-loup-dans-la-bergerie>

23. Le Monde (2022) Face aux difficultés, Uber s'est transformé, sans vraiment changer de modèle [https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2022/07/13/face-aux-difficultes-uber-s-est-transforme-sans-vraiment-changer-de-modele\\_6134559\\_3234.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2022/07/13/face-aux-difficultes-uber-s-est-transforme-sans-vraiment-changer-de-modele_6134559_3234.html)



*“The underlying objective is probably political: to **impose ultra-liberalism as a model** in our societies. The idea is that companies are freed from any constraint; and that all constraints without exception are borne by the workers.”*

Jean-Bernard Robillard, former Deliveroo courier, October 2021<sup>24</sup>

The targets of the platforms' lobbying vary with the stages of the European legislative process. When the proposal was being drafted, platforms specifically targeted the Commission department in charge of this work: the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, headed by Commissioner Schmit. When the task proved more difficult than anticipated, they also tried to sow division within the Commission – a classic lobbying technique<sup>25</sup> – by meeting other Commissioners closer to their position, such as the Commissioner for the Internal Market or the Digital Commissioner.

Indeed, certain departments of the European Commission are much more supportive of the platforms than Mr. Schmit's. Fabrice Comptour, who currently works in the Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton's office, attended a meeting with Uber in 2015 with Mr Breton's predecessor, Ms Bienkowska. Mr Comptour and

the former Commissioner are said to have inspired, and even encouraged, Uber to file a complaint to the Commission against France, Germany and Spain for restricting Uber's expansion possibilities. The 2015 meeting will be described as excellent by Uber.<sup>26</sup> Fabrice Comptour is also very close to Emmanuel Macron. Shortly after the launch of Macron's political party "En Marche!" (now Renaissance), he contributed to internal memos on European defence issues.<sup>27</sup> This is not the only example of political alignment between the Commission and platforms. Bolt CEO Markus Villig sits on the EU Innovation Council.<sup>28</sup> Zuzana Púčiková, director in charge of European policy at Uber, has been appointed a climate ambassador for the European Commission.<sup>29</sup>

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24. Vice (2021) Tout le monde y perd à se faire livrer de la bouffe à domicile <https://www.vice.com/fr/article/z3nbme/deliveroo-shift-livraison-domicile-neoliberalisme>

25. <https://corporateeurope.org/en/2020/12/big-tech-brings-out-big-guns-fight-future-eu-tech-regulation>

26. Le Monde (2022) « Uber Files » : des plaintes européennes d'Uber favorablement accueillies à Bruxelles [https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2022/07/12/uber-files-des-plaintes-europeennes-d-uber-favorablement-accueillies-a-bruxelles\\_6134523\\_4408996.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2022/07/12/uber-files-des-plaintes-europeennes-d-uber-favorablement-accueillies-a-bruxelles_6134523_4408996.html)

27. Le Monde (2022) « Uber Files » : en 2017, une forte proximité idéologique entre Uber et la campagne présidentielle d'Emmanuel Macron [https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2022/07/12/uber-files-en-2017-une-forte-proximite-ideologique-entre-uber-et-la-campagne-presidentielle-d-emmanuel-macron\\_6134407\\_4408996.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2022/07/12/uber-files-en-2017-une-forte-proximite-ideologique-entre-uber-et-la-campagne-presidentielle-d-emmanuel-macron_6134407_4408996.html)

28. Commissioner Schmit. Meeting with Bolt CEO Markus VILLIG. Bilateral discussion on the platform work initiative Virtual meeting, 26/04/2021. Document available on demand.

29. CES (2022) Uber files : les eurodéputés doivent enquêter sur le lobbying anti-travailleurs auprès de l'UE <https://www.etuc.org/fr/pressrelease/uber-files-les-eurodeputes-doivent-enqueter-sur-le-lobbying-anti-travailleurs-aupres>

# Digital platforms' lobbying strategies in Brussels

Companies have built very diverse and elaborate lobbying strategies to convince politicians and protect their interests. Digital platforms had only to choose from a “toolbox” of influence strategies already used by other industries to prevent the European legislative proposal from changing workers' status from alleged freelancers to employees. They acquired the services of lobbying “mercenaries”; met key decision-makers; presented their arguments, and tried to impose their figures and narrative.

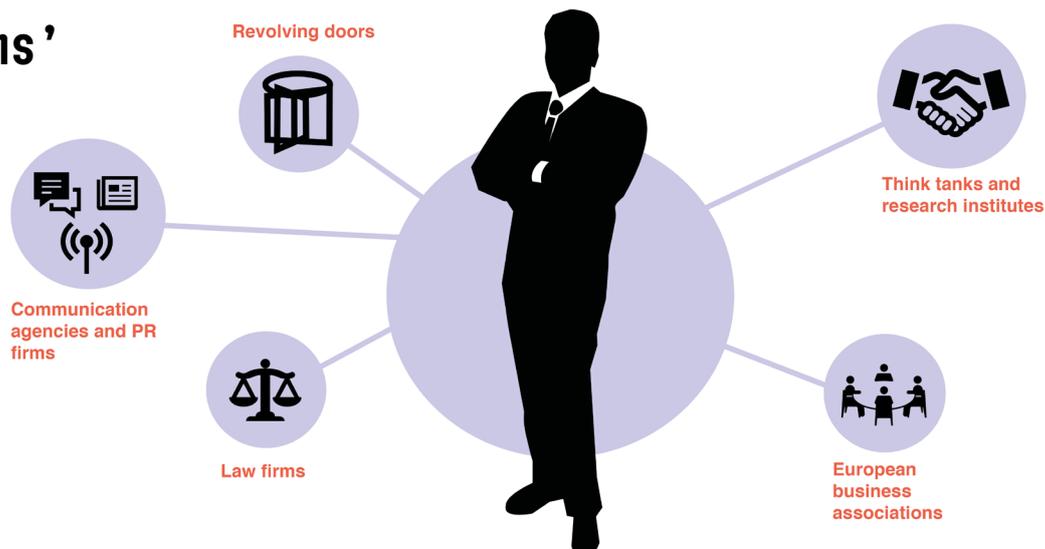
However, these arguments, despite being rehashed by digital platforms and the companies working for them (law firms, communication agencies, public relation companies, etc.), weren't enough.<sup>31</sup> As the legislative proposal's publication date drew nearer, platforms increasingly resorted to more aggressive lobbying methods: challenging the legislative process; putting their own solutions forward, and above all, delegitimising their opponents.



*“[Uber's] lobbyists [will] do anything to rewrite the rules in their favour, or to simply ignore them when they fail.”*

Ludovic Voet, Confederal Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation, 2022<sup>30</sup>

## The platforms' lobbying network



30. CES (2022) Uber files : les eurodéputés doivent enquêter sur le lobbying anti-travailleurs auprès de l'UE <https://www.etuc.org/fr/pressrelease/uber-files-les-eurodeputes-doivent-enqueter-sur-le-lobbying-anti-travailleurs-aupres>

31. Médiapart (2022) Uber : à Bruxelles, un lobbying agressif mais finalement peu payant <https://www.mediapart.fr/index.php/journal/international/110722/uber-bruxelles-un-lobbying-agressif-mais-finalement-peu-payant>

## Unity is strength: business associations also speak for digital platforms

Digital platforms don't just use their own public relations employees to reach European institutions. They can also count on the European business associations of which they are members. For example, Uber can benefit from BusinessEurope's firepower (a European employers' association) to disseminate its messages. Uber sits on one of its advisory structures.<sup>32</sup> BusinessEurope enjoys privileged access to the European Commission, in part thanks to annual Commission meetings bringing together European Commissioners and the most influential CEOs.<sup>33</sup> Another example is Wolt, who told the European Commission in January 2021 that its political arguments were supported by BusinessEurope as well as national employers' associations.<sup>34</sup> The German employers' association did in fact meet with Commissioner Schmit in October 2021 to talk to him, among other things, about the legislative proposal on platform workers.<sup>35</sup>

Digital platforms can also rely on European sectoral business associations. They created two associations for this reason: Move EU which brings together Bolt, Free Now and Uber, and Delivery Platforms Europe, which brings together Bolt, Deliveroo, DeliveryHero, Doordash, Glovo, UberEats and Wolt. In addition, some platform companies are also members of European digital industry associations. Wolt and Uber, for example, are members of the Computer and Communications Industry Association.<sup>36</sup> This association was able to arrange various meetings discreetly with the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU in 2020.<sup>37</sup> The European office of this group of digital companies is chaired by a former adviser to the United States government in Brussels on digital issues.<sup>38</sup>

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32. Médiapart (2022) Uber : à Bruxelles, un lobbying agressif mais finalement peu payant <https://www.mediapart.fr/index.php/journal/international/110722/uber-bruxelles-un-lobbying-agressif-mais-finalement-peu-payant>

33. <https://www.businesseurope.eu/publications/businesseurope-headlines-no-2021-33> (Website visited on 31 August, 2022)

34. Commissioner Schmit. Meeting with Wolt CEO Miki KUUSI. Bilateral discussion on the platform work initiative Virtual meeting, 09/06/2021. Document available on demand.

35. Meeting of Commissioner Schmit with the BDA on 4/10 in Strasbourg. Document available on demand.

36. <https://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/consultation/displaylobbyist.do?id=002278013515-26> et <https://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/consultation/displaylobbyist.do?id=987241938472-54> (Websites visited on 5 September, 2022)

37. Corporate Europe Observatory (2020) Big Tech brings out the big guns in fight for future of EU tech regulation <https://corporateeurope.org/en/2020/12/big-tech-brings-out-big-guns-fight-future-eu-tech-regulation>

38. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/christianborggreen/?originalSubdomain=be> (Website visited on 5 September, 2022)

## Paying experts for their services

Platforms can also count on the support of think tanks. A think tank is typically an organisation that brings together experts, publishing studies and organising events. These organisations sometimes wield considerable influence.<sup>39</sup> Uber, for example, is a member of the CEPS<sup>40</sup> think tank. Coincidence? This research center was commissioned to write a study on digital platforms – and their working conditions specifically – by the European Commission in June 2021.<sup>41</sup>

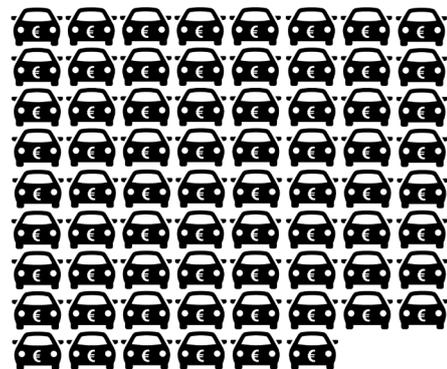
A slew of consultants and law firms also work for digital platforms in the European quarter. For example, since 2013, Uber has spent more than one million euros on lobbying through contracts

with Covington & Burling LLP and Gide Loyrette Nouel.<sup>42</sup> The "Uber Files" revealed the existence of two missions entrusted to Fipra (a public affairs firm) in 2014. Fipra created a list of no less than 1,850 "targets" for Uber to approach to advance its agenda in around thirty European countries. It includes mainly politicians and civil servants, but also academics, CEOs, journalists and influential advisers.<sup>43</sup> Above all, Fipra, commissioned by Uber, met Neelie Kroes, then Commissioner for the Digital Economy, on 18 October 2014, less than two weeks before he left the Commission, to discuss in particular, his future role in the company.<sup>44</sup>

From 2014 to 2022,  
Uber's lobby spending  
increased by  
**1400%**



2014 : € 50 000



2022 : Over € 700 000

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- 39. Observatoire des Multinationales (2022) Les think tanks français et l'Europe : un partenariat public-privé loin des citoyens <https://multinationales.org/Les-think-tanks-francais-et-l-Europe-un-partenariat-public-privé-loin-des>
  - 40. <https://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/consultation/displaylobbyist.do?id=002278013515-26> (Website visited on 5 September, 2022)
  - 41. <https://www.ceps.eu/ceps-publications/digital-labour-platforms-in-the-eu/> ((Website visited on 5 September, 2022)
  - 42. Médiapart (2022) Uber : à Bruxelles, un lobbying agressif mais finalement peu payant <https://www.mediapart.fr/index.php/journal/international/110722/uber-bruxelles-un-lobbying-agressif-mais-finalement-peu-payant>
  - 43. Le Monde (2022) « Uber Files » : dans le monde entier, chronique d'une extraordinaire entreprise de lobbying [https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2022/07/13/uber-files-dans-le-monde-entier-chronique-d-une-extraordinaire-entreprise-de-lobbying\\_6134580\\_4408996.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2022/07/13/uber-files-dans-le-monde-entier-chronique-d-une-extraordinaire-entreprise-de-lobbying_6134580_4408996.html)
  - 44. Le Monde (2022) « Uber Files » : les liaisons dangereuses entre Uber et la commissaire européenne Neelie Kroes [https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2022/07/12/uber-files-les-liaisons-dangereuses-entre-uber-et-la-commissaire-europeenne-neelie-kroes\\_6134525\\_4408996.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2022/07/12/uber-files-les-liaisons-dangereuses-entre-uber-et-la-commissaire-europeenne-neelie-kroes_6134525_4408996.html)

Uber is not the only digital platform to have acquired the services of expert lobbying firms in Brussels. Bolt spent between 100,000 and 200,000 euros in 2020 to pay for the consultancy and communication services of Portland, an agency founded in 2000 by Peter Guilford, a former spokesman for the Commission. It was through Portland, for example, that Bolt obtained a meeting with the cabinet of the European Commissioner for the Internal Market, Thierry Breton, on September 7, 2021.<sup>45</sup> Bolt is also a client of the EPPA agency, enabling it to meet influential advisers in the European Parliament<sup>46</sup> and to obtain the EU Parliament's legislative timetable.<sup>47</sup>

For tens of thousands of euros per year, Weber Shandwick works for Deliveroo; APCO works for Wolt, and Hanover Communications works for DeliveryHero.<sup>48</sup> APCO in particular enabled Wolt to co-organise an event with SME Connect (an organisation which brands itself as a small business lobby of which Uber is a member)<sup>49</sup> on the legislative proposal, with public figures such as Members of the European Parliament or representatives of the Czech Republic - which presides the Council of the EU from June to December 2022.<sup>50</sup>

NB1: your meeting of 30 November has been logistically organised by a public affairs consultancy, "EU Strategy" based in Brussels, close to the Berlaymont (Charlemagne), hired by EU Move (i.e: UBER, BOLT and FREE NOW)

Extract from minutes of Commission meetings with lobbies  
Highlighting added

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45. [https://www.asktheeu.org/de/request/meeting\\_between\\_joan\\_canton\\_filo#incoming-33870](https://www.asktheeu.org/de/request/meeting_between_joan_canton_filo#incoming-33870)

46. Meeting between Bolt and Tilly Metz on 19 May 2022. Document available on demand.

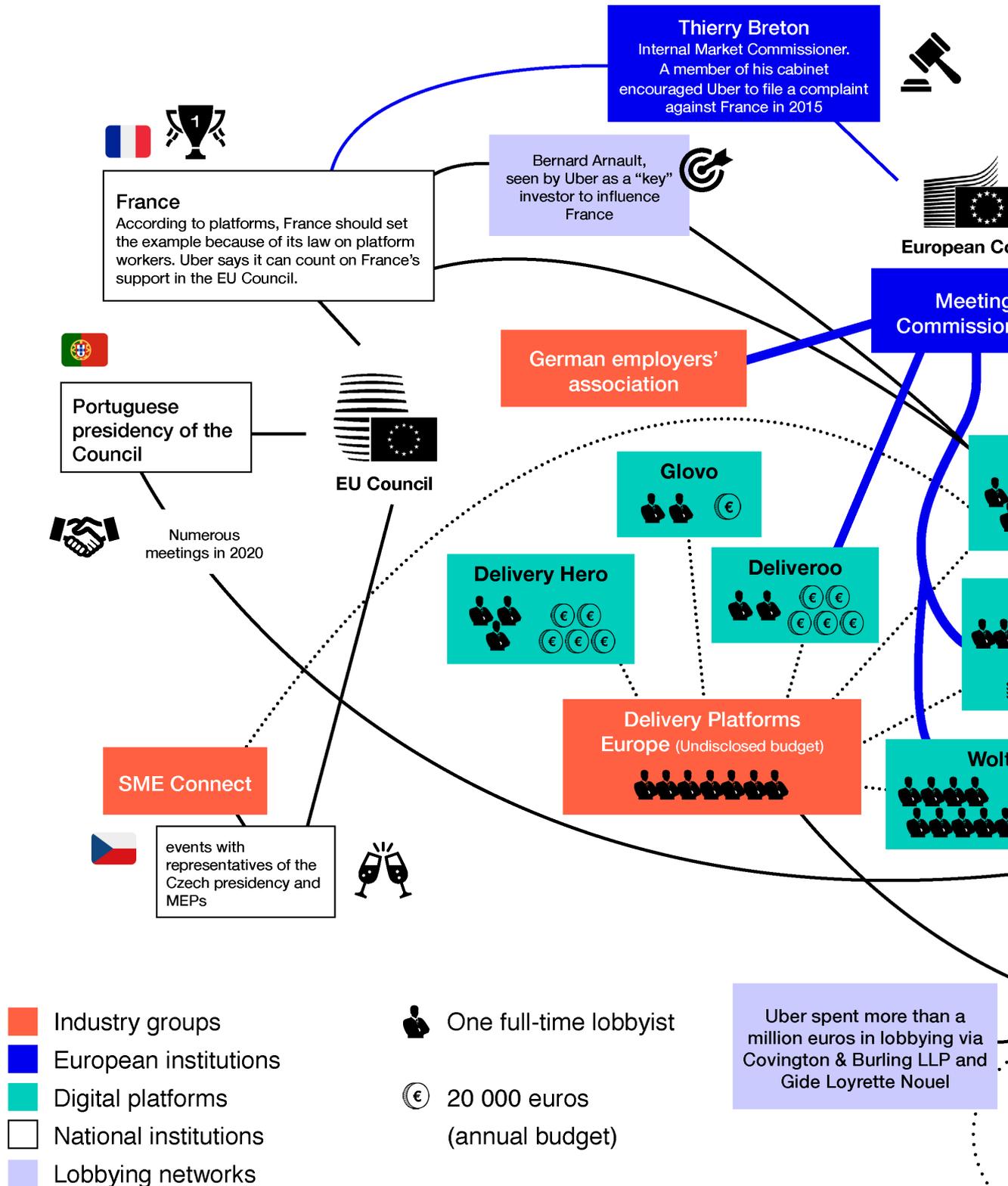
47. Document available on demand.

48. <https://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/homePage.do> (Website visited on 17 August, 2022)

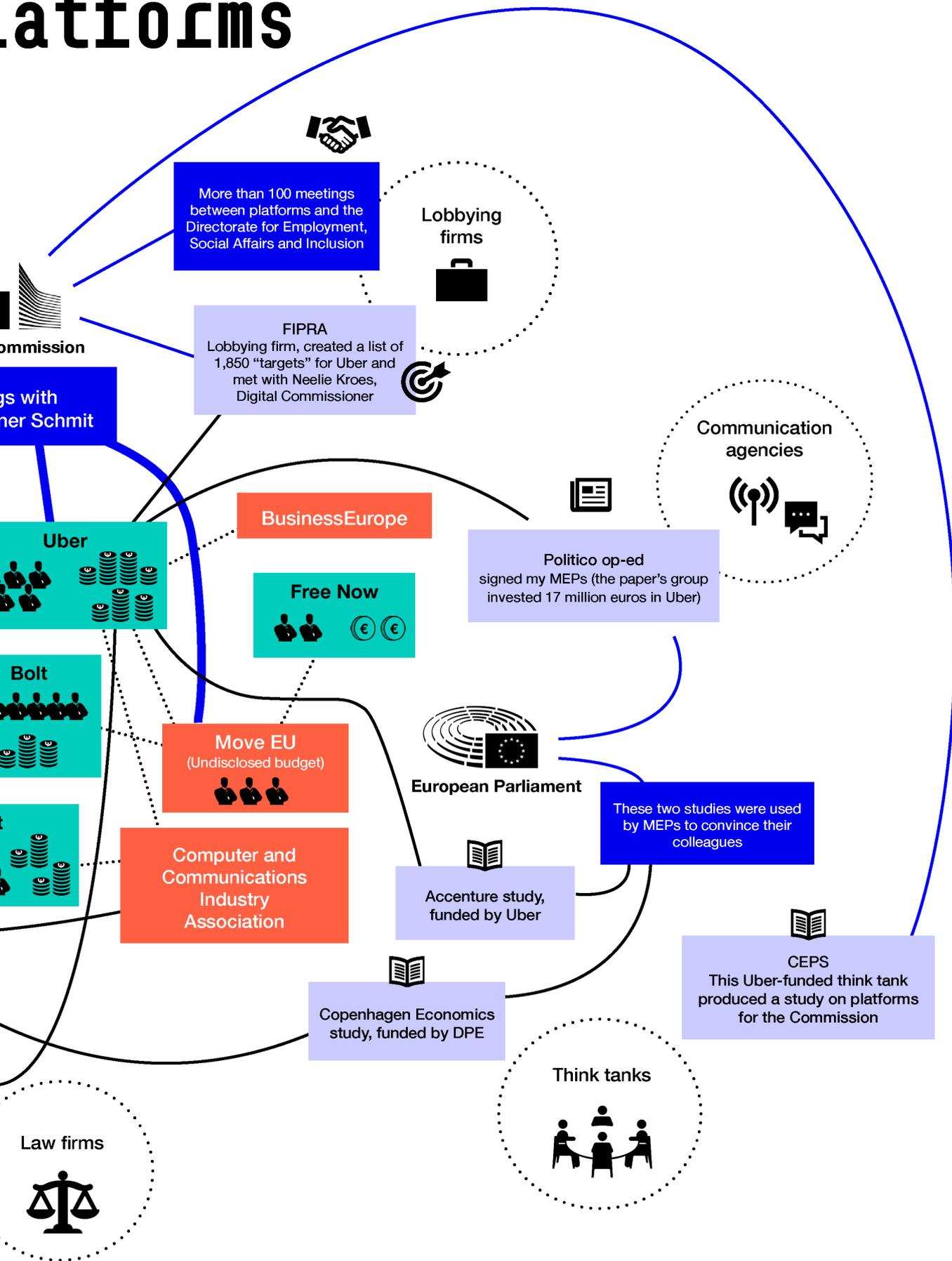
49. <https://ec.europa.eu/transparencyregister/public/consultation/displaylobbyist.do?id=002278013515-26> (Website visited on 5 September, 2022)

50. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-next-ecommerce-revolution-local-delivery-platforms-tickets-328737882857?ref=estw> et invitation reçue d'APCO par les député.e.s européen.ne.s le 22 Mars 2022. Document available on demand.

# The lobbying webs of p1



# Platforms



## Regular meetings with European decision-makers

The “Uber Files” revealed that between 2014 and 2016, Uber executives met representatives of the EU Commission 12 times – information that wasn’t public before.<sup>52</sup> But this figure is very low compared to the number of meetings Uber arranged in 2020 and 2021. According to the Commission itself, while the future European law was being drafted by the Commission, up until September 2021, digital platforms arranged<sup>53</sup> more than a hundred meetings with the Directorate for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. In April 2021, Uber had already met this DG (including its Commissioner) at least five times in five months – at a rate of at least once per month.<sup>54</sup> At that time, Bolt had arranged at least 8 meetings in 7 months.<sup>55</sup> In June 2021, Wolt arranged at least 6 meetings in 9 months.<sup>56</sup> It’s impossible to compare the number of meetings between digital platforms and DG EMPL with the number of meetings arranged with unions on the same issue, as DG EMPL refuses to share the list of meetings its employees arranged with representatives of external organisations.<sup>57</sup>

*“The most important lesson [of the Uber Files] concerns the level of access top lobbyists had to the **upper echelons of power**, at both the national and the European level. The ease with which the company managed to secure the attention of such high level policy-makers ought to be a wake-up call for the EU administration.”*

Emily O'Reilly, European Union ombudsman, July 2022<sup>51</sup>

- Commission stressed the importance of a dialogue with different stakeholders in the context of the initiative, including platform companies. Commission added that, if counted all meetings organised at all levels, probably over 100 meetings were held with those representing platforms.

Extract from minutes of Commission meetings with lobbies  
Highlighting added

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51. Social Europe (2022) The Uber Files—a wake-up call for the EU institutions <https://socialeurope.eu/the-uber-files-a-wake-up-call-for-the-eu-institutions>

52. ICIJ (2022) How Uber won access to world leaders, deceived investigators and exploited violence against its drivers in battle for global dominance <https://www.icij.org/investigations/uber-files/uber-global-rise-lobbying-violence-technology/>

53. FLASH REPORT – Meeting between CAB SCHMIT and MOVE EU representatives – 24/09/2021. Document available on demand.

54. Commissioner Schmit. Meeting with Uber CEO Dara KHOSROVSHAHI. Bilateral discussion on the platform work initiative. Virtual meeting, 26/04/2021. Document available on demand.

55. Commissioner Schmit. Meeting with Bolt CEO Markus VILLIG. Bilateral discussion on the platform work initiative Virtual meeting, 26/04/2021. Document available on demand.

56. Commissioner Schmit. Meeting with Wolt CEO Miki KUUSI. Bilateral discussion on the platform work initiative Virtual meeting, 09/06/2021. Document available on demand.

57. [https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/directive\\_on\\_improving\\_working\\_c\\_2#outgoing-22744](https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/directive_on_improving_working_c_2#outgoing-22744)

## The platforms' arguments

During their meetings with European decision-makers, digital platforms put forward a number of arguments to maintain workers under freelance statuses rather than recognise them as employees with contracts granting them rights and social protection. The three main arguments, which are repeated and reiterated, are firstly, that a law requiring contracts for couriers, drivers, etc., would result in many job losses. Secondly, according to these companies, current platform freelancers do not want a job contract because they benefit from very good conditions. Finally, they supposedly prefer the flexibility of freelancing to the alleged constraints of an employee status.

Uber and Bolt executives both assured Commissioner Schmit that if the European law redefined current platform freelancers as employees, it would lead to 50 per cent job losses.<sup>59</sup> Bolt even mentioned the potential loss of hundreds of thousands of well-paid jobs throughout the EU.<sup>60</sup> However, Uber's CEO presented a different picture to its investors in December 2021. He declared that the company could continue making profits even if a new law forced Uber to recruit its drivers as employees.<sup>61</sup>

*“At the European level, a legislative proposal going (...) in the direction of presuming an employee status in certain conditions has been submitted, but there is intense guerilla work to (...) empty it of its contents.”*

Confédération Syndicale Chrétienne  
(Belgian Union), July 2022<sup>58</sup>

*“Dara Khosrowshahi's acknowledgement that the company can — and has — adapted to treating workers as employees in other countries is a slap in the face to every single driver in the US that Uber continues to exploit.”*

Steve Smith, spokesperson of the  
California Labor Federation, 2021<sup>62</sup>

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58. CSC (2022) Uber files : Il n'est jamais trop tard pour se rendre compte qu'il y a un loup dans la bergerie <https://www.lacsc.be/page-dactualites/2022/07/15/uber-files-il-n-est-jamais-trop-tard-pour-se-rendre-compte-qu-il-y-a-un-loup-dans-la-bergerie>
59. FLASH REPORT – Meeting between Cmsr SCHMIT and Markus VILLIG, CEO and Founder of BOLT – 26/04/2021. Document available on demand.  
FLASH REPORT - Meeting between Commissioner SCHMIT and Dara KHOSROWSHAHI, CEO of Uber. 23 November 2021, Online. Document available on demand.
60. Bolt. Improving Platform Workers' Conditions While Preserving Jobs and Innovation in the EU. November 2021. Document available on demand.
61. The Intercept (2022) Uber CEO Admits Company Can Afford Labor Protections for Drivers <https://theintercept.com/2022/01/07/uber-drivers-labor-protections-dara-khosrowshahi-european-union/>
62. The Intercept (2022) Uber CEO Admits Company Can Afford Labor Protections for Drivers <https://theintercept.com/2022/01/07/uber-drivers-labor-protections-dara-khosrowshahi-european-union/>

Several recent examples prove the absurdity of these job loss threats. The Swedish platform Yepstr has offered a work contract to its 5,500 employees since January 1, 2021<sup>63</sup> with no massive job losses recorded.<sup>64</sup> Another example is Justeats, a platform based on the employee model: It is leading the sector in Spain since a national law (known as the Riders Law) favours the employment of platform workers.

Platforms also argue with the Commission that a directive aiming to improve working conditions is not necessary since their workers already benefit from very good working conditions. In November 2021, Bolt told members of the cabinet of the Digital Commissioner Vestager that in most cases, the company offers an income up to three times higher than the minimum wage.<sup>65</sup>

However, on the same date and in the same setting, Deliveroo admitted it was difficult to estimate the average income of its couriers.<sup>66</sup> A month earlier, however, Deliveroo's CEO said the opposite to Commissioner Schmit, stating that their drivers' income was higher than in many other sectors.<sup>67</sup>

A 2020 academic study conducted for the European Parliament concludes that platform workers have low, unstable and fragmented income with few complementary income options for periods without orders.<sup>68</sup> This is a very different reality from the narrative platform companies are presenting to European decision-makers.

The battle of political arguments in the European quarter in 2021 is therefore also a battle of numbers. This is why platforms funded studies to base their arguments on supposedly independent analyses. They also used existing studies by reinterpreting the results in their favour.

In November 2021, the Copenhagen Economics research institute published research funded by Delivery Platforms Europe – the European platform association that brings together Bolt, Deliveroo, Delivery Hero, Uber and Wolt.<sup>69</sup> The study's conclusions are close to the platforms' narrative: couriers prefer flexible employment to an employee status.

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63. <https://www.gigwell.org/resources/policy-initiatives-for-gig-work>

64. <https://www.techarenanews.com/2022/08/19/yepstr-proves-unique-approach-to-gig-economy-with-gigantic-growth/>

65. Meeting between Cabinet Vestager and BOLT on platform workers protection. 3 November 2021. Document available on demand.

66. [https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/10475/response/36011/attach/7/Ares%202021%207106619%20Report%20of%20the%20meeting%20with%20Deliveroo%20on%2015%2011%202021%20Redacted.pdf?cookie\\_passthrough=1](https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/10475/response/36011/attach/7/Ares%202021%207106619%20Report%20of%20the%20meeting%20with%20Deliveroo%20on%2015%2011%202021%20Redacted.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1)

67. FLASH REPORT – Meeting between Commissioner SCHMIT and Deliveroo CEO & representatives – 07/10/2021. Document available on demand.

68. Hauben (ed.), H., Lenaerts, K. And Waeyaert, W., The platform economy and precarious work, Publication for the committee on Employment and Social Affairs, Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies, European Parliament, Luxembourg, 2020 [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/652734/IPOL\\_STU\(2020\)652734\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/652734/IPOL_STU(2020)652734_EN.pdf)

69. <https://copenhageneconomics.com/publication/study-of-the-value-of-flexible-work-for-local-delivery-couriers/>

According to an official Commission document, the independence and quality of this study raise questions. In fact, the study does not mention certain fundamental aspects in its comparison between the statuses of freelancers and employees – such as working conditions and social protection. More importantly, the study focuses on flexibility, based on the unproven principle that an employee status does not enable flexibility. However, the current situations of retail or hotel sectors, for example, contradict this idea.<sup>70</sup> The Bruegel think tank also considered this study to be based on exaggerated arguments.<sup>71</sup>

In other cases, the platforms did not commission external studies but used scientific studies in their favour by exaggerating their results. In November 2021, a month before the European Commission published the legislative proposal, Move EU (Bolt, Uber and Free Now) published and shared its demands on the text. This paper argues that studies across Europe show that the vast majority of platform workers appreciate the flexibility and higher income enabled by their self-employed status.<sup>73</sup> However, these studies only relate to the United Kingdom, and they show that three quarters of the 1,001 Uber drivers interviewed have lower wages than the average wage in London.<sup>74</sup>



*"You often mention the courier's desire for flexibility, but **this flexibility is a complete illusion** because to maximise their chances of remuneration, the courier has to work during optimal schedules for orders, mainly evenings and weekends."*

Open letter from a former courier to the manager of Deliveroo Benelux, October 2018<sup>72</sup>

- I am aware of this study being widely circulated within the Commission and have looked at its main findings.
- The study is of questionable independence and quality. To start with, it does not look at certain fundamental legal aspects of working conditions and access to social protection, which are key issues in the debate on platform work.

Extract from minutes of Commission meetings with lobbies. Highlighting added

70. Meeting with Move EU (UBER, BOLT, FREE NOW) Online, 30 November 2021. Document available on demand.

71. <https://www.bruegel.org/blog-post/inclusive-european-union-must-boost-gig-workers-rights>

72. Le Soir (2018) Quel projet de société Deliveroo veut-il nous livrer? <https://www.lesoir.be/186520/article/2018-10-25/quel-projet-de-societe-deliveroo-veut-il-nous-livrer>

73. <https://www.move-eu.eu/our-positions>

74. <https://www.oxfordmartin.ox.ac.uk/news/201809-frey-berger-uber/>

## Challenging the legislative process

When digital platforms sensed that the Commission's Directorate for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion was unconvinced by their arguments, they began to turn to other Commission departments.

As mentioned, the Commission's Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion Directorate doors were wide open. However, in March 2021, Deliveroo complained to the Digital Commissioner's office about the consultation process. Deliveroo was unhappy about the inclusion of unions alongside digital platforms in the process, allowing Commission officials to hear the arguments of

both parties. Deliveroo questioned the legitimacy of consulting unions, claiming that the people working for platforms were not heard when the Commission invited unions and employers.<sup>75</sup>

Challenging the legislative process when it doesn't benefit you is a classic lobbying technique. In November 2021, Bolt went as far as to suggest that drafting a law on labour matters was beyond the Commission's Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion Directorate's legal competence.<sup>76</sup>

## Suggesting voluntary action instead of real regulation

Uber took action as soon as the Commission started working on its legislative proposal. To prevent the Commission from regulating its activities, Uber published a white paper in February 2022 proposing its own framework to improve the working conditions of its platform's couriers and drivers. According to the American platform, this white paper was aimed at European policymakers, to enable them to build a framework for platform workers together.<sup>77</sup>

This is another classic lobbying technique: putting forward voluntary, non-binding initiatives instead of actual public regulation of companies' activities. Legally, this is known as "soft law" as opposed to a "hard law" – real laws involving penalties, fines and the possibility of appealing to the courts if they aren't respected.

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75. Meeting with Deliveroo and Vestager Cabinet members, 15 March 2021. Document available on demand.

76. Bolt. Improving Platform Workers' Conditions While Preserving Jobs and Innovation in the EU. November 2021. Document available on demand.

77. Société (2021) Uber pour un meilleur encadrement de ses chauffeurs et de ses livreurs? <https://www.societe.com/actualites/uber-pour-un-meilleur-encadrement-de-ses-chauffeurs-et-de-ses-livreurs-51524.html>

In September 2021, Bolt presented a code of conduct drafted by several platforms to members of the Internal Market Commissioner's cabinet.<sup>78</sup> On the same date, MOVE EU (Bolt, Uber and Free Now) suggested to members of Commissioner Schmit's cabinet to rely on digital platforms' self-regulation rather than a European law, proposing examples such as codes of conduct, charters, or the promotion of dialogue with their drivers.<sup>79</sup>

The solution that a majority of companies seem to promote is dialogue between freelancers and platforms. This is what Bolt<sup>80</sup> and Deliveroo<sup>81</sup> asked the Digital Commissioner's cabinet for and what Uber's CEO asked Commissioner Schmit in April 2021.<sup>82</sup> The fact that Uber calls for social dialogue at the European level is rather ironic, as the French Secretary of State for Transport Alain Vidalies was quoted saying about the company in August 2014, "It's immediately clear to me that they ignore social dialogue".<sup>83</sup>

In fact, for Uber<sup>84</sup> and DeliveryHero,<sup>85</sup> France should set the example, as the legislation adopted by Emmanuel Macron's government does not seek to change the status of platform workers, and promotes social dialogue (according to Move EU<sup>86,87</sup>). Platform companies are very satisfied not having employees in France, and only collaborating with "auto-entrepreneurs" instead. Indeed, the French government decided not to recognise new rights for platform workers, but rather to promote "social dialogue" between entrepreneurs and platforms. In the context of a virtually inexistent legal framework and minimal worker representation, it's difficult to expect many improvements in terms of labour rights. Promoting "social dialogue", an idea Emmanuel Macron appropriated from the Institut Montaigne, (a French think tank financed by companies) serves his political communication above all.<sup>88</sup>

platforms. A good example to this end is the discussions around the related French law, where the focus is clearly not to change the employment status. Uber also queried on the forthcoming guidelines on collective bargaining.

Extract from minutes of Commission meetings with lobbies.  
Highlighting added

- 
78. Meeting with Bolt and Cabinet Breton. 7 September 2021. Document available on demand.  
79. FLASH REPORT – Meeting between CAB SCHMIT and MOVE EU representatives – 24/09/2021. Document available on demand.  
80. Meeting between Cabinet Vestager and BOLT on platform workers protection. 3 November 2021. Document available on demand.  
81. [https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/10475/response/36011/attach/7/Ares%202021%207106619%20Report%20of%20the%20meeting%20with%20Deliveroo%20on%2015%2011%202021%20Redacted.pdf?cookie\\_passthrough=1](https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/10475/response/36011/attach/7/Ares%202021%207106619%20Report%20of%20the%20meeting%20with%20Deliveroo%20on%2015%2011%202021%20Redacted.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1)  
82. FLASH REPORT – Meeting between Cmsr SCHMIT and Dara KHOSROVSHAHI, CEO of UBER – 26/04/2021. Document available on demand.  
83. Le Monde (2022) « Uber Files » : une « stratégie du chaos » assumée pour conquérir le monde [https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2022/07/10/uber-files-une-strategie-du-chaos-assumee-pour-conquerir-le-monde\\_6134211\\_4408996.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2022/07/10/uber-files-une-strategie-du-chaos-assumee-pour-conquerir-le-monde_6134211_4408996.html)  
84. FLASH REPORT - Meeting between Commissioner SCHMIT and Dara KHOSROVSHAHI, CEO of Uber. 23 November 2021, Online. Document available on demand.  
85. Meeting DeliveryHero & Cabinet Breton, 14 December 2021. Document available on demand.  
86. Report of videoconference between Move EU and Cabinet Vestager on platform work, 4 November 2021. Document available on demand.  
87. [https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/10481/response/36001/attach/3/Ares%202021%207062633%20Redaout%20of%20the%20meeting%20with%20Move%20EU%20and%20Maria%20Luisa%20Cabral%20Redacted.pdf?cookie\\_passthrough=1](https://www.asktheeu.org/en/request/10481/response/36001/attach/3/Ares%202021%207062633%20Redaout%20of%20the%20meeting%20with%20Move%20EU%20and%20Maria%20Luisa%20Cabral%20Redacted.pdf?cookie_passthrough=1)  
88. <https://multinationales.org/Attention-travailleurs-des-plateformes-la-France-est-presidente-du-Conseil-de-l>

## Delegitimising your opponents

In the political battle of the future law on working conditions, the platforms' main opponents are unions and the workers who have sued platforms at a national level for the recognition of their employee status. To reduce the political weight of their opponents' narratives, platforms didn't hesitate to delegitimise them when they met with Commission employees.

Move EU (Bolt, Uber et Free Now) told Commissioner Schmit in September 2021 that the drivers' lawsuits targeting platforms were only driven by the plaintiffs' desire to extort money from the various platforms.<sup>89</sup>

But the most common strategy is to delegitimise unions' voices and their legitimacy to speak in the name of platform workers. Move EU (Bolt, Uber et Free Now) co-organised an event in the European Parliament on 11 May 2022. One of the speakers claimed to represent Lithuanian drivers and couriers, stating he wanted to keep his current working conditions.<sup>90</sup> Wolt invited employees chosen by the platform in May 2022 to meet with representatives of the Commission and the European Parliament.<sup>91</sup> Even more obviously, in a policy pitch to the Commission in November 2021, Bolt highlighted in italics that unions do not speak on behalf of platform workers.<sup>92</sup>

- MOVE EU further questioned the court cases arguing that the drivers who are doing them, **only try do receive retroactive payments** from several platforms.

Extract from minutes of Commission meetings with lobbies.  
Highlighting added

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<sup>89</sup>. FLASH REPORT – Meeting between CAB SCHMIT and MOVE EU representatives – 24/09/2021. Document available on demand.

<sup>90</sup>. Impact of proposed platform work directive on EU ride-hailing sector: Will proposed measures classify most drivers as employees? - hosted by MEP Radan Kanev. Document available on demand.

<sup>91</sup>. <https://blog.wolt.com/hq/2022/05/23/couriers-making-their-voices-heard-by-eu-policymakers/> (Website visited on 31 August, 2022)

<sup>92</sup>. Bolt. Improving Platform Workers' Conditions While Preserving Jobs and Innovation in the EU. November 2021. Document available on demand.

# The current battle in the EU Parliament and Council



*"Uber's fingerprints are all over some of the amendments tabled on this file"*

Kim van Sparrentak, Green MEP, 2022<sup>93</sup>

The legislative proposal published by the Commission in December 2021 is just the first step. It must still be discussed and approved by the European Parliament and the EU Council (the institution that represents Member States in Brussels). Platforms therefore changed their target in December 2021.

The "Uber Files" revealed Uber's declaration that it could count on the support of France in the European Council, particularly of Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne and Minister Delegate for Transport Clément Beaune.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, Ms. Borne took up the arguments of platform lobbies in September 2021, explaining to the French Senate that an "overwhelming proportion" of [platform] workers "do not want to be employed".<sup>95</sup> This certainly explains why Uber's chief lobbyist in Paris up until April 2022 became Uber's chief lobbyist in Brussels.<sup>96</sup>

From January 2022, the platforms begin to arrange meetings with national civil servants representing the Member States in the Council. Thanks to its transparency policy, it's possible to know the number of times the Dutch government met with lobbies in Brussels. To discuss the directive to improve working conditions of platforms, representatives of the Netherlands in the Council met Wolt three times, Deliveroo twice, and Move EU and Bolt once between January and May 2022. A total of seven meetings in five months.

The European Parliament is not entirely committed to the platforms' interests. This is why since the publication of the legislative proposal in December 2021, digital platforms have increased their number of meetings with MEPs.

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93. Politico (2022) Uber Files embolden the left on tougher platform work bill <https://www.politico.eu/article/uber-files-european-law-eu-commission-left-wing-to-seize-tougher-platform-work-bill/>

94. Le Monde (2022) Face aux difficultés, Uber s'est transformé, sans vraiment changer de modèle [https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2022/07/13/face-aux-difficultes-uber-s-est-transforme-sans-vraiment-changer-de-modele\\_6134559\\_3234.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/economie/article/2022/07/13/face-aux-difficultes-uber-s-est-transforme-sans-vraiment-changer-de-modele_6134559_3234.html)

95. Public Sénat (2021) Travailleurs ubérisés : le gouvernement préfère miser sur le dialogue social plutôt que de légiférer <https://www.publicsenat.fr/article/politique/travailleurs-uberises-le-gouvernement-prefere-miser-sur-le-dialogue-social-plutot>

96. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/sophie-bonnecarr%C3%A8re-4090b246/> (Website visited 31 August, 2022)

## Supportive MEPs

Some MEPs have become allies for platforms, disseminating their messages in the European Parliament to other European decision-makers and to the general public. In particular, in June 2022, a coalition of MEPs signed an op-ed in Politico (the daily newspaper of European decision-makers), arguing against an employee status for platform workers.<sup>97</sup> Choosing Politico raises questions, as the group that owns Politico Europe, Axel Springer, discreetly invested 5 million euros in Uber in 2017.<sup>98</sup> Publishing an op-ed that aims to reduce Uber's labour costs is a conflict of interest when Uber represents a portion of its income. The MEPs who signed the op-ed include MEPs of the EPP (right-wing) such as Sara Skyttedal (Sweden) and Miriam Lexmann (Slovakia). Miriam Lexmann in particular met with the Slovakian Labour state secretary with representatives of the platforms in June 2022, to ask to keep the current flexible labour system.<sup>99</sup> She, with other MEPs, would file amendments in June 2022 including the "code of conduct" promoted by Bolt to Commissioner Breton's cabinet the previous year (see above).<sup>100</sup>



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97. Politico (2022) Digital workers prioritize flexibility — not employment <https://www.politico.eu/article/digital-platforms-workers-economy-challenges/>

98. Le Monde (2022) « Uber Files » : le réseau souterrain des géants de la tech à l'appui de la start-up américaine [https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2022/07/13/uber-files-dans-le-monde-entier-chronique-d-une-extraordinaire-entreprise-de-lobbying\\_6134580\\_4408996.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2022/07/13/uber-files-dans-le-monde-entier-chronique-d-une-extraordinaire-entreprise-de-lobbying_6134580_4408996.html)

99. <https://twitter.com/MiriamMLex/status/1536585458884521984>

100. Amendment 525 Proposal for a directive Article 2 – paragraph 1 – Point 6 a (new)

## Studies with undisclosed funding

Miriam Lexmann together with her colleague Aldo Patriciello, also circulated a letter to her fellow MEPs in April 2022, taking up many of the platforms' arguments. It's extremely rare to see MEPs who are not included in negotiations put pressure on their colleagues. This letter mentions the Copenhagen Economics study funded by the platforms, mentioned before, as well as a recent study by Accenture. However, the latter was funded by Uber,<sup>101</sup> which isn't specified in the letter from the two MEPs to their colleagues.

Using supposedly "neutral and objective" academic studies is a classic lobbying technique. What raises questions is that their funding is not always disclosed. MEPs believe they are receiving information from an independent third-party organisation which is not the case. Another example: Bolt, in its communications with MEPs, mentions a study by Compass Lexecon, which concludes with an estimate of 149,000 job losses linked to the proposed legislation in the European Union.<sup>102</sup> However, Bolt doesn't specify that Move EU commissioned this study.<sup>103</sup>

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101. <https://www.platformsworkreport.com/>

102. Meeting between Bolt and Tilly Metz on 19th May 2022. Document available on demand

103. <https://www.move-eu.eu/news/the-private-and-social-value-of-flexible-work-in-ride-hailing-platforms> (Data collection 31 Aug. 2022)

# Conclusion

The political, legal and communications battle over the rights of platform workers is still ongoing. Both sides have grown stronger. Digital platforms didn't succeed in convincing the Commission but they found strong allies in the two institutions currently working on the proposal: the French government in the EU Council and MEPs from the EPP in the Parliament.

Digital platforms' lobbying activities in Brussels' European quarter are a classic example of the influence of large companies. They failed to win their case quickly and easily thanks to a counter-power in Brussels: the unions, platform workers, their allies in the European Parliament, and public opinion, that see couriers, drivers, and other platform "service providers" carrying out their difficult work in the streets of European capitals every day. This grassroots counter-lobbying, in particular through trade unions and platform workers' collectives at national and European levels, counterbalanced the platforms' well-organised lobbying machine. It prevented companies from succeeding behind closed doors, as is too often the case, allowing a real democratic debate to emerge at the European level. The arguments and techniques of digital platforms are extremely effective when decision-makers hear only one side, but less so when counter-powers make their voices heard in Brussels and in European capitals.

*« We must define a common strategy to change the balance of power.»*

Member of the Austrian union vida,  
October 2018<sup>104</sup>

<sup>104</sup>. CES (2018) La force dans l'unité pour les livreurs à vélo <https://www.etuc.org/fr/la-force-dans-lunite-pour-les-livreurs-velo>



# Dismantling a European law

## MANUAL

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### **Influence the process at every step**

- Meet all the important decision-makers
- Secure support from national governments
- Place your leaders in key positions

### **Impose your narrative**

- Publish your own studies
- Put your solutions forward
- Use the media

### **Take no chances**

- Divide decision-makers
- Delegitimise the legislative process... and your opponents
- Unity is strength: join a business association



The Left in the European Parliament defends a vision of a socially equitable and sustainable Europe, based on international solidarity.



L'Observatoire des Multinationales is an online media on large corporations and economic powers, and their relations with political power.

**Authors:** Lora Verheecke, Observatoire des Multinationales

**Publication date:** October 2022

**Editing:** Olivier Petitjean

**Design:** Sarah Reader & Clémence Hutin

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*This report received funding from the The Left in the European Parliament (GUE/NGL)*