



Commission to publish guidelines on sharing economy next week

By Jorge Valero | EurActiv.com

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Uber's CEO Travis Kalanick met with Commissioner for Innovation, Carlos Moedas, on 23 May. The Portuguese commissioner is one of the strongest supporters of the so-called sharing economy inside the college.

The European Commission's highly anticipated views on the sharing economy are expected to pave the way towards a solution to outstanding complaints against the likes of Uber and Airbnb in a number of EU countries.

The College of Commissioners will discuss on 1 June a set of guidelines to help member states apply existing EU laws to the collaborative economy—in areas such as taxation, employment and consumer protection.

A decision is expected to be formally adopted by written procedure on the following day, EU sources told EurActiv.com.

The Commission is looking at provisions included in the Services Directive and the E-Commerce Directive to see how they can fit Uber-type companies, and will consider new legislative proposals in the event that regulatory gaps are identified.

Once the executive sets out its political stance on how to apply existing EU law, it will decide on the pending legal cases in some member states.

Uber submitted complaints against France, Germany and Spain, claiming that the restrictions imposed on its operations in these countries breach the principles of the internal market.

The European Commission is also assessing complaints filed by Airbnb against the Catalan Tourism Act, and German legislation regulating the tourism accommodation sector, where the US house-renting company is a disruptive player.

Uber meets commissioners

These legal cases were in the background when the CEO of Uber, Travis Kalanick, came to Brussels for a visit yesterday (23 May).

Kalanick met with top EU officials involved in the sharing economy dossier, including commissioners for the internal market, transport and innovation (Elżbieta Bieńkowska, Violeta Bulc and Carlos Moedas, respectively).

The CEO of Uber told commissioners about the difficulties his company faces in France, Spain, Germany and Hungary, while praising the regulatory framework in Estonia, Lithuania, Finland and Britain, Commission officials explained. Kalanick also discussed with EU authorities what he sees as his “next frontier”.

“We can turn every car into a shared car,” he later told an event organised by the Lisbon Council think tank, saying car pooling could help cope with traffic jams, limited parking spots and pollution in European cities.

“We are making our case but also learning what it is going to take to bring our kind of innovation to many cities here in Europe,” Kalanick said. “I got my first course in speaking European this morning at the European Commission,” he confessed.

This was not the first time the US entrepreneur visited the European Commission. Last year, he came to Brussels amid numerous legal challenges brought against his car-ride service UberPop in countries including France, Spain, Germany, Belgium or the Netherlands.

The San Francisco-based firm has now re-entered some of these markets with UberX, a new service operating with licensed chauffeurs.

Commissioners and their teams met over the last few months with numerous representatives of the collaborative economy, and sectors affected by the competition it represents.

In order to assess the existing legal framework and identify potential regulatory gaps, a broad project team involving 16 Commissioners started work on 5 April to set out the political approach on which the EU guidelines will be based, according to documents seen by EurActiv.

The group of Commissioners not only explored regulatory aspects, but also the potential of the “uberisation” of areas like energy and food production.

Against this backdrop, firms including the Dutch platform [Vandebron](#) allows consumers to buy electricity straight from local farmers with excess electricity production generated from solar panels or biogas installations.