

Uber files complaint with EU against Hungary

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Ride-hailing app Uber filed a complaint on Wednesday with the European Commission against Hungary, where legislation came into force in July practically banning the service.

Rob Khazzam, Uber's general manager for Central Europe, told The Associated Press that the company's aim was to return the service to Budapest, where it began operations in late 2014. Uber had 160,000 users and 1,200 drivers in Hungary.

"We want to bring back a service that has been embraced by so many people," Khazzam said. "We want to ensure that people in Hungary have access to a service that is available in almost all other European Union countries."

Legislation approved by parliament in June and enforced from July 24 allows authorities to fine Uber and similar services, block their websites and apps, ban the cars of drivers for up to three years and suspend their licenses for six months.

Uber suspended its activities in Hungary indefinitely at noon on July 24, offering regular users a farewell gift of one free trip in any of the 21 European countries where it is available.

Hungary banned Uber claiming the company gained a competitive advantage by ignoring rules that apply to taxi services.

"Uber's decision indicates that the company is not willing to engage in fair market competition and legal operations," the government said in July, while Uber said that its drivers were abiding by the rules.

A request for government comment on the EU complaint was not immediately returned.

Uber said earlier that Hungarian authorities, who insisted they welcomed innovation, were unwilling to engage in substantial talks about finding a way for Uber to remain in Hungary.

At the same time, transport officials held several meetings with representatives of taxi companies and drivers, mostly after taxi drivers held protests slowing traffic and blocking bridges across the Danube River in downtown Budapest.

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