

Macron presses tech giants on taxes, working conditions

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French President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday urged Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and the bosses of other tech companies accused of hoovering up personal data while avoiding taxes to use their clout for global good.

Around 60 industry leaders, including Zuckerberg, Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi and IBM chief Ginni Rometty travelled to Paris for talks with the French leader about improving the lives of workers in the gig economy and being better corporate citizens generally.

Zuckerberg arrived from Brussels where he said "sorry" to European lawmakers Tuesday for a huge breach of users' data and by a failure to crack down on fake news.

He was expected to face pressure over his company's tax policies, with Macron leading efforts in the EU to get digital giants to contribute more to public coffers.

Addressing the gathering behind closed doors Macron said they could not ride the coattails of the [digital economy](#) without giving back.

"I'm expected frank and direct discussions about how to do more to improve social conditions, (combat) inequality, climate change and together resolve collective problems," the tech-savvy 40-year-old said.

Uber used the occasion of the meeting to announce that it would insure its European drivers and couriers against accidents and sickness, a move aimed at defusing criticism of their precarious working conditions.

Uber said the insurance would be "free and without commitment for over 150,000 eligible partners using the Uber application in Europe."

After their talks at the Elysee Palace, the tech bosses, who were joined by Rwandan President Paul Kagame, a champion of the digital economy, attended workshops to discuss the future of work.

Many will also attend a separate event called VivaTech in Paris on Thursday.

'Digital monster'

Facebook, along with Google, Apple and Amazon, are in the sights of Macron and other EU leaders over their use of low-tax countries such as Ireland to reduce their [corporate tax rate](#) to nominal levels.

As well as talking tax and the battle against fake news—another of his campaigns—Macron is also keen to stress his pro-business credentials at his "Tech for Good" summit.

The former investment banker is desperate to attract more foreign investment to France and has vowed to turn the country into a "start-up nation."

During a brief break from politics in 2014, he travelled to California on a research trip ahead of the launch of his own start-up, which he had planned in the online learning sector.

He abandoned the idea when given an opportunity to enter the then-Socialist government, but since taking power as president last May he has consistently championed the sector—while insisting multinationals must pay tax.

Speaking in Brussels in front from European lawmakers on Tuesday, with Liberal leader Guy Verhofstadt asking if he wanted to be remembered as a "genius who created a digital monster".

Zuckerberg said that while Facebook had brought in new features to connect people, it had become clear in the last two years that they "haven't done enough to prevent these tools from being used for

harm".

"That was a mistake, and I'm sorry for it."

His livestreamed testimony in Brussels was the latest stop on a tour of apology for a major data breach that saw him quizzed for 10 hours in the US Congress in April.

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