

# EU split over copyright overhaul

AFP | Brussels, Belgium

Divisions between EU countries could delay or derail plans to overhaul copyright law, an ambition that has set up a battle pitting media firms against internet giants like Facebook and Google.

The European Parliament, the European Council and the European Commission had planned to meet on Monday to agree on a draft law, but scrapped the meeting at the last minute.

"We take note that the Council needs more time to finalise its position," Commission spokesman Margaritis Schinas told a press conference, referring to the body that represents member states.

The Commission, the European Union's executive arm, proposed reforms in September 2016 designed to modernise copyright for the digital age.

But it has sparked a battle between media and creators seeking payment for online content against lobbyists defending the business model of the Silicon Valley giants backed by internet freedom activists.

Several EU countries -- including Germany, the Netherlands and Italy -- on Friday blocked a council compromise text following a long debate among the bloc's 28 ambassadors.

The stumbling block was over a provision that calls for YouTube and other platforms to better remunerate content creators and force them to remove any pirated content.

Germany wanted small businesses and start-ups to be exempt from the need to pre-filter content while France did



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not, said Axel Voss, the deputy who is steering the legislation through parliament.

"Countries that were not in any way satisfied with the copyright reform took Germany's side. It's of course very unfortunate," Voss said.

## 'Neighbouring rights'

Another bone of contention is a provision to create "neighbouring rights" for media publishers, sources close to the talks said.

These would allow newspapers, magazines or news agencies such as AFP to be paid when



Margaritis Schinas

their content is reused on line by news aggregators like Google News or social networks like Facebook.

"On this provision, we were also not able to find a large majority among the member countries for one or the other of the two options on the table," one of the sources said.

Like the European Parliament, some want to exclude only hyperlinks while others want also to protect "snippets" -- short news items that appear on search engines, aggregators and social media.

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For example, should a story headlined "3,000 killed in earthquake" be considered a simple matter of fact, or should the effort made by journalists to report it be recognised?

Commission spokesman Schinas pledged to try to bridge the

divide. "We shall continue our hard work as an honest broker to help the EU institutions, the council and the European Parliament, to reach a deal as soon as possible," Schinas said.

Axel Voss meanwhile urged Paris and Berlin to overcome their differences over the exemption for start-ups and small businesses.

"Germany and France must now come to an agreement, which in my opinion can occur with some creativity and good will," Voss said.

If a deal is reached among the three EU institutions, the European Council and then the parliament, meeting in full session, will have to sign off on a final version.

But time is running out as the votes must take place before the elections to a new parliament in May, when analysts fear populist parties may increase their representation without sharing the same zeal for reform.

# S. Korea growth falls to 2.7pc, slowest in six years

Seoul, South Korea

South Korea's GDP growth slowed to its weakest in six years at 2.7 per cent in 2018, the central bank said yesterday, as President Moon Jae-in's ratings fall amid concerns over the health of the world's 11th-largest economy.

Public discontent over the sluggish economy, especially on relatively high youth unemployment, has dragged Moon's approval ratings below 50 per cent, down from the 80s he was scoring in May after his first summit with the North's leader Kim Jong Un.

The 2018 growth figure was down 0.4 percentage points from the previous year, the central Bank of Korea said, and the weakest since the 2.3pc recorded in 2012.

South Korea's export-driven economy has been pressured by slowing growth in China, its biggest trading partner, where expansion slipped to a 28-year low last year.

The South has also been



Moon Jae-in

squeezed by trade tensions between the US and the Asian giant, the world's top two economies.

But GDP expanded 3.1pc year-on-year in the last quarter, the central bank said, led by government spending and construction and infrastructure investment.

Moon sacked his top two economic officials in November, the finance minister and his policy chief, and his chief of staff left earlier this month.

## UBS annual profits jump to \$4.9bn

Zurich, Switzerland

Swiss banking giant UBS saw its net profits leap by almost five times last year to \$4.9 billion (4.3 billion euros) despite "challenging conditions," it said. UBS' 2017 results were hammered by US tax reforms that forced banks that operate in the United States to book substantial one-time losses in

the final quarter of that year, but which were expected to be mostly favourable beyond that.

Excluding the impact of changes in US tax laws, UBS net income for 2018 as a whole was still up by 25pc from the previous year. "I want to thank all UBS employees for a very successful 2018 in overall challenging conditions," chief executive Sergio P. Ermotti said.

# Michelin boosts female chefs in 2019 guide

Paris, France

An unprecedented number of restaurants run by female chefs won plaudits in the new French edition of the Michelin food guide released Monday, as the guardians of haute cuisine sought to address a glaring gender imbalance.

Eleven female-led restaurants have been added to the 2019 guide to the best food in France, out of a record 75 new additions bestowed with one, two or three Michelin stars.

Among them was 24-year-old wunderkind Julia Sedefdjian, who won a star for her new restaurant Baieta, while Stephanie Le Quellec claimed her second for Parisian restaurant La Scene.

The guide's new international director Gwendal Poullennec had promised to breathe new life into its pages this year, celebrating young talent as well as female chefs.

A large number of international chefs are also honoured -- many of them Japanese -- while Argentine Mauro Colagreco became the only foreigner to currently hold three stars in France.

"So many emotions. Thank you! I'm so honoured," said the 42-year-old, whose Mirazur restaurant on the glitzy French Riviera ranked fourth last year on the World's 50 Best Restaurants list.

Chef Laurent Petit meanwhile praised the feared Michelin reviewers for having "the sense" to award him a third star for Le Clos des Sens restaurant in



Italian-Argentinian chef Mauro Colagreco (C-L) and French Laurent Petit (C-R) celebrate on stage after they were awarded three Michelin stars during the Michelin guide award ceremony in Paris



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Anney.

"I'm delighted to have won a third star with endive roots and a cabbage tart. Simple, simple, simple," he said.

In one of the biggest shocks, renowned Alpine chef Marc Veyrat lost his third star, along with the Auberge de L'Il, a restaurant in Alsace that had held three stars for 51 years.

"It's hard for the team, it's hard for everyone -- the customers, the family," its chef Marc Haerberlin told France 3 Alsace television.

"I don't know how to explain this loss," said Haerberlin, whose family has run an inn in Alsace for 150 years.

Veyrat, known as much for his trademark wide-brimmed black hat as his love of mountain herbs, said he was "terribly disappointed" that his restaurant the Maison des Bois had been downgraded. "I can't understand it at all," said Veyrat, blasting the decision as "unfair".

## Unwanted stars

A chef who shocked the culinary world in 2017 by renouncing his Michelin stars was meanwhile stunned to find himself back in the prestigious guide for 2019.

Sebastien Bras had cited the "huge pressure" that came with Michelin recognition when he

asked in September 2017 for his three-star restaurant Le Suquet to be left out of the 2018 guide.

Michelin agreed, with the company's then brand manager Claire Dorland Clauzel telling AFP: "It is difficult for us to have a restaurant in the guide which does not wish to be in it."

Bras spent the following year rustling up inventive French cuisine at his restaurant in the town of Laguiole, in the rural Aveyron region, without worrying whether it was meeting Michelin's exacting standards.

But on Monday the 47-year-old said he was "surprised" to see the restaurant back in the guide, with two stars.

"This contradictory decision has left us with doubts, even if in any case we no longer worry about either the stars or the strategies of the guide," he said.

Bras took over the kitchen at Le Suquet from his father Michel a decade ago.

The elder Bras had held three Michelin stars since 1999, and his son said that knowing a single

French chef Sebastien Bras poses as he works in the kitchen of his three-star restaurant Le Suquet, in Laguiole, southern France

