

## Briefing

# The French digital revolution will not take place



### How do you manage a borderless and constantly evolving business sector, making it work for people and businesses?

This is the question the French government has grappled with for the last two years. But it has failed to develop satisfactory answers.

Regulation of the digital economy has been on the French government's agenda since 2014. The role of Deputy Minister for Digital Affairs was created and a national consultation on digital issues set up. Many organisations and companies expressed their views on the best way forward.

A digital bill was drafted (again, with an online consultation). Parliamentarians were asked to reflect on complex but knotty issues – the data economy, net neutrality, open data, and others.

Yet the draft law, voted by National Assembly members at first reading on 26 January, has disappointed many companies.

It was designed to address consumer protection issues and avoid more core business and competition issues.

This latter set of issues was deliberately removed from the draft law, with the intention of covering them in a second law focused on the digital economy, or other pieces of legislation on employment or economic issues.

What is most likely to happen is that they will finally disappear from the national agenda, especially as France moves towards a presidential election in just over twelve months' time.

So there has been much ado about very little. The revolution has not taken place.

From a grand attempt to regulate an entire economic sector, the French initiative has turned into a paltry set of peripheral measures.

Many businesses will now look to Europe – to negotiations on the European Digital Single Market – to bring about a more dramatic and positive change to the digital economy.

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