

# The EU is turning its fire on Ireland, the Netherlands ...

Published: January 14, 2026, 7:59 am

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The [FT has reported tonight that](#):

*Brussels is probing Ireland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands over their [tax deals with multinationals](#) paving the way potentially for a formal investigation into illegal sweeteners.*

Europe's top competition authority has asked the governments to explain their system of tax rulings and give details of assurances given to several specific companies — including [Apple](#) and [Starbucks](#) — according to people who have seen the request.

The move threatens to open a new front in the [global clampdown on tax evasion](#) through enforcing the EU's state aid rules — a unique regime that bans serious distortions of competition through tax breaks to favoured private groups.

If this is true - and the report implies good sources are available - this is excellent news because it goes right to the heart of the issue of tax abuse - which is that it is state sponsored by those states that have fallen prey to the influence of what Prem Sikka calls the pinstripe mafia of lawyers, accountants and bankers.