

French leader heads to Silicon Valley to talk tech

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France's president was visiting San Francisco on Wednesday and meeting with Silicon Valley technology leaders, just days after a French regulator hit Google with an embarrassing regulatory slap and after years of efforts to wrest more taxes from tech companies.

Francois Hollande holds up the U.S. [tech](#) industry as an economic success that he hopes to replicate at home. But he's also been among the leaders of Europe's fight to prevent what the continent sees as a systematic attempt by tech firms to invade [privacy](#) and avoid paying their corporate fair share.

The French leader was meeting with tech kingpins, including Google's Eric Schmidt, Sheryl Sandberg of Facebook and Twitter's Jack Dorsey, on a West coast swing during his three-day state visit to the United States.

Those companies have faced scrutiny by European regulators over privacy, [hate speech](#) and data protection issues.

Over the weekend, Google posted a statement on its French website noting that France's digital privacy watchdog found the search giant in violation of rules on ensuring data privacy. In late 2012, Twitter agreed to pull racist and anti-Semitic tweets under a pair of French hash tags after a Jewish group threatened to sue the social network for running afoul of national laws against hate speech.

Hollande's advisers insist his first priority is to meet leading dynamos of American Internet innovation, even though the president would press France's principles on issues such as privacy, taxes and hate speech.

French companies are playing catch-up in Silicon Valley compared to counterparts from Germany, Finland and Ireland, one analyst said.

Burton Lee, a lecturer in European Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the Stanford University engineering school, said socialist Hollande "does not seem to deeply understand technology-based innovation, entrepreneurship or product design, and as a result they do not have adequate policy tools or frameworks to accelerate badly needed growth in their emerging tech sector."

He said Hollande's proposed 75 percent income tax on the wealthy has definitely created tension between the French administration and the nation's tech entrepreneur and angel investor communities.

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