

French TV channels seek protection from Google, Netflix

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Google logo is seen on a wall at the entrance of the Google offices in Brussels on February 5, 2014

The heads of France's three largest private television networks have asked the government to protect them from US competitors like Google, Apple and Netflix who are set to enter the market.

The bosses of TF1, Canal+ and M6, alarmed by the impending arrival of

the American tech giants, have sought a meeting with Culture Minister Aurelie Filippetti to discuss "urgent measures" to reform the sector.

"It is not an economic crisis that is being faced by TF1, Canal+ and M6 but a rapid sectoral change," Nonce Paolini, Bertrand Meheut and Nicolas de Tavernost said in the letter written last week and seen by AFP on Monday.

They said they were worried by the "upheavals caused by the arrival of new actors" who had become leading providers of entertainment content across the world.

The TV chiefs said they were also concerned by the "outrageous tax optimisation" used by the US companies.

France is one of a growing number of nations to pursue more aggressively what they see as abuse of tax and accounting rules that allows some multinational companies to pay less tax.

Google for instance has reduced the amount of tax it pays in France by funnelling most of its revenue through a Dutch-registered intermediary and then to a Bermuda-registered holding, Google Ireland Limited, before reporting it in low-tax Ireland.

The French television heads said the government was worsening the situation in a stagnant sector by inviting new operators.

They called for a revamp of tight laws controlling television, a [tax](#) overhaul and revised rules allowing advertisements which are currently banned.

Contacted by AFP, the culture ministry refused comment on the letter.

Experts say video-streaming services like those offered by Netflix, Apple and Google, which owns YouTube, could make huge inroads in France which has a big domestic market for films and [television](#) series.

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