

Irish opposition attacks Apple ruling appeal

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Ireland's opposition on Wednesday lashed out at a cabinet decision to appeal the EU's Apple ruling amid public support for the European Commission order to collect back taxes from the US tech giant.

"We want companies like Apple in Ireland... but this doesn't mean one should turn a blind eye to tax evasion or avoidance," Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams said in parliament, which was recalled early to debate an issue that has divided the country.

"Tax is not just for the small man, it is for all," he said, Sinn Fein said on its Twitter account.

The European Commission last week ordered Apple to pay a record 13 billion euros (\$15 billion) in back taxes in Ireland, a move Washington warned could damage hugely important transatlantic economic ties.

The ruling put Ireland in the strange position of refusing the windfall for fear of scaring away valuable investment and undermining a cornerstone of Ireland's economic policy for decades.

Ireland's two main parties, Prime Minister Enda Kenny's Fine Gael and Fianna Fail, which supports the minority government, are expected to back the appeal.

But Sinn Fein, the main opposition party which gained support in elections earlier this year on an anti-austerity platform, is set to oppose.

Sinn Fein finance spokesman Pearse Doherty said Apple had operated "a sort of untaxed Bermuda Triangle" in Ireland following opinion polls that have shown majorities in favour of Apple paying the back taxes.

In his opening address, Finance Minister Micheal Noonan said the ruling had fed into an "outdated caricature" of Ireland as a tax haven and must be appealed to defend its [international reputation](#) and its future ability to attract foreign investment.

"The government's position throughout this process has been that the full amount of tax was paid in this case and no State aid was provided," he said.

"Ireland did not give favourable tax treatment to Apple: Ireland does not do deals with taxpayers."

Prime Minister Enda Kenny said the ruling had done "great damage" to Ireland's international reputation.

"The picture of Ireland painted by the Commission in this decision as a country prepared to play fast and loose with the law to gain unfair advantage could not be more damaging or further from the truth," he said.

Apple has had a base in the southern city of Cork since 1980 and employs nearly 6,000 people in Ireland, through which it routes its international sales totalling billions.

The European Commission said Apple paid an effective corporate tax rate of just 0.005 per cent on its European profits in 2014—equivalent to just 50 euros for every million.

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