



## Press Release

Luxembourg, 3 July 2018

### EU Auditors to examine the European Commission's enforcement of competition rules

The European Court of Auditors is conducting an audit of whether the European Commission has been effective in enforcing EU competition rules in the Single Market. EU competition rules cover various forms of anti-competitive behaviour, the control of mergers and other areas where action by a public authority may be necessary to preserve competition. The auditors will examine how well the Commission has performed in enforcing EU competition rules through its own antitrust proceedings, its merger control and through cooperation with the national competition authorities of the Member States.

*“Competition rules are of significant importance to the EU citizens and the EU economy. They should result in consumers benefiting from lower prices and a greater variety of products and services because companies can do business on a level playing field. This is crucial for the proper functioning of the EU's Single Market,”* said **Alex Brenninkmeijer, the Member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the audit.** *“We will seek to identify strengths and weaknesses in the Commission's work, highlight areas where changes could be beneficial, and assess how well the Commission has communicated its objectives and the impact of its work to EU citizens and other stakeholders.”*

The auditors will be conducting interviews with Commission officials and will review various Commission documents relating to its competition policy enforcement activities. They will also visit the competition authorities of some Member States.

The audit report is expected to be published in mid-2019.

#### Note to Editors

The principal EU competition rules are contained in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The overarching aim of EU competition policy is to keep the Single Market open and efficient, ensure a level playing field for companies to do business and help to reduce prices for the benefit of consumers.

The policy also contributes to the European Commission's general objectives and priorities; for example, by fostering the right conditions for the creation of jobs and encouraging higher levels of growth and investment. To achieve this, EU policy aims to eliminate actual and potential

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threats to competition. Behaviour that could distort free competition is prohibited by law. For example, competitors are forbidden from colluding to set prices and from dividing up markets in a way which makes it harder for other companies to compete.

Since 2004, a system of parallel enforcement of EU competition rules has existed: both the Commission and the national competition authorities of the Member States have the legal powers and responsibility to enforce EU competition rules. The Commission is also responsible for prohibiting mergers and acquisitions which would significantly reduce competition in the Single Market by, for example, creating dominant companies likely to raise prices for consumers.