



Press Release

Luxembourg, 12 September 2018

Auditors publish Background Paper on EU competition policy enforcement

The European Court of Auditors has today published a Background Paper on the enforcement of the EU's competition rules. Background Papers provide information on ongoing audit tasks and are designed as a source of information for those interested in the policy and/or programmes being audited.

Today's Paper is based on preparatory work for an audit currently underway on whether the European Commission has been effective in enforcing EU competition rules. Competition policy covers anticompetitive behaviour, mergers and state aid.

The Background Paper includes sections on the importance of competition in the EU single market, as well as the issues surrounding it, including anti-competitive behaviour and market restructuring. It sets out the EU's objectives for competition policy, the regulatory environment and the roles and responsibilities of the various authorities at EU and Member State level.

"We hope that readers find in this Background Paper useful information on what the scope is of our audit," said Alex Brenninkmeijer, the Member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the audit. "Competition policy plays a vital role in the EU single market and it is important that it is understood as widely as possible."

The auditors will be conducting interviews with officials in the European Commission and in national competition authorities. They will also review documents related to the Commission's enforcement activities and its cooperation with Member States' national competition authorities. Publication of the audit report is expected towards the middle of 2019.

Note to Editors

Competition rules play a significant role in the EU economy: they ensure that companies can do business on a level playing field and provide a greater variety of products and services to consumers at competitive prices and conditions. The principle of fair competition on equal terms is crucial for the proper functioning of the EU Single Market. Competition policy covers all forms of anticompetitive behaviour by companies, the risks to competition posed by mergers between

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companies, and activities of public authorities of the Member States that may distort competition, such as the granting of state aid.

The European Commission is the principal enforcer of the EU's competition rules. It has the power and responsibility to investigate suspected anticompetitive conduct, issue prohibition decisions, impose fines and conclude binding agreements with companies. In a system of parallel enforcement, the Commission ensures that the national competition authorities of the Member States apply EU competition rules in a uniform manner. The Commission also plays an important role in drawing up EU competition rules, together with the European Parliament and the Council.

The purpose of this press release is to convey the main messages of the European Court of Auditors' Background Paper. The full paper is available at eca.europa.eu.