



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

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Antitrust: Commission opens proceedings against container liner shipping companies

The European Commission has opened formal antitrust proceedings against several container liner shipping companies to investigate whether they engaged in concerted practices, in breach of EU antitrust rules. Container liner shipping is the transport of containers by ship at a fixed time schedule on a specific route between a range of ports at one end (e.g. Shanghai - Hong Kong - Singapore) and another range of ports at the other end (e.g., Rotterdam - Hamburg - Southampton). Opening of proceedings does not prejudge the outcome of the investigation.

Since 2009, these companies have been making regular public announcements of price increase intentions through press releases on their websites and in the specialised trade press. These announcements are made several times a year and contain the amount of increase and the date of implementation, which is generally similar for all announcing companies. The announcements are usually made by the companies successively a few weeks before the announced implementation date.

The Commission has concerns that this practice may allow the companies to signal future price intentions to each other and may harm competition and customers by raising prices on the market for container liner shipping transport services on routes to and from Europe. The Commission will now investigate whether this behaviour amounts to a concerted practice in breach of Article 101 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and of Article 53 of the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement.

Background

Article 101 TFEU prohibits anticompetitive agreements and concerted practices.

Article 11(6) of the [Antitrust Regulation](#) provides that the initiation of proceedings by the Commission relieves the competition authorities of the Member States of their competence to also apply EU competition rules to the practices concerned. Article 16(1) further provides that national courts must avoid giving decisions, which would conflict with a decision contemplated by the Commission in proceedings that it has initiated.

The Commission has informed the container liner shipping companies concerned and the competition authorities of the Member States that it has opened proceedings in this case.

There is no legal deadline for bringing an antitrust investigation to an end. The duration of an investigation depends on a number of factors, including the complexity of the case, the cooperation of the undertakings with the Commission and the exercise of the rights of defence.

More information on the investigation will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [39850](#).

Contacts :

[Antoine Colombani](#) (+32 2 297 45 13, Twitter: [@ECspokesAntoine](#))

[Marisa Gonzalez Iglesias](#) (+32 2 295 19 25)