



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

MEMO

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Antitrust: Commission confirms unannounced inspections in Internet connectivity services

The European Commission can confirm that on 9 July 2013 Commission officials initiated unannounced inspections at the premises of a number of telecommunications companies active in the provision of Internet connectivity in several Member States. The Commission has concerns that the companies concerned may have violated EU antitrust rules that prohibit the abuse of a dominant market position (Article 102 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union - TFEU).

The Commission officials were accompanied by their counterparts from the relevant national competition authorities.

Internet players interconnect with each other through a combination of wholesale services to cover all possible Internet destinations. Internet connectivity allows market players (e.g. content providers) to connect to the Internet so as to be able to provide their services or products at the retail level. This service is crucial for the functioning of the Internet and for end users' ability to reach Internet content with the necessary quality of service, irrespective of the location of the provider.

Unannounced inspections are a preliminary step into suspected anticompetitive practices. The fact that the Commission carries out such inspections does not mean that the companies are guilty of anti-competitive behaviour nor does it prejudge the outcome of the investigation itself. The Commission respects the rights of defense, in particular the right of companies to be heard in antitrust proceedings. The Commission does not make public the names of the companies inspected at this stage.

There is no legal deadline to complete inquiries into anticompetitive conduct. Their duration depends on a number of factors, including the complexity of each case, the extent to which the undertakings concerned co-operate with the Commission and the exercise of the rights of defence.