Completing the Digital Single Market is one of the key Commission priorities for fostering growth, innovation and job creation across the EU.

Concern: **Google** might be favouring “Google Shopping” when displaying general search results.

Consumers might not see more relevant results

Other comparison shopping services might not be displayed as prominently and so can't compete on merit.

In 2014, the Commission continued its investigation into **Google** because it may have abused its dominant position. **Online consumers** should have as wide a choice as possible.

New antitrust rules on technology transfer agreements (TTBER) should help foster innovation.

The Commission opened formal proceedings against film studios and **pay-TV** broadcasters who may prevent consumers from cross-border access to pay-TV content.

The Commission authorised the acquisition of **WhatsApp** by Facebook.

The Commission imposed modifications on mergers between **mobile network operators** in Ireland and Germany, and fined Slovak Telekom and Deutsche Telekom for excluding competitors.

Decisions relating to Standard Essential Patents (SEPs) – Motorola and Samsung – will make sure that the benefits of standardisation are coupled with a fair reward for intellectual property holders.
Energy Union

Competition policy can make a significant contribution to the EU energy market, for example by tackling uncoordinated national policies and unfair business practices.

The Commission monitors high energy prices caused by abusive or collusive behaviour. In 2014 it took two decisions imposing fines in the area of power exchanges.

To help Member States better target public subsidies for energy infrastructure, generation capacity and support to renewable energies, the Commission adopted new Guidelines on State aid for environmental protection and energy.

The Commission pursued an antitrust investigation into Gazprom for an alleged abuse of dominance on gas supply markets.

In April 2015, the Commission launched a State aid sector inquiry into national measures to ensure sufficient electricity supply (so-called “capacity mechanisms”). The aim is to assess whether these measures are distorting competition among electricity suppliers or hindering trade across national borders.

GAZPROM may be abusing its dominant position in Central and Eastern Europe

- by preventing cross-border flows of gas
- by charging unfairly high prices
- by extracting commitments, in return for gas, to keep control over pipelines
Unfair tax advantages

Unlawful reductions of the tax burden for selected companies harm every taxpayer, as well as competitors in the market.

In 2014, the Commission opened formal investigations into specific tax rulings in Ireland (Apple), Luxembourg (Amazon and Fiat) and The Netherlands (Starbucks), as well as into the Belgian excess profit ruling system.

The Commission also asked all EU countries to give information on how they use tax rulings.

Financial markets and payments

The Commission adopted two important cartel decisions in the area of interest rate derivatives and dealt with a number of cases in relation to the fixing of benchmark rates.

Multilateral interchange fees (MIFs), imposed when using bank cards, may result in higher prices for consumers. The Commission made legally binding the commitment offered by Visa Europe to significantly cut its MIFs for credit card payments, and continues investigating the business practices of Visa Inc., Visa International and Mastercard. The MIF Regulation also capped the level of MIFs for European cards.
Competition policy figures in 2014

Commission decisions

- **State aid**: 866 decisions. €301 million illegal State aid recovered.
- **Mergers**: 300 decisions. In 18 of them merging parties had to accept remedies to prevent an anti-competitive outcome. No merger was prohibited.
- **Antitrust**: 6 decisions and 2 Statements of Objection (SO).
- **Cartels**: 10 decisions and 10 SOs.

Fines

The Commission investigates possible anti-competitive behaviour by companies, takes binding decisions and imposes fines. The Commission imposed **€1.7 billion** in fines related to cartel decisions and **€0.5 billion** related to antitrust decisions. The money received in fines does not increase the EU’s overall budget, but reduces the EU countries’ contribution to the budget.

Customer benefits

The observable customer benefits\(^{(1)}\) resulting from cartel decisions in 2014 were estimated between €1.8 billion and €2.6 billion. The observable customer benefits resulting from merger decisions in 2014 were estimated between €2 billion and €5.1 billion.

What do EU citizens think about competition?

74% think that effective competition has a positive impact on them as consumers.

Where did you hear or read about competition?

- TV: 62%
- Mobile: 38%
- Print: 60%
- Radio: 34%

Does more competition between companies lead to...?

- More choice:
  - totally agree: 36%
  - tend to agree: 32%
  - don’t know: 10%
  - tend to disagree: 15%
  - totally disagree: 7%

- Better prices:
  - totally agree: 29%
  - tend to agree: 31%
  - don’t know: 9%
  - tend to disagree: 20%
  - totally disagree: 10%

- Better quality:
  - totally agree: 33%
  - tend to agree: 29%
  - don’t know: 11%
  - tend to disagree: 19%
  - totally disagree: 8%

- More innovation:
  - totally agree: 17%
  - tend to agree: 29%
  - don’t know: 11%
  - tend to disagree: 21%
  - totally disagree: 13%

Have you experienced a lack of competition?

In which sector?

- Energy
- Transport
- Pharma
- ICT
- Food
- Finance

What was the main problem?

- Prices too high
- Prices too similar
- Too little choice
- Quality not good enough
- Difficult to compare prices
- Difficult to change supplier
- Other