



Antitrust: Commission confirms unannounced inspections in the fragrance sector

Brussels, 7 March 2023

On 7 March 2023, the European Commission carried out unannounced inspections at the premises of companies and an association active in the fragrance industry in various Member States. In parallel, the Commission has sent out formal requests for information to several companies active in the same sector.

The inspections and requests for information concern possible collusion in relation to the supply of fragrances and fragrance ingredients. Fragrances are used in the manufacture of consumer products such as household and personal care products.

The Commission has concerns that companies and an association in the fragrance industry worldwide may have violated EU antitrust rules that prohibit cartels and restrictive business practices ([Article 101](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union).

The Commission has been in contact with the Antitrust Division of the US Department of Justice, the UK Competition and Markets Authority and the Swiss Competition Commission in relation to this matter and the inspections were conducted in consultation with them. The Commission officials were accompanied by their counterparts from the national competition authorities of the Member States where the inspections were carried out.

Unannounced inspections are a preliminary investigatory 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 defence, in particular the right of companies to be heard in antitrust proceedings.

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.

Under the Commission's leniency programme companies that have been involved in a secret cartel may be granted immunity from fines or significant reductions in fines in return for reporting the conduct and cooperating with the Commission throughout its investigation. Individuals and companies can report cartel or other anti-competitive behaviour on an anonymous basis through the Commission's whistle-blower tool. Further information on the Commission's [leniency programme](#) and [whistle-blower tool](#) is available on DG Competition's [website](#).

IP/23/1532

Press contacts:

[Arianna PODESTA](#) (+32 2 298 70 24)

[Maria TSONI](#) (+32 2 299 05 26)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)