

Antitrust: Commission confirms inspection in the car sector in Germany

The European Commission can confirm that as of 16 October 2017 its officials carried out an unannounced inspection at the premises of a car manufacturer in Germany.

The inspection is related to Commission concerns that several German car manufacturers 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 officials were accompanied by their counterparts from the German national competition authority.

Inspections are a preliminary step in investigations of suspected anti-competitive practices. The fact that the Commission carries out inspections does not mean that the inspected 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 anti-competitive conduct. Their duration depends on a number of factors, including the complexity of each case, the extent to which the companies concerned cooperate with the Commission and the exercise of the rights of defence.