

Antitrust: Commission confirms unannounced inspections in the styrene monomer purchasing sector

The European Commission can confirm that on 5 June 2018 its officials carried out unannounced inspections in several Member States at the premises of companies active in styrene monomer purchasing.

The Commission has concerns that the inspected companies 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 relevant national competition authorities.

Styrene monomer is a chemical product used as a base material for a number of chemical products such as plastics, resins, rubbers and latexes. These products are then used in a very wide range of applications (insulation, packaging, etc.).

Unannounced inspections are a preliminary step in investigations 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 cooperate with the Commission and the exercise of the rights of defence.