



## **Antitrust: Commission carries out unannounced inspections in the automotive sector**

Brussels, 15 March 2022

On 15 March 2022, the European Commission has conducted unannounced inspections at the premises of companies and associations active in the automotive sector located in several Member States. In parallel, the Commission has sent out formal requests for information to several companies active in the automotive sector.

The Commission has concerns that several companies and associations 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. The inspections were conducted in coordination with the UK Competition and Markets Authority.

The inspections and requests for information concern possible collusion in relation to the collection, treatment and recovery of end-of-life cars and vans which are considered waste.

Unannounced inspections and requests for information are a preliminary investigatory step into suspected anticompetitive practices. The fact that the Commission carries out such inspections and sends out formal requests for information does not mean that the companies are guilty of anti-competitive behaviour nor does it prejudice the outcome of the investigation itself.

The Commission fully respects the rights of defence, in particular the right of companies to be heard in antitrust proceedings.

The inspections have been conducted in compliance with all coronavirus health and safety protocols to ensure the security of those involved.

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 companies and associations concerned co-operate with the Commission and the exercise of the rights of defence.