Today, a meeting of the heads of the network of European competition authorities ('the ECN') took place to discuss the results of the monitoring exercise and the way forward in the online hotel booking cases.

Following a mandate from the ECN, a working group of 10 national competition authorities ('NCAs')[1] and DG Competition is currently finalising a report on the results of a monitoring exercise in the online hotel booking sector. The monitoring was carried out last year to assess the effects of the antitrust enforcement measures adopted in recent years in the sector. This report will be published soon.

The results of the monitoring exercise suggest that both types of measure which are based on a converging theory of harm – on the one hand, allowing large online travel agents ('OTAs') to use so-called 'narrow MFN clauses'[2] and, on the other, prohibiting OTAs from using MFN clauses – go in the right direction.

Based on the monitoring results, the heads of the ECN have agreed to keep the online hotel booking sector under review and to re-assess the competitive situation in due course. This will allow the sector more time to make full use of the measures that have already been taken.

New enforcement actions or market investigations will be coordinated within the ECN.

The ECN is committed to ensuring consistency in future cases. An early warning system has been agreed and introduced within the ECN: it allows discussing ongoing cases that raise novel issues at the earliest possible stage. It also facilitates early case allocation and/or coordination of novel cases with cross-border effects, run by several authorities. The Commission will of course fulfil its role under Regulation 1/2003 in this respect.

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[1] Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, UK
[2] Narrow MFN clauses prevent hotels from offering better prices on their own websites than on OTAs' websites, while still allowing them to offer different room prices to different OTAs.