

Brussels, 22 June 2010

Antitrust: Commission sends Statement of Objections to suspected participants in window mountings cartel

The European Commission has sent a Statement of Objections (SO) to nine European producers of mountings for windows and window-doors. The Commission believes it has evidence showing their participation in a cartel covering mountings used to open and close windows and terrace- and balcony-doors. The sending of an SO does not prejudice the final outcome. The companies have the right to reply in writing, to request a hearing and to have access to the Commission's file of documents on the case.

In July 2007 the Commission carried out unannounced inspections at the premises of a number of European producers of mountings (see [MEMO/07/276](#)). The mountings concerned are the mechanical parts that allow the opening and closing of a window or window door and attach a window to its frame. The most commonly used type of mountings in Europe is the so called tilt and turn mechanism, designed to enable the full or partial opening of the window in different positions with one handle. Mountings are made of up to a hundred individual pieces of metal for one window and are not visible when the window is closed.

The Commission believes that nine European producers may have colluded to increase the sales prices for these mountings in the European Economic Area (EEA) and is sending them a Statement of Objections that outlines the Commission's findings against them.

Procedural background

A Statement of Objections is a formal step in Commission investigations into suspected violations of EU rules on restrictive business practices (Article 101 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). The Commission informs the parties concerned in writing of the objections raised against them and the companies can also examine the documents on the Commission's investigation file, can reply in writing and can request an oral hearing to present their comments on the case in front of representatives of the Commission and the national competition authorities.

Sending a Statement of Objections does not prejudice the final outcome of the procedure.

The duration of cartel investigations varies according to the complexity of the case, the number of markets and companies involved and whether they cooperate with the Commission.

If, after the parties have exercised their rights of defence, the Commission concludes that there is sufficient evidence of an infringement, it can issue a decision prohibiting the conduct and impose a fine of up to 10% of a company's annual worldwide turnover.

This is without prejudice to a company's ability to receive full immunity for being the first to reveal information about the cartel or to receive a reduction of the fine for supplying evidence of significant added value according to the Commission's Leniency Notice.

[http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52006XC1208\(04\):EN:NOT](http://eurlex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52006XC1208(04):EN:NOT)