



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Antitrust: Commission market tests improved commitments on Reuters Instrument Codes**

The European Commission is consulting interested third parties on a new proposal from Thomson Reuters to address concerns that its licensing practices in relation to Reuters Instrument Codes (RICs) may be in breach of EU antitrust rules prohibiting the abuse of dominant market positions.

RICs are codes that identify securities, used by financial institutions to retrieve data from Thomson Reuters' real-time datafeeds. Thomson Reuters has substantially revised its commitments proposal to address shortcomings identified by market players in a first market test. In particular, the new proposal extends the scope of the license and reduces the fee. If the outcome of the market test were to show that the commitments address the competition concerns, the Commission could make them legally binding on Thomson Reuters.

The Commission has concerns that Thomson Reuters may be abusing its dominant market position in the market for consolidated real-time datafeeds by prohibiting customers from using RICs for retrieving data from alternative providers and cross-referencing them to alternative codes by other suppliers (so-called "mapping"). In the Commission's preliminary view, this creates substantial barriers for customers who use RICs in their internal applications and wish to switch to alternative providers. Customers who want to switch would have to remove RICs from their internal applications and replace them with alternative codes. This is technically challenging and costly and often prevents customers from switching.

To address the Commission's concerns, Thomson Reuters offered to allow customers to license additional RIC usage rights for the purpose of switching and to use RICs for retrieving data from other providers against a monthly license fee. In addition, Thomson Reuters would provide customers with the necessary information to map RICs to alternative symbology (i.e. codes by other suppliers).

The new proposal improves the previously offered commitments in several regards. The license fee would be reduced and the fee structure simplified. Furthermore, the license could be used worldwide by customers with genuine business operations in the European Economic Area (EEA). The scope of the license would be widened to cover all RICs which related to instruments traded over-the-counter (OTC), unless Thomson Reuters was the sole provider of the OTC-data at the time of the switch. Furthermore, a separate license would be available for third party developers to enable them to facilitate customer switching.

## Background

Following its own initiative investigation, the Commission opened formal proceedings on 30 October 2009 (see [IP/09/1692](#)). In September 2011, the Commission informed Thomson Reuters of its concerns that the company may have abused its dominant position in breach of Article 102 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) and Article 54 of the European Economic Area (EEA) agreement by prohibiting customers to use RICs for retrieving data from alternative providers and map them for such a purpose to alternative symbols.

A first commitment proposal was market tested between 14 December 2011 and 25 January 2012 (see [IP/11/1540](#)).

If the outcome of this second market test confirms that the proposed improved commitments address the competition concerns, the Commission may adopt a decision under Article 9 of the Antitrust Regulation 1/2003, making the commitments legally binding on Thomson Reuters without concluding whether EU antitrust law was infringed.

RICs are short, alphanumerical codes that identify securities and their trading locations. They are used - inter alia - to retrieve information on these securities from Thomson Reuters' consolidated real-time datafeeds.

A real-time market datafeed is a virtual pipeline of electronically distributed real-time market data which feeds software applications developed by banks and financial institutions. Consolidated real-time datafeeds are real-time market datafeeds that provide real-time market data originating from a variety of sources such as stock exchanges or other trading venues. They frequently also include price information concerning securities traded over-the-counter (OTC).

The full commitments and more information on the case are available at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/competition/elojade/isef/case\\_details.cfm?proc\\_code=1\\_39654](http://ec.europa.eu/competition/elojade/isef/case_details.cfm?proc_code=1_39654)

Interested third parties can submit comments on the commitments one month from the date of publication in the EU Official Journal (until 12 August 2012)

Contacts :

[Antoine Colombani](#) (+32 2 297 45 13)

[Marisa Gonzalez Iglesias](#) (+32 2 295 19 25)