

Antitrust: Commission confirms unannounced inspections in the grocery retail sector in France

The European Commission can confirm that on 20 May 2019 its officials carried out unannounced inspections at the premises of companies active in the grocery retail sector in France.

The Commission has concerns that two grocery retail 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 French competition authority.

Unannounced inspections are a preliminary investigatory step into suspected anti-competitive 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 prejudice 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 anti-competitive conduct. Their duration depends on a number of factors, including the complexity of each case, the extent to which the companies concerned co-operate with the Commission and the exercise of the rights of defence.