



RECOMMENDATIONS & BEST PRACTICES

Revised recommendation of the Council Concerning Co-operation between Member countries on Anticompetitive Practices affecting International Trade

1995

Introduction

The OECD Council has adopted a number of non-binding Recommendations on competition law and policy. In addition, the Competition Committee has adopted Best Practices. OECD Recommendations and Best Practices are often catalysts for major change by governments.

Overview

International co-operation between OECD countries on anticompetitive practices affecting international trade has been in operation for more than 40 years based on a series of Council Recommendations which have been elaborated and progressively refined by the Competition Committee.

The Council Recommendation has last been revised in 1995. The basic provisions of notification, exchange of information, consultation and conciliation have been completed by an interpretative Appendix. It contains guiding principles as to when and how to make use of the Recommendation and clarifies the principle of confidentiality of information disclosed.

The 1995 Recommendation has proven to be an important instrument of international co-operation in the enforcement of competition laws.

Related Topics

Recommendation of the OECD Council Concerning Effective Action against Hard Core Cartels (1998)

ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC
CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

GENERAL DISTRIBUTION

Paris, drafted: 21-Sep-1995

OLIS: >

dist.: >

C(95)130/FINAL

COUNCIL

REVISED RECOMMENDATION OF THE COUNCIL

CONCERNING CO-OPERATION BETWEEN MEMBER COUNTRIES ON
ANTICOMPETITIVE PRACTICES AFFECTING INTERNATIONAL TRADE

(adopted by the Council at its 856th Session on 27 and 28 July 1995)

>

THE COUNCIL,

Having regard to Article 5 b) of the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of 14th December 1960;

Having regard to the fact that international co-operation among OECD countries in the control of anticompetitive practices affecting international trade has long existed, based on successive Recommendations of the Council of 5th October 1967 [C(67)53(Final)], 3rd July 1973 [C(73)99(Final)], 25th September 1979 [C(79)154(Final)] and 21st May 1986 [C(86)44(Final)];

Having regard to the recommendations made in the study of transnational mergers and merger control procedures prepared for the Committee on Competition Law and Policy;

Recognising that anticompetitive practices may constitute an obstacle to the achievement of economic growth, trade expansion and other economic goals of Member countries;

Recognising that the continued growth in internationalisation of business activities correspondingly increases the likelihood that anticompetitive practices in one country or co-ordinated behaviour of firms located in different countries may adversely affect the interests of Member countries and also increases the number of transnational mergers that are subject to the merger control laws of more than one Member country;

Recognising that the unilateral application of national legislation, in cases where business operations in other countries are involved, raises questions as to the respective spheres of sovereignty of the countries concerned;

Recognising the need for Member countries to give effect to the principles of international law and comity and to use moderation and self-restraint in the interest of co-operation on the field of anticompetitive practices;

Recognising that anticompetitive practices investigations and proceedings by one Member country may, in certain cases, affect important interests of other Member countries;

Considering therefore that Member countries should co-operate in the implementation of their respective national legislation in order to combat the harmful effects of anticompetitive practices;

Considering also that closer co-operation between Member countries is needed to deal effectively with anticompetitive practices operated by enterprises situated in Member countries when they affect the interests of one or more other Member countries and have a harmful effect on international trade;

Considering moreover that closer co-operation between Member countries in the form of notification, exchange of information, co-ordination of action, consultation and conciliation, on a fully voluntary basis, should be encouraged, it being understood that such co-operation should not, in any way, be construed to affect the legal positions of Member countries with regard to questions of sovereignty, and in particular, the extra-territorial application of laws concerning anticompetitive practices, as may arise;

Recognising the desirability of setting forth procedures by which the Competition Law and Policy Committee can act as a forum for exchanges of views, consultations and conciliation on matters related to anticompetitive practices affecting international trade;

Considering that if Member countries find it appropriate to enter into bilateral arrangements for co-operation in the enforcement of national competition laws, they should take into account the present Recommendation and Guiding Principles:

I. RECOMMENDS to Governments of Member countries that insofar as their laws permit:

A. NOTIFICATION, EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND CO-ORDINATION OF ACTION

1. When a Member country undertakes under its competition laws an investigation or proceeding which may affect important interests of another Member country or countries, it should notify such Member country or countries, if possible in advance, and, in any event, at a time that would facilitate comments or consultations; such advance notification would enable the proceeding Member country, while retaining full freedom of ultimate decision, to take account of such views as the other Member country may wish to express and of such remedial action as the other Member country may find it feasible to take under its own laws, to deal with the anticompetitive practices;
2. Where two or more Member countries proceed against an anticompetitive practice in international trade, they should endeavour to co-ordinate their action insofar as appropriate and practicable;
3. Through consultations or otherwise, the Member countries should co-operate in developing or applying mutually satisfactory and beneficial measures for dealing with anticompetitive practices in international trade. In this connection, they should supply each other with such relevant information on anticompetitive practices as their legitimate interests permit them to disclose; and should allow, subject to appropriate safeguards, including those relating to confidentiality, the disclosure of information to the competent authorities of Member countries by the other parties concerned, whether accomplished unilaterally or in the context of bilateral or multilateral understandings, unless such co-operation or disclosure would be contrary to significant national interests.

B. CONSULTATION AND CONCILIATION

4. a) A Member country which considers that an investigation or proceeding being conducted by another Member country under its competition laws may affect its important interests should transmit its views on the matter to or request consultation with the other Member country;
- b) Without prejudice to the continuation of its action under its competition law and to its full freedom of ultimate decision the Member country so addressed should give full and sympathetic

consideration to the views expressed by the requesting country, and in particular to any suggestions as to alternative means of fulfilling the needs or objectives of the competition investigation or proceeding;

5. a) A Member country which considers that one or more enterprises situated in one or more other Member countries are or have been engaged in anticompetitive practices of whatever origin that are substantially and adversely affecting its interests, may request consultation with such other Member country or countries recognising that entering into such consultations is without prejudice to any action under its competition law and to the full freedom of ultimate decision of the Member countries concerned;
 - b) Any Member country so addressed should give full and sympathetic consideration to such views and factual materials as may be provided by the requesting country and, in particular, to the nature of the anticompetitive practices in question, the enterprises involved and the alleged harmful effects on the interests of the requesting country;
 - c) The Member country addressed which agrees that enterprises situated in its territory are engaged in anticompetitive practices harmful to the interests of the requesting country should attempt to ensure that these enterprises take remedial action, or should itself take whatever remedial action it considers appropriate, including actions under its legislation on anticompetitive practices or administrative measures, on a voluntary basis and considering its legitimate interests;
6. Without prejudice to any of their rights, the Member countries involved in consultations under paragraphs 4 and 5 above should endeavour to find a mutually acceptable solution in the light of the respective interests involved;
 7. In the event of a satisfactory conclusion to the consultations under paragraphs 4 and 5 above, the requesting country, in agreement with, and in the form accepted by, the Member country or countries addressed, should inform the Competition Law and Policy Committee of the nature of the anticompetitive practices in question and of the settlement reached;
 8. In the event that no satisfactory conclusion can be reached, the Member countries concerned, if they so agree, should consider having recourse to the good offices of the Competition Law and Policy Committee with a view to conciliation. If the Member countries concerned agree to the use of another means of settlement, they should, if they consider it appropriate, inform the Committee of such features of the settlement as they feel they can disclose.
- II. RECOMMENDS that Member countries take into account the guiding principles set out in the Appendix to this Recommendation.
 - III. INSTRUCES the Competition Law and Policy Committee:

1. To examine periodically the progress made in the implementation of the present Recommendation and to serve periodically or at the request of a Member country as a forum for exchanges of views on matters related to the Recommendation on the understanding that it will not reach conclusions on the conduct of individual enterprises or governments;
 2. To consider the reports submitted by Member countries in accordance with paragraph 7 of Section I above;
 3. To consider the requests for conciliation submitted by Member countries in accordance with paragraph 8 of Section I above and to assist, by offering advice or by any other means, in the settlement of the matter between the Member countries concerned;
 4. To report to the Council as appropriate on the application of the present Recommendation.
- IV. DECIDES that this Recommendation and its Appendix cancel and replace the Recommendation of the Council of 21st May 1986 [C(86)44(Final)].

APPENDIXGUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR NOTIFICATIONS, EXCHANGES OF INFORMATION,
CO-OPERATION IN INVESTIGATIONS AND PROCEEDINGS,
CONSULTATIONS AND CONCILIATION OF
ANTICOMPETITIVE PRACTICES AFFECTING INTERNATIONAL TRADEPurpose

1. The purpose of these principles is to clarify the procedures laid down in the Recommendation and thereby to strengthen co-operation and to minimise conflicts in the enforcement of competition laws. It is recognised that implementation of the recommendations herein is fully subject to the national laws of Member countries, as well as in all cases to the judgement of national authorities that co-operation in a specific matter is consistent with the Member country's national interests. Member countries may wish to consider appropriate legal measures, consistent with their national policies, to give effect to this Recommendation in appropriate cases.

Definitions

2. a) "Investigation or proceeding" means any official factual inquiry or enforcement action authorised or undertaken by a competition authority of a Member country pursuant to the competition laws of that country. Excluded, however, are (i) the review of business conduct or routine filings, in advance of a formal or informal determination that the matter may be anticompetitive, or (ii) research, studies or surveys the objective of which is to examine the general economic situation or general conditions in specific industries.
- b) "Merger" means merger, acquisition, joint venture and any other form of business amalgamation that falls within the scope and definitions of the competition laws of a Member country governing business concentrations or combinations.

Notification

3. The circumstances in which a notification of an investigation or proceeding should be made, as recommended in paragraph I.A.1. of the Recommendation, include:

- a) When it is proposed that, through a written request, information will be sought from the territory of another Member country or countries;
- b) When it concerns a practice (other than a merger) carried out wholly or in part in the territory of another Member country or countries, whether the practice is purely private or whether it is believed to be required, encouraged or approved by the government or governments of another country or countries;

- c) When the investigation or proceeding previously notified may reasonably be expected to lead to a prosecution or other enforcement action which may affect an important interest of another Member country or countries;
- d) When it involves remedies that would require or prohibit behaviour or conduct in the territory of another Member country;
- e) In the case of an investigation or proceeding involving a merger, and in addition to the circumstances described elsewhere in this paragraph, when a party directly involved in the merger, or an enterprise controlling such a party, is incorporated or organised under the laws of another Member country;
- f) In any other situation where the investigation or proceeding may involve important interests of another Member country or countries.

Procedure for notifying

- 4. a) Under the Recommendation notification ordinarily should be provided at the first stage in an investigation or proceeding when it becomes evident that notifiable circumstances described in paragraph 3 are present. However, there may be cases where notification at that stage could prejudice the investigative action or proceeding. In such a case notification and, when requested, consultation should take place as soon as possible and in sufficient time to enable the views of the other Member country to be taken into account. Before any formal legal or administrative action is taken, the notifying country should ensure, to the fullest extent possible in the circumstances, that it would not prejudice this process.
- b) Notification of an investigation or proceeding should be made in writing through the channels requested by each country as indicated in a list to be established and periodically updated by the Competition Law and Policy Committee.
- c) The content of the notification should be sufficiently detailed to permit an initial evaluation by the notified country of the likelihood of any effects on its national interests. It should include, if possible, the names of the persons or enterprises concerned, the activities under investigation, the character of the investigation or procedure and the legal provisions concerned, and, if applicable, the need to seek information from the territory of another Member country. In the case of an investigation or proceeding involving a merger, notification should also include:
 - i) the fact of initiation of an investigation or proceeding;
 - ii) the fact of termination of the investigation or proceeding, with a description of any remedial action ordered or voluntary steps undertaken by the parties;
 - iii) a description of the issues of interest to the notifying Member country, such as the relevant markets affected, jurisdictional issues or remedial concerns;

- iv) a statement of the time period within which the notifying Member country either must act or is planning to act.

Co-ordination of Investigations

5. The co-ordination of concurrent investigations, as recommended in paragraph I.A.2. of the Recommendation, should be undertaken on a case-by-case basis, where the relevant Member countries agree that it would be in their interests to do so. This co-ordination process shall not, however, affect each Member country's right to take a decision independently based on the investigation. Co-ordination might include any of the following steps, consistent with the national laws of the countries involved:

- a) providing notice of applicable time periods and schedules for decision-making;
- b) sharing factual and analytical information and material, subject to national laws governing the confidentiality of information and the principles relating to confidential information set forth in paragraph 10;
- c) requesting, in appropriate circumstances, that the subjects of the investigation voluntarily permit the co-operating countries to share some or all of the information in their possession, to the extent permitted by national laws;
- d) co-ordinating discussions or negotiations regarding remedial actions, particularly when such remedies could require conduct or behaviour in the territory of more than one Member country;
- e) in those Member countries in which advance notification of mergers is required or permitted, requesting that the notification include a statement identifying notifications also made or to be made to other countries.

Assistance in an investigation or proceeding of a Member country

6. Co-operation among Member countries by means of supplying information on anticompetitive practices in response to a request from a Member country, as recommended in paragraph I.A.3 of the Recommendation, should be undertaken on a case-by-case basis, where it would be in the interests of the relevant Member countries to do so. Co-operation might include any of the following steps, consistent with the national laws of the countries involved:

- a) assisting in obtaining information on a voluntary basis from within the assisting Member's country;
- b) providing factual and analytical material from its files, subject to national laws governing confidentiality of information and the principles relating to confidential information set forth in paragraph 10;
- c) employing on behalf of the requesting Member country its authority to compel the production of information in the form of testimony or documents, where the national law of the requested Member country provides for such authority;

- d) providing information in the public domain relating to the relevant conduct or practice. To facilitate the exchange of such information, Member countries should consider collecting and maintaining data about the nature and sources of such public information to which other Member countries could refer.

7. When a Member country learns of an anticompetitive practice occurring in the territory of another Member country that could violate the laws of the latter, the former should consider informing the latter and providing as much information as practicable, subject to national laws governing the confidentiality of information and the principles relating to confidential information set forth in paragraph 10, consistent with other applicable national laws and its national interests.

- 8. a) Member countries should use moderation and self-restraint and take into account the substantive laws and procedural rules in the foreign forum when exercising their investigatory powers with a view to obtaining information located abroad.
- b) Before seeking information located abroad, Member countries should consider whether adequate information is conveniently available from sources within their national territory.
- c) Any requests for information located abroad should be framed in terms that are as specific as possible.

9. The provision of assistance or co-operation between Member countries may be subject to consultations regarding the sharing of costs of these activities.

Confidentiality

10. The exchange of information under this Recommendation is subject to the laws of participating Member countries governing the confidentiality of information. A Member country may specify the protection that shall be accorded the information to be provided and any limitations that may apply to the use of such information. The requested Member country would be justified in declining to supply information if the requesting Member country is unable to observe those requests. A receiving Member country should take all reasonable steps to ensure observance of the confidentiality and use limitations specified by the sending Member country, and if a breach of confidentiality or use limitation occurs, should notify the sending Member country of the breach and take appropriate steps to remedy the effects of the breach.

Consultations between Member countries

- 11. a) The country notifying an investigation or proceeding should conduct its investigation or proceeding, to the extent possible under legal and practical time constraints, in a manner that would allow the notified country to request informal consultations or to submit its views on the investigation or proceeding.
- b) Requests for consultation under paragraphs I.B.4. and I.B.5. of the Recommendation should be made as soon as possible after notification and explanation of the national interests affected should be

provided in sufficient detail to enable full consideration to be given to them.

- c) The notified Member country should, where appropriate, consider taking remedial action under its own legislation in response to a notification.
- d) All countries involved in consultations should give full consideration to the interests raised and to the views expressed during the consultations so as to avoid or minimise possible conflict.

Conciliation

- 12. a) If they agree to the use of the Committee's good offices for the purpose of conciliation in accordance with paragraph I.B.8. of the Recommendation, Member countries should inform the Chairman of the Committee and the Secretariat with a view to invoking conciliation.
- b) The Secretariat should continue to compile a list of persons willing to act as conciliators.
- c) The procedure for conciliation should be determined by the Chairman of the Committee in agreement with the Member countries concerned.
- d) Any conclusions drawn as a result of the conciliation are not binding on the Member countries concerned and the proceeding of the conciliation will be kept confidential unless the Member countries concerned agree otherwise.