

Chair's Report: 2012-2013 ICN Accomplishments

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In April 2012 I became Chair of the International Competition Network and articulated three areas on which I intended to place particular emphasis during my time as chair: member engagement, assistance to members, and increasing the visibility of competition policy. This month, I hand over leadership of the ICN to Mr. Andreas Mundt, President of the German Bundeskartellamt. As I do so, I thought it would be useful to review progress on the three areas I outlined in my vision statement.¹

Member Engagement

The ICN provides a platform for competition agency staff and heads to get to know one another and collaborate on common issues. To give an idea of the scale, almost 100 member agencies attended an in-person ICN meeting over the past year. Seventy member agencies and over 100 non-governmental advisors actively contributed to the reports, guidance, and other work developed over 2012-2013.

The ICN's enormous success in attracting new members engenders the challenges of meaningfully engaging all of its members – both to encourage participation as well as to ensure that the work we are doing is appropriate for their needs.

Vice Chairs Lasserre and Mundt have devoted considerable time and effort to promoting member engagement. On the communication side, Vice Chair Bruno Lasserre launched a “Welcome Track Guide” for members, a complement to the 2011 Non-governmental Advisor (NGA) Toolkit. I introduced a few mechanisms to improve communication with all members and NGAs, including a quarterly Chair's Update that provides a summary of current ICN work and projects, and “Town Hall” teleseminars to encourage outreach and dialogue. More targeted initiatives included “intro to ICN” teleconferences for new members and an ICN information session on the margins of the UNCTAD annual meeting.

Vice Chair Mundt worked with the ICN's Working Groups and the Horizontal Coordinator to design a new work plan template and assess workload, to ensure that efforts are dedicated to the most relevant work product. To respond to requests to make ICN's work more economics-focused, I worked with the Canadian Competition Bureau to explore how we can better attract economists to participate in our projects, with new initiatives upcoming. I also worked with regional organizations, including the African Competition Forum and the Latin American Regional Center to promote joint projects that should increase meaningful member and NGA participation and inclusiveness more generally.

Assistance to Members

My vision statement provided for the ICN to take a more active role in supporting members with assistance on specific policy initiatives by providing external support for domestic reforms. Members to whom the ICN had already provided a formal ICN view, including agencies from Brazil, India, and Jersey, had provided overwhelmingly positive feedback about their experience as recipients of ICN support.

¹ <http://www.internationalcompetitionnetwork.org/uploads/library/doc792.pdf>

Last year, we created a Member Assistance Program² to extend this support to other ICN members. With this new program, upon member request the ICN Steering Group will describe conformity between a member's proposed reforms and ICN practices or principles. Designed to complement the work of the Advocacy and Implementation Support Program (AISUP), which provides for more broad-based technical assistance, in the member assistance program the ICN Steering Group provides a conformity analysis that takes the form of a letter or other mechanisms such as in country speaking engagements that provide support for reforms that are consistent with ICN recommendations.

Through this program the ICN has worked with Peru's INDECOPI and more recently with the COMESA Competition Commission. This program holds great promise both for individual recipients of the assistance, but also more broadly as it can provide another avenue towards reaching our overarching goals as a network, of global convergence and cooperation.

Increasing the Visibility of Competition Policy

The third and final area I had set out was to promote the visibility of competition policy. The ICN, in line with its long-standing goal of "supporting competition advocacy," is uniquely placed to supplement local efforts by its members with initiatives to place competition issues on the agenda of national and international (regional or global) organizations and fora.

We agreed on the importance of this goal, and recognized that to promote competition policy and principles we needed to have clear messages about the benefits of competition that go beyond law enforcement. Building on the ICN's Case for Competition Policy in Difficult Economic Times document³, the Advocacy Working Group project on Explaining the Benefits of Competition (the "Benefits Project") aims to provide ICN members with knowledge of, and strategies and arguments for, explaining the benefits of competition in support their competition advocacy efforts with governmental stakeholders, including messages. A few months ago, the Benefits Project submitted draft messages to ICN members at the 12th Annual conference in Warsaw, and plans to submit a final report to the 2014 annual conference.

Another important development is a project co-led by the CFC and the French Autorité de la concurrence on competition impact assessments. The Competition Assessment Project has developed draft Recommended Practices on conducting assessments, covering both draft and existing legislation, as well as both process issues (i.e., how to be recognized by Government and Parliament as a source of expertise, how to trigger advocacy work on legislation and how to maximize the impact of competition assessment) and substantive practices (i.e., the analytical criteria agencies may use to analyze legislation, alternative and

² <http://www.internationalcompetitionnetwork.org/uploads/library/doc847.pdf>

³ <http://www.internationalcompetitionnetwork.org/uploads/library/doc818.pdf>

mitigation measures). Final Recommended Practices will be submitted to the 2014 annual conference for adoption by ICN members.

At an individual level, I worked to promote competition policy through speeches and articles, including through efforts like this op-ed, "[The Competition Factor](#)".

There is a lot more we can and need to do in this area, which leads me to mention three important goals going forward.

Going Forward

As I shared in my closing statement at the 2013 annual conference,⁴ I see three important goals the ICN should address this coming year: First, we need to be better about looking outward, about addressing the wider audience of economic policymakers. Second, we need to do more to promote convergence by creating, where possible, additional Recommended Practices. Third, we must look for new ways to promote our existing work product.

Progress on these three goals will help the ICN fulfill a central aim that motivated its creation: to be a demand-driven institution that promotes acceptance of superior methods, enables agencies to understand more deeply their common interests and differences, and to realize, through collective action, results that elude individual initiative.

I leave the Steering Group confident in the ICN's direction and anticipating even greater accomplishments in the years to come under Andreas Mundt's very able leadership.

⁴ <http://internationalcompetitionnetwork.org/uploads/library/doc898.pdf>