



With Margrethe Vestager

Thank you, Commissioner Vestager, for granting this interview to CPI.

1. What have been the biggest differences between your life as a Danish Minister and a European Commissioner?

I have worked as a Danish politician for more than 20 years and as such as a law maker. So the biggest difference for me now is that I get to enforce the law.

2 For decades transatlantic cooperation has been a big priority for DG Competition. We now have a White House which seems to have a novel approach to many topics, including antitrust. What changes for DG Competition?

On both side of the Atlantic, we have a shared interest in smoothly cooperating in global cases, such as in the recent *Bayer/Monsanto* merger proceedings and we also have our best practices on cooperation in merger investigations. And there is a continued commitment to engage in policy dialogue, to better understand possible divergences. Our aim is also increased global convergence of procedural fairness standards, keeping in mind that the process towards that goal should include and be aligned with OECD/ICN work in this field.

3. The Commission's procedures are unique in the world of antitrust enforcement, and have been criticized over the years by practitioners, despite various changes and reforms. However, they have been consistently upheld by the courts and the Commission robustly defends them. Are there areas where you foresee procedural changes?

The EU Treaties provide for administrative antitrust enforcement rather than a judicial procedure. All Commission competition decisions can be challenged before the European Courts. Therefore we regularly reflect on our procedures. The 2011 Antitrust Best Practices Notice reflects a review of our procedures that enhanced transparency, interaction with parties and rights of defense. While we do not currently foresee changes, we continuously monitor whether there is a need for specific improvements to the Commission's procedures.

4. In the high-technology world, market developments can move faster than antitrust investigators. How can you intervene most effectively when due process, administrative thoroughness and judicial review each can take years? What has been your experience?

The question of speed in antitrust cases is very relevant, not only in high-tech markets, but also in other sectors. Nevertheless, effective intervention is not only fast, but also gets things right and respects rights of defense. One way in which we are trying to achieve this balance is by applying to other cases the cooperative approach that was used in the *ARA* decision.

ARA did cooperate with the Commission by acknowledging the infringement and thereby they ensured that the decision could benefit from administrative efficiencies, as well as by proposing a structural remedy. More specifically, ARA offered to divest a part of the household collection infrastructure that it owned. So the company could no longer exclude competitors from access to that infrastructure. This ensured that such an infringement cannot be repeated in the future.

5. Which of the Commission's decisions in the field of competition has given you most satisfaction?

Competition is not about a handful of cases that happen to get the attention from a wide audience. Competition is a system of law enforcement, and every part of the system has to function, to make sure the market works well for consumers. In the end, it comes down to making life a little fairer for 500 million Europeans. And showing them how Europe can make a difference to their lives.

6. The remarkable growth of national enforcement of competition law has had the effect of changing the Commission's enforcement diet. Are there areas where you might envisage intervening in "local" cases which present interesting questions of principle?

Usually, local cases are for national competition authorities. But the Commission can always intervene, in particular where a precedent needs to be set at the European level. Hence, local cases which present interesting questions of principle will always be discussed by national competition authorities and the Commission within the European Competition Network. When the effects of a local case are felt beyond national borders, the Commission will consider intervening, no matter the area.

7. You have a fascinating job. Can you think of a better one?

I am really fond of my job and I have always aimed at doing my job well rather than speculating in what could have happened or what lies ahead. So the short answer to your question would then be no!

