

Brussels, 11<sup>th</sup> October 2007

## **Antitrust: Commission carries out inspections in the international freight forwarding sector**

*The European Commission can confirm that on 10th October 2007 Commission officials carried out unannounced inspections at the premises of various providers of international freight forwarding services. Freight forwarding is the organisation of transportation of items along with related activities such as customs clearance, warehousing and ground services. The Commission has reason to believe that the companies concerned may have violated EC Treaty rules that outlaw restrictive business practices (Article 81).*

The Commission officials were accompanied by their counterparts from the relevant national competition authorities.

Surprise inspections are a preliminary step in investigations into suspected cartels. The fact that the European Commission carries out such inspections does not mean that the companies are guilty of anti-competitive behaviour; nor does it prejudge the outcome of the investigation itself. The European Commission respects the rights of defence, in particular the right of companies to be heard in antitrust proceedings.

There is no strict deadline to complete cartel inquiries. Their duration depends on a number of factors, including the complexity of each case, the extent to which the undertakings concerned co-operate and the exercise of the rights of defence.