

**Foreword to the Annual Competition Report 2024**

**by Teresa Ribera, Executive Vice-President and Commissioner for Competition**

I am pleased to be contributing for the first time with a foreword to the Report on Competition Policy. This annual exercise is an opportunity to take stock and reflect, in particular at the start of a new mandate.

We face the challenge of crafting policy in a period of profound uncertainty and volatility. The world we know appears to be changing more and more by the day. At the same time, Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine has entered its fourth year, with also a profound impact on the EU, not least because of the weaponisation of energy supplies. Against this background, we must urgently address the climate crisis and its consequences, improvements to our competitiveness and the imperative to strengthen resilience.

It requires decisive action to build a future-proof economy that is decarbonised, resilient, fair, and that creates quality jobs. A Europe that drives prosperity for its citizens and businesses and is competitive on the global stage.

The EU is rising to the challenge. The European Commission presented the Competitiveness Compass, a major initiative that provides a strategic framework to guide its future work. Integral to the implementation of this Compass is the Clean Industrial Deal: an ambitious plan for Europe to close the innovation gap, leverage decarbonization and circularity to drive growth, reduce excessive dependencies and enhance resilience. This plan builds on Europe's strengths, accelerating the transition to a sustainable, competitive, and inclusive economy, while ensuring that technological change boosts our industries' competitiveness.

Competition policy and enforcement contribute to reaching these objectives. While adapting to market realities, we should stand firm on core principles of fairness, openness, and efficiency. In doing so, competition policy and enforcement will continue to contribute to a better future for the EU and its citizens for many years to come.

And as is always the case, when forging ahead, we build on the work already achieved.

Under the leadership of Executive Vice-President Margrethe Vestager, the Commission achieved a lot in 2024. That year saw important achievements in relation to Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEIs). We approved the first IPCEI to support research, innovation and the first industrial deployment of healthcare products, as well as innovative production processes of pharmaceuticals. Moreover, we approved two IPCEIs for hydrogen infrastructure and hydrogen mobility, respectively. These groundbreaking projects will allow major progress in these research areas and produce positive spillover effects for the whole EU.

Significant sections of the Temporary Crisis and Transition Framework were phased out in the course of 2024, as many of the direct and indirect effects of Russia's actions had receded and the EU's economy showed resilience in the face of the shocks endured. Still, the Commission adopted 127 State aid decisions approving national measures notified by 24 Member States, notably under the Framework's transition sections.

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In antitrust and cartels too, the Commission was productive in 2024, adopting ten decisions. Our antitrust decisions included landmark cases such as *Mondelez*, *Vifor pharma*, *Teva Copaxone*, *Apple App Store Practices*, *Apple Pay* and *Meta Facebook Marketplace*.

The year was also busy for merger control. The number of notified mergers remained high, and we adopted 398 merger decisions, of which 351 were simplified. Eight acquisitions were cleared with commitments and there were no prohibitions in 2024.

We made significant progress enforcing the Digital Markets Act (DMA) in 2024. The first six designated gatekeepers submitted their DMA compliance reports in March 2024, which triggered the formal opening of non-compliance investigations against *Alphabet*, *Apple* and *Meta*. Later in the year, we opened two sets of non-compliance proceedings against *Apple* and one against *Meta*. Moreover, we designated *Apple* as a gatekeeper for its operating system *iPadOS* for use in *iPads*, and *Booking* as a gatekeeper for its online intermediation service *Booking.com*.

In 2024, we took significant steps to enforce the Foreign Subsidies Regulation (FSR), protecting the Single Market from distortive subsidies granted by non-EU countries. During the year, we received 102 notifications of concentrations and approved one proposed concentration subject to commitments. Finally, as a part of a preliminary review in the field of security equipment for airports and ports, we carried out our first unannounced inspections under the FSR.

All this work came along with continued efforts to evaluate and update competition rules, streamline our procedures, and reduce the regulatory burden for businesses.

We will continue on this path in 2025 and throughout this mandate. Europe is defining its new business and societal model, based on the rule of law and eager to defend competition as an essential part of building a Single Market that is clean, just, and competitive.