



Press release

Press Office

Kaiser-Friedrich-Str. 16

53113 Bonn

Phone: +49 228 9499-215/214

Fax: +49 228 9499-143

www.bundeskartellamt.de

24 October 2017

Bundeskartellamt / Consumer Protection

Bundeskartellamt launches sector inquiry into comparison websites

Bonn, 24 October 2017: The Bundeskartellamt has launched a sector inquiry into "online price comparison websites".

Andreas Mundt, President of the Bundeskartellamt: *"Every day millions of consumers gather information by using price comparison websites. Bookings involving substantial amounts and extensive contract agreements are influenced by the information published on these websites. We have to ensure that the consumers can count on their reliability, objectivity and transparency."*

The Bundeskartellamt's inquiry will focus on comparison websites active in the area of travel, insurance, financial services, telecommunications and energy. The authority is going to send questionnaires to a large number of website operators on topics such as rankings, financing, corporate links, reviews, availability or relevant market coverage, in order to uncover and specify possible violations of consumer law provisions. The Bundeskartellamt's extensive powers to investigate the websites will considerably improve existing possibilities to identify and assess possible violations of law.

Andreas Mundt continued: *"Until now problems with comparison websites have mainly been followed up in individual private court proceedings. Information provided by trade associations and consumers suggests that we should now deal with the matter in a more fundamental way. We are not investigating specific companies but taking an overall view of this economic sector in order to identify prohibited conduct in an evaluation of all the facts available."*

The Bundeskartellamt is currently selecting the comparison websites for the survey and is preparing questionnaires which are to be sent out by the end of the year. After evaluating the

replies and consulting with the respective business communities, the Bundeskartellamt will summarise the results of its sector inquiry in a report.

The sector inquiry can identify any possible deficits in the private and public enforcement of consumer rights in this business segment. Depending on the results of the sector inquiry, the report will be able to indicate how the Bundeskartellamt, provided it was granted the relevant enforcement powers, could help enforce fair trading rules to protect a large number of consumers in Germany.

With its "online price comparison websites" sector inquiry the Bundeskartellamt will apply its newly gained investigative powers in the area of consumer protection ([see press release of 12 June 2017](#)) in a first specific proceeding. Similar to sector inquiries in the area of the protection of competition, a sector inquiry in the area of consumer rights under Section 32e(5) of the German Competition Act (GWB) is not targeted against specific companies, but is intended to examine a specific sector of the economy.

By the end of this year, the Bundeskartellamt will decide whether to launch another sector inquiry in the area of consumer problems in everyday digital life.

The Bundeskartellamt does not yet have decision-making and enforcement powers to supplement the system of privately enforced consumer protection in Germany.

Follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/Kartellamt>