

For Official Use

DAFFE/COMP/WD(2002)56



Organisation de Coopération et de Développement Economiques
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

23-Sep-2002

English - Or. English

**DIRECTORATE FOR FINANCIAL, FISCAL AND ENTERPRISE AFFAIRS
COMPETITION COMMITTEE**

**DAFFE/COMP/WD(2002)56
For Official Use**

ROUNDTABLE ON COMMUNICATION BY COMPETITION AUTHORITIES

-- Note by the Republic of Lithuania --

This document is submitted by Lithuania to the Competition Committee FOR DISCUSSION at its forthcoming meeting on 23-24 October 2002.

English - Or. English

JT00131938

Document complet disponible sur OLIS dans son format d'origine
Complete document available on OLIS in its original format

**ROUNDTABLE ON COMMUNICATION BY COMPETITION AUTHORITIES
OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA**

1. The Competition Council of the Republic of Lithuania has appointed a Press Representative to be in charge of public relations the activity whereof is being coordinated by the Chairman of the Competition Council. Public relations are being persistently developed, strengthened and improved. Considering the significant impact of news media upon the formation of public opinion, every effort is made to increase the public awareness not only about peculiarities of the competition law, but also about the conducted investigations and decisions passed. The constantly proliferated information undoubtedly facilitates the solidification of the competition law provisions in the public.

2. The Competition Council realises that expeditious and consistent information of the public of various aspects of its activity plays a significant role in the formation of public understanding of the possibilities of the application of the Law on Competition and the importance of subsequent decisions for the consolidation of the principles of fair competition.

3. The activity of the Competition Council is being conducted in the way which allows as much publicity and feedback as possible, many-sided contacts with individual groups of the society, especially business representatives, who are still not always well-disposed towards the application of requirements of the Law on Competition. Therefore an important aspect of the development of public relations is the interpretation and propagation of the competition law. For that purpose the lawyers and specialists of the Competition Council publish targeted articles (for counsels, enterprise managers, officials of municipalities, etc.) Such publications, specialised shows mostly focus on the explanation of the competition law, and peculiarities of relevant regulations.

4. In an attempt to improve public relations all possibilities offered by different programs are made use of. To successfully present the relevant legal provisions of the European Communities and the process of the negotiations in the area of competition the Competition Council used the methodological and organisational assistance provided by the European Committee under the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. A special program was developed to spread the relevant ideas in the public. The implementation of the measures under the program was constantly monitored and accounted for. The implementation of the program was one of the reasons for success of Lithuania in the competition chapter of the EU accession negotiations. Officials of the Competition Council have a possibility to familiarize themselves with requirements in public relations area attending courses in the Lithuanian Institute of Public Administration. Public relations agencies also organise courses for specialists in which issues of communications with news media are considered.

5. The guiding strategy of the Competition Council in the are of public relations are openness and publicity: agendas of the meetings of the Council are published in advance through information agencies, information on passed decisions is promptly notified to the press, press conferences are organized on most burning issues. News media receives all the necessary information through the Press Representative of the Competition Council, while specific issues are commented by specialists in charge. Information is extensively made public in cooperation with members of the Council: comprehensive interviews, analytical descriptions of investigations, comments on specific issues of competition law. Objectivity, professionalism and expediency of information while respecting relevant confidentiality requirements are the most important preconditions for favourable assessment of the activities of the Competition Council in news media.

6. To the extent possible information is differentiated taking into account the interests of individual interest groups. The presentation of information is specially tailored for business representatives, a different form of presentation is chosen for the general public. However, it is the journalists that shape the presentation of

information on the basis of material supplied by the Competition Council taking into consideration the peculiarities of their readers or audiences. Undoubtedly, information concerning the widest public economic and social interests is always most broadly discussed in the public (e.g. detected prohibited agreements in fuel market, decisions concerning telecommunications market, issues of strategy for the development of trade enterprises, and others). We also realise the changes in the circles of users of the information supplied by us. Where previously it was mostly lawyers and representatives of large enterprises that were interested in the application of the Law on Competition and legal acts, lately in the face of development of small and medium businesses representatives thereof are becoming increasingly interested in the subject. These changes are clearly reflected in the inquiries submitted to specialists of the Competition Council, also in the feedback to publications, television and radio shows, discussions.

7. Information on the activity of the Competition Council is being proliferated by dedicated channels – in the first place by Internet through information agencies, also press, television and radio news agencies. No financial or other aid is being used seeking to ensure the unbiased character of provided information.

8. It is not easy to assess the efficiency of public relations. It may be defined in terms of number of publications and periodicity of discussions on radio and television, which in its own turn is determined by the relevance of investigations conducted by the Competition Council to the general public. The efficiency is largely illustrated by the public feedback: reaction to publications, comments in the Internet, etc. The efficiency is also determined by the scope of proliferation of the information, therefore all news media are used, personal contacts are maintained with journalists working in the field, attractive way of presenting the information is sought. To a significant extent the news media is influenced by the quality of received information therefore special attention is being paid to the accuracy, objectivity and expediency of the information. Undoubtedly, information of the society on the activities of the Competition Council is a specific undertaking, largely related to confidentiality requirements and ordinarily not disclosed information on the progress of the investigations and the obtained preliminary conclusions, although the inherent intrigue also favourably stimulates the news media attention.

9. It would be a challenging task to define the impact of public relations upon the opinion of the Government towards aid to be allocated to the Competition Council, although the favourable image of the institution undoubtedly brings about numerous advantages.

10. In the assessment of the activities of the Competition Council and its image the public opinion is primarily shaped by the relevance and efficacy of decisions passed by the Competition Council. Bringing to public domain the outcome of most important investigations, in particular the detected cartel agreements between large enterprises and cases of unfair competition which have an impact upon a significant share of consumers intensify attention towards the Competition Council and enhance positive assessments. The criticism in the news media is most often sufficiently constructive and officials of the Competition Council endeavour to respond to it with proper argumentation.

11. No extensive discussions concerning the activity of the Competition Council and the peculiarities of the application of the Law on Competition were covered lately in the news media. Most discussions are ignited with regard to the enforcement of decisions passed by the Competition Council. Often undertakings choose to appeal the decisions to courts, legal processes become lengthy which undermines the efficiency of the enforcement of the decision, as well as the image of the Competition Council in the society. For this reason we continuously work on the enhancement of public awareness of legal procedures set forth in the Law on Competition. We always take an active part in discussions and take all measures to explain the position of the Competition Council towards issues being considered.