

JOINT STATEMENT

Commissioner Neelie Kroes and Minister of Government Administration and Reform Ms. Heidi Grande Røys met in Bergen on 2 and 3 July to exchange views on current competition and state aid issues of mutual interest. They noted the close and fruitful cooperation between the European Commission and the Norwegian competition authorities. It was particularly noted that Norway, together with Iceland and Liechtenstein, now participate fully in the policy discussions of the European Competition Network.

In the discussions, particular emphasis was placed on competition issues in the ICT sector, the Commission's White Paper on Damages actions for breach of the EC antitrust rules, the recently adopted Commission Communication on a procedure for direct settlements and recent initiatives in Norway strengthening cartel detection and enforcement.

It was noted that the ITC sector develops rapidly and has features that may make the industry susceptible to anticompetitive behaviour. Competition authorities should follow this sector closely, enforcing their competition laws in order to promote innovation and consumer welfare. An open standard policy could supplement competition law in achieving the benefits of competition.

Commissioner Kroes presented the Commission initiative on damages actions and the general approach of the White Paper, which were welcomed by Minister Grande Røys who expressed Norway's will to contribute actively in the further process. She particularly drew the attention to the Norwegian Dispute Act, which addresses several of the issues raised in the White Paper.

Minister Grande Røys expressed Norway's wish to have information on Norway included in the European Commission's State Aid scoreboard, an overview of state aid granted by the EU Member States. The Minister and the Commissioner agreed that the EU Commission and Norway will enter into further discussions about possible future cooperation in regard to the scoreboard.

Today, Commissioner Kroes also met with Minister of Petroleum and Energy Mr. Terje Riis-Johansen to discuss various energy-related issues. Particular emphasis was placed on Norwegian energy, the liberalisation of energy markets, security of energy supply and the commitment on both sides to promote Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) projects. Norway has initiated CCS projects which are considered to be of European interest. The projects have been notified to ESA, and the process is closely followed by the European Commission.

Minister Riis-Johansen expressed that the EU is Norway's by far largest market for oil and gas, and energy issues are interlinked not least concerning energy security. The Minister and Commissioner Kroes agreed that the world will be dependent upon fossil fuels for decades to come and the challenge is to make the production and use of fossil fuels more environmentally friendly. CCS is one important element in this respect. At the same time, there is a need for major parallel efforts in developing renewable energy and energy efficiency.