

Implementation of the rules on competition

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The Council noted progress with the proposal for the introduction of a new system of implementing the competition rules in Articles 81 and 82 of the Treaty. It also heard the Commission present its 31st report on competition (2001). The President drew the following conclusions on reform of the competition rules: The Presidency : - notes that all delegations and the Commission remain fully committed to work towards an effective, viable new system for the application of Articles 81 and 82 of the Treaty; - welcomes the substantial progress made in different areas, especially on the key issue of the functioning of the network of competition authorities where it elaborated a stabilized text, as laid down in the draft Joint Statement of the Council and the Commission; - acknowledges that delegations' positions on main issues to be tackled in the second semester of 2002 have been identified in order to meet the target date set by the Barcelona European Council for the adoption of the Regulation. The proposed reform is intended to make for more effective implementation and decentralised application of Community competition law, while maintaining consistency and preserving the special responsibility of the Commission. In particular it provides for the introduction of a system of legal exception, based on the principle that agreements not contravening the rules on competition are automatically lawful. The Barcelona European Council of 15 and 16 March 2002 gave absolute priority to proceedings on this issue and called on the Council to adopt the new legislative framework by the end of 2002.