

Brussels, 9 June 2011

## **Antitrust: Commission confirms investigation into suspected cartel in the sector of seatbelts, airbags and steering wheels**

*The European Commission can confirm that, starting on 7 June 2011, Commission officials carried out unannounced inspections at the premises of companies that supply car seatbelts, airbags and steering wheels, known in the industry as automotive occupant safety systems. The Commission has reason to believe that the companies concerned may have violated EU antitrust rules that prohibit cartels and restrictive business practices (Article 101 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union).*

Automotive occupant safety systems cover safety products such as seatbelts, airbags and steering wheels that are supplied to car manufacturers.

The Commission officials were accompanied by their counterparts from the relevant national competition authority.

Unannounced inspections are a preliminary step into suspected anticompetitive practices. The fact that the Commission carries out such inspections does not mean that the companies are guilty of anti-competitive behaviour nor does it prejudice the outcome of the investigation itself. The Commission respects the rights of defence, in particular the right of companies to be heard in the Commission's proceedings against them.

There is no legal deadline to complete inquiries into anticompetitive conduct. Their duration depends on a number of factors, including the complexity of each case, the extent to which the undertakings concerned co-operate with the Commission and the exercise of the rights of defence.