

The CNMC investigates several travel agencies for possible anti-competitive agreements

- The companies could have shared clients and/or public tenders, in addition to having exchanged commercially sensitive information.
- This anti-competitive behaviour would affect the provision of travel agency services in Spain and abroad.
- From March 28 to 31, 2023, the CNMC inspected the headquarters of IAG7, Viajes El Corte Inglés, Nautalia Viajes and Grupo Barceló.

Madrid, December 13, 2023.- The CNMC is investigating several travel agencies for allegedly dividing up clients and/or public tenders and exchanging commercially sensitive information ([S/0001/23](#)). This behaviour would be contrary to Article 1 of the [Spanish Competition Act](#) (Ley de Defensa de la Competencia; LDC) and Article 101 of the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#) (TFEU), and would affect the provision of travel agency services in Spain and abroad.

The companies under investigation are: Integration Travel Agencies, SA (IAG7); Viajes El Corte Inglés, SA (VECI) and its parent company El Corte Inglés SA; Nautalia Viajes, SL and its parent company Wamos, SA; and Sekai Corporate Travel, SLU, Viajes Halcón, SAU, Ávoris Retail División, SL, Ávoris Corporación Empresarial, SL and its parent company Barceló Corporación Empresarial, SA (Grupo Barceló).

Investigation

The Competition Directorate of the CNMC initiated this file based on the information collected through the provisions of Article 132 of the [Public Sector Contract Act](#) (Ley de Contratos del Sector Público; LCSP) , and after having inspected the headquarters of IAG7, Viajes El Corte Inglés, Nautalia Viajes and Grupo Barceló between March 28 and 31, 2023 .

The initiation of these proceedings does not prejudice the final outcome of the investigation. There is now a time limit of 24 months to investigate and adopt a decision on the case.

Cartel detection

The CNMC points out that agreements between competitors constitute a **very serious infringement** of competition regulations, which can lead to fines of up to 10% of the total turnover of the infringing companies. The investigation of

cartels is one of the CNMC's top priorities, given the seriousness of their consequences for consumers and the proper functioning of the markets.

To this end, the CNMC relies, among other instruments, on a [leniency programme](#). This allows companies that provide evidence to the CNMC that leads to the detection of the cartel in which they participate, or have participated, to be granted **immunity from fines**. This programme also allows leniency applicants who, once the CNMC investigation has been initiated, provide information with significant added value to benefit from a reduced fine.

In addition to being granted immunity from fines or a reduction of fines, companies applying for leniency are also **released from the ban on contracting** established in Article 71 of the [Spanish Public Procurement Act](#) for those fined due to a serious infringement in terms of distortion of competition. This is pursuant to Article 72.5 of this law and Articles 65.4 and 66.5 of the [Spanish Competition Act](#), which regulate the leniency programme.

The CNMC also has an **online citizen collaboration platform** for cartel detection. This platform, called [Sistema de Informantes de Competencia Anónimos \(SICA or Anonymous Competition Whistleblower System\)](#), allows anonymous reporting of anti-competitive practices, such as agreements between competing companies to fix prices or other commercial conditions, market or customer allocation, or fraudulent allocations of public or private tenders.

Related content:

- [S/0001/23](#)
- [Press release](#) (12/04/2023): The CNMC investigates possible anti-competitive practices in the allocation of travel agency tenders
- [Guide to public procurement and competence.](#)
- [Press release](#) (23/06/2023): The CNMC approves the criteria governing the prohibition for companies that distort competition to enter into contracts with the public sector.
- [Leniency program](#) and [Citizen collaboration](#)