

PRESS RELEASE

The CNMC steps up its use of algorithms and big data to identify cartels and anti-competitive behaviour

- It has implemented a new system for completely anonymous and confidential informants that works similarly to an encrypted chat.
- The Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) will process the messages and will never reveal their content in the investigations it initiates.
- This team of experts in mathematics, computer science, law and economics applies big data and artificial intelligence techniques to detect irregularities in public procurement and other anti-competitive practices.

Madrid, 1 March 2021 - As part of its firm commitment to digitisation and to enhance citizen collaboration ([see 2021-2022 Action Plan](#)), the CNMC has put into operation its [Sistema de Informantes de Competencia Anónimos \(SICA\)](#), a completely encrypted and anonymous channel that any citizen can use to send information on practices that undermine competition and, consequently, harm the Spanish economy.

The operation of the [new SICA](#) is very simple and is similar to that of an encrypted chat. When a member of the public enters information into the system, they receive an alphanumeric code, which will be the only way to access these conversations. The informant will not have to provide any type of personal information (telephone, name or email) to collaborate with the CNMC and a two-way, anonymous channel will be established.

All communications between the CNMC and the informant are **always confidential**. This way, even if an informant decides not to be anonymous, their personal data will only be available to the [Economic Intelligence Unit \(EIU\)](#). This team will never directly or indirectly disclose said data during any potential investigations it initiates.

Economic Intelligence Unit

The [CNMC's EIU](#) is made up of a group of experts in mathematics, statistics, and computer science, as well as economists and lawyers, who use algorithms and analysis techniques typical of big data to carry out their investigations. Their work is essential in cases that directly involve tampering with public procurement processes and the dismantling of stable cartels.

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Economic intelligence units are common in anti-trust authorities in other countries. In the case of the CNMC, its origin dates back to 2018 and, since then, it has been crucial to the Commission's initiation of various investigations. Some of them ended with fines being imposed on the infringing companies, as in the case of the [cartel that allocated the contracts of the State Meteorological Agency \(AEMET\)](#) and, more recently, with the cartel of the pharmaceutical companies [producing PET radiopharmaceuticals](#).

Analysis of the messages received

The EIU is in charge of **managing the program for informants to report anti-trust activities, and [its new communication system \(SICA\)](#)**. The Unit analyses the plausibility of the facts for as long as needed and, if indicated by this analysis, it will initiate an investigation. Throughout the process, mechanisms are adopted to guarantee both the confidentiality of the people who provide information, as well as of those who are affected by the events or situations reported.

In addition to the [recently launched system \(SICA\)](#), the CNMC has two other channels for citizen collaboration: a telephone (+34 671 483 741) and an email box (buzoncolaboracion@cnmc.es). It also has other tools to identify anti-trust practices, such as its [Leniency Programme](#).

[Link to SICA.](#)

[Explanatory video.](#)

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