



## Commission opens investigation into possible anticompetitive conduct by energy drink manufacturer Red Bull

Brussels, 13 November 2025

The European Commission has opened a formal antitrust investigation to assess whether the energy drinks company **Red Bull** has illegally restricted competition in the **energy drinks sector** in breach of EU competition rules that prohibit the abuse of a dominant market position.

The Commission has indications that Red Bull, manufacturer of the well-known 250ml Red Bull energy drink, may have developed a European Economic Area (EEA)-wide strategy to restrict competition from energy drinks larger than 250ml, as regards sales in the 'off-trade' channel, i.e. sale points where the drinks are purchased for consumption elsewhere, like supermarkets and petrol station shops. Red Bull's strategy allegedly targeted in particular the energy drinks sold by its closest competitor.

The Commission is concerned that Red Bull may have implemented such strategy at least in the Netherlands, where that company appears to hold a dominant position on the national market for the wholesale supply of branded energy drinks, by engaging in two suspected anticompetitive practices: (i) granting monetary and non-monetary incentives to its off-trade customers to stop selling ('delist') or disadvantage, for example, in terms of visibility, competing energy drinks sold in sizes exceeding 250ml; and (ii) misusing its position as category manager at off-trade customers so that competing energy drinks sold in sizes exceeding 250ml are delisted or disadvantaged.

Under category management arrangements, shops, such as supermarkets, entrust the marketing of a category of products, such as energy drinks, to a specific supplier (the 'category captain' or 'category manager'). Acting as category manager may cover not only the supplier's products, but also the competitors' products. The category manager may thus have an influence on, for instance, the selection (the assortment), the placement, and the promotion of competing products for a shop.

This is the Commission's first formal investigation into a potential abuse relating to the misuse of a category management position by a supplier to limit or disadvantage competing products.

If proven, the practices under investigation may breach EU competition rules that prohibit the abuse of a dominant position.

The Commission will now carry out its in-depth investigation as a matter of priority. The opening of a formal investigation does not prejudice its outcome.

### Background

Red Bull is a global energy drink manufacturer headquartered in Austria, and operating through several subsidiaries in the EEA.

The Commission carried out [unannounced inspections](#) at the headquarters of Red Bull and at several of its EEA subsidiaries in March 2023. The Commission continued the inspection at its premises in Brussels in June 2023 and between August and September 2023.

Red Bull challenged the decision authorizing the Commission to carry out inspections to the General Court. Red Bull also requested the suspension of the continued inspection at the Commission's premises in Brussels. In [September 2023](#), the President of the General Court dismissed the request for suspension. In [October 2025](#), the General Court rejected Red Bull's challenge against the inspection decision, confirming that that decision was well founded, that it was adopted on the basis of sufficient indicia, and that it was neither arbitrary nor disproportionate.

Red Bull has also challenged the Commission's decision as regards the reimbursement of the additional costs incurred by Red Bull as a result of the continuation of the inspection at the

Commission's premises in Brussels. Where inspections initially started at corporate premises are continued at the Commission's premises in Brussels, the concerned company [may request](#) the Commission to reimburse the "additional costs" incurred by that company solely as a result of that continuation. In those cases, the Commission adopts a decision setting the reimbursed costs. Red Bull's challenge against such decision is currently pending.

[Article 102](#) TFEU and [Article 54](#) of the European Economic Area ('EEA') Agreement prohibit the abuse of a dominant position that may affect trade and prevent or restrict competition within the Single Market. The implementation of Article 102 TFEU is defined in [Regulation 1/2003](#).

Article 11(6) of Regulation 1/2003 provides that the opening of proceedings by the Commission, as is the case today with the investigation into Red Bull's conduct, relieves the competition authorities of the Member States of their competence to apply EU competition rules to the practices concerned. Article 16(1) further provides that national courts must avoid adopting decisions which would conflict with a decision contemplated by the Commission in proceedings it has initiated.

There is no legal deadline for bringing an antitrust investigation to an end. The duration of an antitrust investigation depends on a number of factors, including the complexity of the case, and the extent to which the companies concerned cooperate with the Commission and the parties' exercise of the rights of defense.

More information on the investigation will be available on the Commission's [competition website](#), in the public [case register](#) under the case number [AT.40819](#).

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Quote(s):

*"Today we are opening an investigation into Red Bull's alleged plan to protect its well-known energy drink from rival products, in breach of competition rules. We want to see if these practices may be keeping prices high and limiting choice of energy drinks for consumers. This investigation is part of the Commission's continued efforts to enforce competition rules in the food supply chain to the benefit of European consumers."*

Teresa Ribera, Executive Vice-President for Clean, Just and Competitive Transition - 13/11/2025

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