

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **The Belgian Competition Authority hosts Colruyt Group for an exchange of best practices on cooperation in the framework of its investigations**

On 25 June 2024, the Belgian Competition Authority ("BCA") welcomed representatives of Colruyt Group for an exchange of best practices on cooperation in the framework of its investigations.

Colruyt Group, which specializes in the distribution of food and fast-moving consumer goods, is part of the everyday lives of Belgians due to its various retail chains spread across the country and its more than 33,000 employees. Because of the size and scope of its activities, Colruyt Group is also frequently asked by the BCA to contribute to its investigations, both in the context of restrictive practices and merger control proceedings.

In recent years, the BCA and Colruyt Group have interacted on a number of occasions. At the BCA's invitation, they decided to take stock of their respective experiences in order to identify a number of best practices for the future.

Stefaan Vandamme, CFO of Colruyt Group: *"The BCA's initiative of inviting us for a working session is a valuable opportunity to learn from each other. We appreciate the BCA's openness to the experiences of the business community and it is also essential that we take account of their point of view. We are of course conscious of our obligation to cooperate closely with the BCA and to collaborate with its investigations. This enables the BCA to carry out its missions effectively, which is also in the interests of Colruyt Group."*

The overall purpose of the dialogue initiated between the BCA and Colruyt Group is to ensure that all stakeholders eventually benefit from the outcome of the discussions on cooperation best practices.

In order to be able to take effective action anchored in reality and in a timely manner, the collaboration of companies is very important for the BCA, whether for the purpose of collecting relevant data or understanding the scope of certain commercial strategies, as well as the dynamics underlying the interactions between supply and demand on the markets concerned.

This is why the Belgian Code of Economic Law empowers the BCA to gather all necessary information from companies, associations of companies and individuals. The companies and individuals in question are obliged to respond to these requests for information fully, accurately and within the specified time limits, subject to fines. The same applies in case of obstruction to an ongoing investigation or refusal to attend a hearing.

Damien Gerard, the BCA's Prosecutor General: *"The BCA has significantly strengthened its investigation capabilities but remains largely dependent on companies to be able to take effective action to the benefit of companies themselves and consumers. The BCA is naturally careful to tailor its investigative actions to the situation in question. The BCA is also prepared to find pragmatic solutions when a company informs it*

*in a timely and transparent manner of practical difficulties, for example to provide the information requested in the requested format or within the set deadline. Conversely, the supply of incomplete, inaccurate or misleading information, or any other act that hinders the proper conduct of an investigation, is punishable with fines. If necessary, the BCA will not hesitate to take measures in this regard.”*

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The Belgian Competition Authority (BCA) is an independent administrative authority that contributes to the definition and implementation of competition policy in Belgium. Concretely, the BCA pursues anti-competitive practices, such as cartels and abuses of a dominant position, and reviews the main merger operations. The BCA cooperates with the other competition authorities of the member states of the European Union and the European Commission within the European Competition Network (ECN)