

ICN Agency Effectiveness Working Group (AEWG)

Mission: Identify key elements of a well-functioning competition agency and develop best practices for agency strategy, operations, and procedures, as well as encourage and facilitate the greater involvement of agency Chief/Senior Economists and NGA economists in ICN work.

AEWG Working Group Co-Chairs: Competition and Consumer Authority of Botswana (CCA), Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore (CCCS) and Swedish Competition Authority (SCA). After the conference, the SCA will step down and Mexican Federal Economic Competition Commission (COFECE) will become a Co-Chair.

2020-2021 AEWG Work Product

Digitalisation, Innovation and Agency Effectiveness (multi-year project): From the responses to a survey of member agencies, the AEWG published a report on “Digitalisation, Innovation and Agency Effectiveness”. The report illustrates the level of digitalisation among member agencies and how it was achieved. It also shares practical experiences for member agencies to learn from to improve agency effectiveness. The report looks at three key areas: agencies’ digital environments and digital tools, digital goals and strategies, as well as adoption of new digital skills. In addition, in March 2021 the AEWG hosted a webinar which explored agencies’ internal digital goals, strategies and tactics, digital tools and technologies, as well as COVID-19’s impact on agencies’ digital transformation.

Case Prioritisation and Initiation: This project examines how early case prioritisation and management can contribute to effective and efficient enforcement. The AEWG hosted a webinar in October 2020 to explore how member agencies identify and set competition enforcement prioritisation policies. A survey was also conducted to look into member agencies’ methods and principles to prioritise cases so as to make the best use of their resources. It delved into competition agencies’ practices in handling complaints / tip-offs / referrals, weighing different enforcement priorities, and the effectiveness and/or challenges of doing so. These inputs were collated into a report.

The Role of Chief/Senior Economists for Effective Enforcement: This project is focused on increasing the involvement of Chief/Senior Economists and NGAs within the ICN to further develop and emphasize the importance of economics in competition analysis. During the webinar on "Market Studies: Economist's Perspective" in March 2021, a panel of Agency and NGA economists discuss their recent experiences in conducting market studies by bringing the economic perspective to the forefront.

2021-2022 Proposed Work

Digitalisation, Innovation and Agency Effectiveness (multi-year project): Based on the AEWG Report on “Digitalisation, Innovation and Agency Effectiveness”, this project will further explore different strategies used by competition agencies to digitalise and innovate their agencies. In particular, the project may look at deployment of innovative digital tools and solutions, as well as creating a forum for non-traditional digital roles within competition agencies to discuss specific digital issues.

Agency Effectiveness Post-COVID-19: This project will focus on how the future operations of competition agencies after the pandemic look like, what changes have been done in their institutional design and processes, and what practices/experiences could be shared between ICN members. This project could explore topics such as remote and electronic work, institutional re-design or adjustments, as well as how agencies’ strategies have changed in order to support the economic recovery during and after the pandemic.

Planning, Monitoring and Measuring Effectiveness (multi-year project): Planning, monitoring, and measuring agency effectiveness are vital steps to increase the likelihood of an agency successfully achieving its objectives. This project will focus on member agencies’ best practices, experiences, and challenges in identifying clear objectives and strategies, assessing progress as well as evaluating effectiveness.

The Role of Chief/Senior Economists for Effective Enforcement: We will start planning for the AEWG’s 3rd Chief/Senior Economist Workshop while making sure the topics are built off the feedback received in previous years and global competition trends.