

ADVOCACY WORKING GROUP

2016-2019 Work Plan

MISSION

The mission of the Advocacy Working Group (AWG) is to undertake projects, to develop practical tools and guidance, and to facilitate experience-sharing among ICN member agencies, in order to improve the effectiveness of ICN members in advocating the dissemination of competition principles and to promote the development of a competition culture within society.

Advocacy reinforces the value of competition by educating citizens, businesses and policy-makers. In addition to supporting the efforts of competition agencies in tackling private anti-competitive behaviour, advocacy is an important tool in addressing public restrictions to competition. Competition advocacy in this context refers to those activities conducted by the competition agency, that are related to the promotion of a competitive environment by means of non-enforcement mechanisms, mainly through its relationships with other governmental entities and by increasing public awareness in regard to the benefits of competition.

ORGANISATION

The AWG has 63 ICN member agencies from 61 jurisdictions and 64 non-governmental advisors (NGAs).

The AWG is co-chaired by the Italian Competition Authority, the Mexican Federal Economic Competition Commission and the Swedish Competition Authority.

LONG TERM GOALS

In order to fulfil its mission, the AWG will seek to:

1. Provide a forum for ICN members to share their experiences and practices in the area of competition advocacy;
2. Provide practical tools and guidance in order to improve the effectiveness of members' advocacy activities;
3. Promote the use of the ICN's existing work products and tools in the area of competition advocacy.

2016-2019 STRATEGIC PLANS

Over the next three years, the AWG will guide its work program based on the following considerations.

Goal 1: Providing a forum for ICN members to share their experiences and practices in the area of competition advocacy.

The AWG will continue to offer experience-sharing teleseminars on an ad-hoc basis and to organise workshops on topics of interest to its members. These activities will provide input for new work to be undertaken in the future.

In addition, the AWG will also consider developing initiatives with other international organizations and non-governmental organizations. In particular, the AWG and the World Bank will continue to organise a joint Contest for Competition Advocacy and the AWG will seek initiatives to promote the contributions made by ICN members to the Competition Advocacy Contest.

To better achieve Goal 1, the AWG will work with the Secretariat to ensure that the ICN website will integrate all or most of AWG current resources, work-products and materials in a way that it will enhance the possibility of experience sharing and maximize its value, given the great diversity and creativity across competition agency advocacy initiatives.

Goal 2: Providing practical tools and guidance in order to improve the effectiveness of members' advocacy activities.

Launching the Advocacy Strategy Project

In the 2016-2019, the AWG will encourage experience sharing and discussion among ICN AWG Members and NGAs on the ways to improve the definition of their advocacy strategies, by focusing on the different steps. The ultimate objective of this project is to explore the possibility of elaborating guiding principles in setting an effective advocacy strategy.

Continuing the Market Studies Project

In 2016-2019 the AWG will elaborate high-level guiding principles in selecting and conducting market studies, based on the 2016 revised Market Studies Good Practice handbook. The AWG will also continue to expand the Market Studies Information Store with new input provided by ICN members.

Finalising the Benefits Project

The Benefits Project seeks to provide ICN members with knowledge, strategies and arguments for explaining the benefits of competition in support of their competition advocacy efforts toward government and non-government stakeholders. In 2016-2019, the AWG will complete the development of an online resource platform that includes existing case studies (whether prepared by competition agencies or by international organizations) highlighting the benefits of competition to consumers and the economy.

Implementing the Competition Assessment Project

In 2017-2019 the AWG will focus on the implementation of the Recommended Practices on competition assessment through various awareness initiatives including the use of hypothetical case scenarios.

Potential Future Topics

Over the next three years, building on insights from the above projects and input by ICN members and mindful of potential overlap with other activities within the ICN or OECD, the AWG will explore new topics and issues, the opportunity to update existing Work Products as well as the potential for new guidance work.

Goal 3: Promoting the familiarity with and use of AWG work products in the area of competition advocacy.

In line with its Mission and long-term Work Plan, the AWG will also promote familiarity with and use of the AWG work products. The AWG will primarily focus on specific work products, such as the Advocacy Toolkit, the Recommended Practices on Competition Assessment and the Competition Culture Report. Specific initiatives to this end will include:

- a. Promoting the existing work products (with a focus on the most recent ones) in the context of teleseminars and/or workshops;
- b. Liaising with the ICN Advocacy and Implementation Network (AIN), responsible for the Advocacy and Implementation Support Program (AISUP);
- c. Promoting broader member and NGA involvement in the AWG activities; and,
- d. Improving the AWG's web-based tools and re-organising the AWG section of the ICN website.

2016-2017 Work Plan

Project 1 – Updating the existing AWG Market Studies Work (“Market Studies Project”).

Objective: The Project will seek to update and revamp the existing AWG work-products on market studies and increase their dissemination among ICN members so that they can be more effectively used as a resource for authorities that have recently started conducting market studies, or are considering introducing market studies in their toolkit.

The Market Studies Project 2016-2017. The AWG will elaborate high-level guiding principles in selecting and conducting market studies, based on the 2016 revised Market Studies Good Practice handbook. The principles will be published in the form of a printable leaflet to provide agencies with short and easily-accessible reference material when planning and carrying out market studies. These principles will complement the practices contained in the handbook.

ICN Members will also be encouraged to exchange experiences with the evaluation of market studies in conjunction with the second seminar of the Strategy Project (see below). To the extent that further good practices can be identified these will be annexed to the 2016 Market Studies Good Practice Handbook.

Project leaders: Swedish Competition Authority.

Project 2 – Fourth Advocacy Workshop

Objective. The AWG will hold a Workshop in Mexico City on November 3 and 4, 2016.

Project leaders: Swedish Competition Authority, Italian Competition Authority and the Mexican Federal Economic Competition Commission (COFECE).

Host agency: Mexican Federal Economic Competition Commission (COFECE).

Project 3 - Building an Effective Advocacy Strategy (“Strategy Project”)

Objective: The aim of the project is to improve the way competition agencies define their advocacy strategies, by encouraging experience sharing and discussion among ICN AWG Members and NGAs on this topic.

The Strategy Project in 2016-2017. A first teleseminar will address the elaboration of the advocacy strategy. Some agencies will illustrate their experience, by focusing on the different steps they go through (including the analysis of the environment, the priority setting, the definition of the advocacy objectives, the assessment of the feasibility of the initiatives).

A second teleseminar will tackle the issue of monitoring and assessing the results of advocacy efforts, to improve effectiveness and better orient the agency’s activity.

Following the teleseminars, all AWG Members and NGAs will be invited to send their voluntary contribution and share their viewpoint and experience. The stories presented in the teleseminars and the contributions received afterwards will be analysed, also having regard to the indications of the 2011 Advocacy Toolkit.

At the end of the ICN year, the AWG will decide whether the information collected is suitable to be further developed with a view to drawing some general principles that can be shared within the ICN.

Project leaders: Italian Competition Authority

Project 4 – Explaining the Benefits of Competition (“Benefits Project”).

Objective. The Benefits Project seeks to provide ICN members with knowledge, strategies and arguments for explaining the benefits of competition in support of their competition advocacy efforts toward government and non-governmental stakeholders.

The Benefits Project in 2016-2017. In 2015, the AWG completed the second section of the Benefits Online Platform aimed at explaining the benefits of competition to businesses. In 2016-2017 the [platform](#) will be expanded by creating (a) new section(s) dedicated to explaining the benefits of competition to the media and the general public. The web-based toolbox, integrated within the Advocacy Toolkit, provides members with examples of messages and arguments, documents and case studies regarding the benefits of competition to assist them in their advocacy efforts. The AWG will run a road-testing of the online interactive platform in order to improve the tool.

Project leaders: Mexican Federal Economic Competition Commission (COFECE).

Project 5 – Third Edition of the World Bank – ICN Competition Advocacy Contest (“Contest Project”).

Objective: The Contest Project aims to raise awareness of the key role of competition agencies in promoting competition and showcase their successful advocacy stories.

The Contest Project in 2016-2017: following the success of the joint editions [2014-2015](#) and [2015-2016](#), the AWG and the World Bank will work on the organization of a third joint edition, including the definition of the general theme and the four categories and the selection of the Contest Judges, with a view to attracting new participants among ICN members and increasing the opportunity of experience sharing.

Project leaders: Italian Competition Authority and World Bank Group

Dissemination, implementation and outreach (“Implementation Project”).

The AWG will continue to carry out initiatives to develop the awareness of the AWG products, namely the Recommended Practices on Competition Assessment, the revised Market Studies Good Practice Handbook, and it will continue to expand the [Market Studies Information Store](#) with regular inputs from ICN members. The AWG and the World Bank will organise a teleseminar within the ICN to promote the submissions made for the 2015-2016 Contest whose winners were awarded at the 2016 annual conference in Singapore. Finally, the AWG and the World Bank will explore the possibility of a joint publication describing the winning stories of the 2015-2016 edition and organise an event to present them.