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08. 02. 2017

The European Commission (EC) launches an investigation to determine whether Asus, Denon & Marantz, Philips and Pioneer are manipulating online retail prices.

According to the press release, the companies are accused of breaking EU competition rules by stopping online retailers from setting own prices for "widely used" CE products such as notebooks, hi-fi products and household appliances. Making the situation worse is pricing software automatically adjusts retail prices to those of the leading competition, bringing a wider impact to overall online prices for CE products.

Philips says a preliminary probe has been going on since 2013, and it is "[continuing] to engage and cooperate fully with the European Commission."

The investigation is just one of three looking into anticompetitive practices in e-commerce. Of the other two, one looks into geo-blocking agreements between Valve, owner of the Steam game distribution platform, and five PC game publishers (namely Bandai Namco, Capcom, Focus Home, Koch Media and ZeniMax) while the other investigates agreements between Meliá Hotels and European tour operators.

"E-commerce should give consumers a wider choice of goods and services, as well as the opportunity to make purchases across borders," commissioner in charge of competition policy Margrethe Vesager says. "The three investigations we have opened today focus on practices where we suspect companies are trying to deny these benefits for consumers. The cases concern the consumer electronics, videogames and hotel accommodation sectors. More specifically, we are looking into whether these companies are breaking EU competition rules by unfairly restricting retail prices or by excluding customers from certain offers because of their nationality or location."

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