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Note from the Chair for the Steering Group Meeting on 6 December 2023

Dear colleagues,

Next week we will hold our first Steering Group meeting of the 2023/24 ICN year. Given that this will be a short ICN year, we decided in Barcelona to speed things up and approve the Working Group work plans in a written procedure. The Horizontal Coordinator received only minor comments, and meanwhile all work plans are available on the [ICN website](#) where you can also find the new [Horizontal Coordinator's "ICN in brief" document](#) providing a quick overview. The Working Groups promoted their projects and invited participation at the traditional ICN Kick-off Call, which around 240 members and NGAs attended.

Last year we introduced the annual ICN Check-In in order to allow direct input and promote active participation. More than 100 member agencies participated in this new annual routine. The 2023/24 Check-In is running and we are confident we will achieve our goal of hearing back from even more members.

ICN Annual Conference

In the coming months, CADE Brazil, the 2024 Annual Conference host, will be the centre of ICN interest. Next week, CADE will report on the planning of this ICN event which will take place in Costa do Sauípe, Salvador, from 14 to 17 May 2024. The conference video is available [here](#).

Operational Framework

The focus of our meeting will be on the ICN Operational Framework review. To remind you, the review of the [ICN Operational Framework](#) was initiated as part of the "Third Decade" (3D) project to prepare for future developments and challenges in the ICN's third decade. In Barcelona, we decided to continue the overhaul of the Operational Framework including its annexes with a focus on inclusiveness, transparency and open opportunities for all to

participate across the network. At our meeting, the Operational Framework Working Group will present an overview of issues to be addressed. A couple of issues have already been addressed in previous Steering Group meetings, such as the number of Working Group Co-Chairs or the number of Vice Chairs and their portfolios. Procedures will be reviewed, including the selection of the Chair and Vice Chairs. There are also issues of a more general nature, e.g. areas where the Operational Framework defines decision making procedures. You will be invited to share initial reactions to shape the working group's mandate. The Operational Working Group Co-Chairs will also explain the further procedure and invite all Steering Group members to designate representatives that will be part of the discussion at the working level.

Agriculture and Food Markets Project

The new project on competition concerns in agriculture and food markets and how to address them, with a focus on the needs of developing countries, successfully started in Barcelona with a breakout session. Next week, the project team will present the current status and the planned next steps.

Work Product

The Merger Working Group Co-Chairs will present two work products for Steering Group approval. The revision of the Recommended Practices for Merger Analysis Chapter on Entry and Expansion led by the UK Competition and Markets Authority and the Norwegian Competition Authority, seeks to reflect the latest best practices from competition agencies across the globe and any changes in competition agencies' analysis of entry and expansion since the Chapter was last updated in 2008. The Report on Digital Mergers, is based on a series of four webinars on digital mergers organised by the Norwegian Competition Authority and the European Commission's DG COMP in the course of the 2022/23 ICN year and summarises the key take-aways from the webinars.

OECD Liaison

Finally, the OECD Liaison will inform the Steering Group members about OECD projects.

I look forward to seeing you next week.

Best wishes,

Andreas Mundt