

EU officials raid Intel, others

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As part of the dawn raid, European Commission officials and national competition authorities from the member states descended on several Intel offices, as well as a number of IT companies that manufacture or sell computers, said a Commission representative.

"These inspections are carried out within the framework of an ongoing investigation," the representative said.

The morning raid comes less than four months after Intel reached an agreement with Japan's Fair Trade Commission, which required the chip giant to halt the practice of requiring PC makers to limit the use of competitors' chips in exchange for monetary rebates. Intel agreed to abide by the recommendations though it noted it disagreed with the agency's findings and conclusions.

Last year, Japanese officials also conducted a raid on Intel offices, and they made their findings available to antitrust agencies in other countries. Following Japan's raid, the EU said it would revisit its antitrust probe into Intel and sent out 64 letters of inquiry to computer makers and retailers.

Also last year, Commission officials said they would investigate the practice of some member states' procurement policies, which restricted computer purchases to only those that used Intel chips.

Intel was not immediately available for comment.

"Normally, these companies are pissed when their offices are raided, but there is nothing they can do about it," said one source familiar with antitrust issues. "They see what investigators have come up with and what is being accused...before they contact" authorities with an explanation.

In most cases, investigators search through hardcopy documents and computer files, the source noted.

By Dawn Kawamoto
CNET News.com

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