Question for written answer E-008372/2016
to the Commission
Rule 130
Andreas Schwab (PPE), Jan Philipp Albrecht (Verts/ALE), Catherine Stihler (S&D), Ramon Tremosa i Balcells (ALDE) and Marju Lauristin (S&D)

Subject: Microsoft/LinkedIn merger

It has recently been recognised by Commissioner Vestager that ‘data could be an important factor in how a merger affects competition’ and that ‘a company might even buy up a rival just to get hold of its data, even though it hasn’t yet managed to turn that data into money’.

The potential acquisition of LinkedIn by Microsoft is now under merger review within DG COMP. The market position of the two parties and indications that Microsoft intends to fully integrate LinkedIn into its products, while preventing competitors from accessing LinkedIn’s unique and non-replicable set of data, have raised concerns.

1. Does the Commission consider that these issues could raise serious competition concerns including input foreclosure and tying/bundling?
2. Is the Commission testing whether access to LinkedIn’s datasets is essential to achieving a level playing field?
3. And, if so, what solutions does the Commission have in mind in relation to LinkedIn’s unique data, and would the Commission ultimately intend to bar Microsoft’s acquisition?