

**Question for written answer E-001624/2023
to the Commission**

Rule 138

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Subject: RBB Economics consultancy firm selected to assess mergers in the EU

In 2021, the Commission launched a tender procedure in the area of evaluation of current EU merger policies. The idea was to carry out a broad review of competition policies with the aim of dismantling digital monopolies.

It was awarded to the consultants RBB Economics, who provide large business groups with legal support when they are pushing through mergers and acquisitions. One key example is that they provided advice to Google between 2017 and 2019 in connection with the three fines imposed by the Commission on that company for anti-competitive behaviour and abuse of a dominant position.

There are still records of RBB Economics directly lobbying for weaker application of EU merger rules and minimised safeguards in the Digital Markets Act.

When questioned by Corporate Europe and LobbyControl about a potential conflict of interest, the Commission replied that it had no legal basis to exclude consultancy firms which 'are currently advising clients on ongoing EU merger cases' from participating in tenders for ex-post evaluation studies.

Against that backdrop, what mechanisms have been established to ensure that this choice does not give rise to conflicts of interest and that the stated aim of combating monopolies is actually pursued?

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