

Portugal appoints new competition head

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Portugal's government has confirmed the appointment of Manuel Sebastião as president of the country's competition authority.

Sebastião, 59, is an economist who has sat on the board of Portugal's national bank. He replaced **Abel Mateus** on 24 March. Mateus, the first president of the authority, has finished his five-year term.

Ricardo Oliveira, partner at PLMJ A M Pereira Sárrega Leal Oliveira Martins Judice e Associados RL, gave the authority, which was created in 2003, the best of starts. "It is paramount that the new board continues not to shy away from taking difficult decisions, which is one of Mateus's main legacies," he says. The other members of the new board are **Jaime Serrão Andrez** and **João Espírito Santo Noronha**. Andrez is also an economist, who used to head Portugal's Institute for the Support of Small and Medium-Sized Companies. One competition specialist is optimistic that he will bring understanding of businesses to his new post. Noronha is an academic lawyer, renowned for his work on commercial law. His appointment is more surprising, as Noronha had not hitherto been seen as a competition expert.

Things that local competition lawyers would now like to see include greater consistency in procedures and decisions, and more focus on abuse of dominance. Says Oliveira: "The market is essentially expecting greater predictability of decisions, enhanced compliance with procedural requirements and a faster decision-making process in merger control."

Under Mateus, the authority tackled the country's banking and telecoms sectors, requiring remedies in the merger between Sonacom and former state monopoly Portugal Telecom, and substantial divestments in Banco Comercial Portugues's tie up with Banco BPI.

Sebastião is expected to continue the strong leadership of the authority, which launched in 2003, but experts say it will not be possible to make an accurate assessment of his capabilities until he has overseen some big cases.

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