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CJEU AstraZeneca Judgment: Groping Towards a Test for Patent Office Dealings 171

AstraZeneca sets the antitrust standard for dealings with the patent office and regulatory authorities. The EU Court of Justice's judgment brings this long-running saga to an end. Though a loss for AstraZeneca, the EU Court pulls back from the more extreme dicta of the General Court. The latter found unlawful any objectively misleading statement before the patent office, regardless of whether it was honestly made or promptly withdrawn. The Court of Justice concludes that no liability arises for ordinary fallibility in patent office dealings. But as the article examines, by failing to articulate an alternative test, it leaves the law in doubt. The precise boundaries of the legal standard of liability will be the subject of future litigation. But the industry and patent practitioners now have some basis for claiming that day-to-day patenting practices should generally escape antitrust liability.

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In 2004, the Supreme Court's *Trinko* decision in the United States introduced an innovative method of analysis to examine an antitrust/competition law claim in a regulated market. In addition, the decision significantly narrowed the substantive scope of pre-existing law with respect to refusal-to-deal doctrine. The setting for the decision involved telecommunications markets and the antitrust/competition law claim implicated the interrelationships between a competition-enhancing regulatory statute and the antitrust laws. The steps in the US method of analysis are described and then applied to the *Deutsche Telekom* case in the European Union. The extent to which the *Trinko* decision precludes antitrust law claims in regulated markets is linked to how courts interpret two key substantive principles of the decision. It is found that the *Trinko* decision provides a useful methodological lesson for examining competition claims in regulated markets for the European Union but is found lacking in its substantive principles contributions to competition law.

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