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Abstract:

The institutional importance of the current EU competition policy stems from a protracted and difficult debate which took place mainly during the European Economic Community (EEC) era, from the negotiation of the Rome Treaty in 1956, to its near-end in 1991.

The paper studies the progressive build-up of community competences and their institutional implementation, from Regulation 17/62 on cartels to the first major decision regarding merger control in 1991. It argues that the institutional features of EEC competition policy had been hotly disputed not only because of the opposition between supporters and opponents of European integration in this area, but also because of the different national traditions. Alternative designs, such as the setting up of an independent cartel agency, had been frequently devised.