

Think it over calmly

...before you call into a fortune-telling television programme...

Based on signals received from consumers, the Hungarian Competition Authority (GVH) has already investigated the commercial practices used by fortune-telling television programmes within the framework of a competition supervision proceeding. The GVH found that the undertaking subject to the proceeding failed to fulfil the requirement of professional diligence since it was suggested that consumers can easily get on the live programme; however, this was not possible even after long waiting times, in spite of the host aggressively encouraging viewers to call in. The GVH imposed a fine based on the findings of the proceeding. ([Vj-105/2012.](#))

The viewers of fortune-telling programmes can often see the daily cash prize spread out on a table in front of the host, which is won by the person whom the description fits the most accurately or who manages to find out the solution to a challenge. The descriptions often include specific figures being contained within the ID card number or taxpayer ID card of the person they are looking for, while the challenges involve putting words or phrases together from the letters presented. The fortune-tellers generally encourage viewers to call in immediately if they match the description or if they found the solution to the challenge and they can win huge sums of money.

However, the consumers who submitted informal complaints to the GVH tended to feel like the descriptions given in the programme matched them perfectly or they managed to find out the solution but instead of a huge prize, they only got an extremely high telephone bill due to the prolonged premium-rate calls. Instead of being put on the live programme, the callers had to participate in lengthy conversations, asked to wait and even if prizes were mentioned after giving the correct answer, they were never actually delivered.

Based on feedback from consumers, the GVH suggests that every viewer **think** the following over **calmly** before calling into a fortune-telling programme:

- Always look up the organiser before calling into any interactive programme. Be especially careful if it is not apparent who or what organisation or undertaking is behind the programmes and any prize competitions.
- Before calling, we recommend that you visit the website of the organiser and read the rules, as well as the general terms and conditions of the programme, especially regarding being put on the live programme and any prize competitions involved. Pay attention to whether calling in guarantees being put on the live programme or whether the waiting times and calls not put on the programme are also invoiced. If you do not find any information on this matter or if the information provided is unclear, consider carefully whether it is worth calling in.
- Take into account whether the programme as a whole or its design, such as any communication containing phrases like ‘be here with us’, ‘we don’t know when next time will come’, ‘call now’, ‘this short phone call is going to be worth it’, ‘you must call’, and ‘dial now’, is aimed at ensuring that consumers think their decisions through

carefully or whether they only serve to create a sense of urgency and disrupt the decision-making process.

- Think about how many people the description provided can fit exactly. If you believe that there could be many whose ID card number includes certain figures but the host states that only a single person will fit the description, think carefully once again about how many other consumers might already be waiting on hold.
- Be careful with challenges as well since if you managed to find out the solution at the first glance, this could be the case for others as well. It is also possible that they only put viewers who state incorrect answers into the live programme in an attempt to increase pressure on others.
- If you do decide to call and you are not put into the programme within a short time, do not let them keep you on hold for long. If you truly are the winner, it is unlikely that you need to wait for more than a few minutes before you are in the live programme. If this does not happen, think it through carefully whether it is worth staying in the call.