

The GVH imposed a fine due to disinfectant products sold in a misleading manner during the pandemic

8 December 2021, Budapest – The Hungarian Competition Authority (GVH) has imposed a fine of HUF 147 million on the distributor of the Dettol product range for advertising its disinfectants using unfounded claims amidst the pandemic.

The investigation of the GVH established that Reckitt Benckiser Kft. misled consumers when promoting the biocide products (antibacterial surface cleaning sprays and wipes, hand sanitisers, and soaps) belonging to the Dettol product range distributed by the undertaking. The advertisements claimed a high level of effectiveness (e.g. *'Destroys 99.9% of bacteria and deactivates viruses'*, *'Kills 99.9% of pathogens without water'*); however, during the proceeding, the undertaking was only able to support these claims to a satisfactory degree in connection with bacteria. The manner in which the undertaking had advertised the products using the logo and recommendation of the Pál Heim Children's Hospital was also found to have infringed the law. Although the undertaking was entitled to use the logo and the slogan *'Recommended by the Pál Heim Children's Hospital'* pursuant to a marketing agreement between the parties, the investigation showed that the recommendation concerning the products was not made after any professional examination or research, or based on any well-founded criteria, contrary to what the average consumer would have assumed. Therefore, the logo and the slogan were communicating a misleading message to customers.

The investigation of the Authority also included the fact that one of the most popular Facebook profiles in Hungary, Father Tibi's social media page, also promoted the disinfectant. During the proceeding, the GVH was able to clearly ascertain that this page presented the product without any cooperation between the parties, which means that there was no attempt to conceal any sponsorship from consumers. Therefore, the GVH terminated the proceeding in this regard.

Due to the unfair practices, the Competition Council of the GVH imposed a competition supervision fine of HUF 147 million on Reckitt Benckiser Kft. The decision took into account that the advertising campaign, which lasted several years, had a noticeable effect on the market in question. However, the Authority also considered that the undertaking voluntarily changed its advertising practices as a result of the proceeding and partially admitted the infringement.

Since the demand for products that help protect against the virus has risen many times over due to the pandemic situation, the GVH has recently been paying increased attention to this area, particularly during the period when there had not yet been a vaccine against Covid-19, making consumers especially receptive to advertising messages that promised protection. In June, the [Authority imposed a fine of a hundred million forints](#) for similar reasons and an [investigation is currently still underway](#) regarding the Virostop spray. Although the advertising claims about Dettol products that were found to have infringed the law had already been used by the distributor well before the pandemic, increased caution was expected from the undertaking in terms of

commercial practices related to the pandemic, [in accordance with the guidance](#) of the GVH.

The official registration number of the case is: **VJ/12/2020**.

GVH Press Office