



GAZDASÁGI
VERSENYHIVATAL

Newly published dictionary with out-of-date definitions

Könyvmíves Könykiadó was fined HUF 500 thousand (approx. EUR 1700) by the GVH (the Hungarian Competition Authority) for the deception of consumers. The undertaking failed to indicate in its publication “Magyar értelmező kéziszótár” (Hungarian Explanatory Concise Dictionary) that it contained a significant number of archaic expressions, based on previous dictionaries, and that it explained headwords several times with old-fashioned wording rather than in today’s meaning.

The competition supervision proceeding conducted against Könyvmíves Könyvkiadó Kft. (publishing) established that the Hungarian Explanatory Concise Dictionary issued by the publisher contains several headwords drafted in an archaic way. Even educated adults might often have difficulties with definitions put in an archaic way, and definitions of this kind are certainly not clear to school kids. Many definitions contain archaic notions like eg. church-tax under the headword tax. At the same time, the dictionary does not indicate that it explains some headwords in a quite old-fashioned manner. This misleading element is further strengthened by the indication “First published in 2000” suggesting to consumers that the dictionary is a new edition with modern language.

Competition concerns arise because consumers cannot recognize the fact that the publication is based on the vocabulary of an old explanatory dictionary, it defines notions used at that time written in an archaic way, with their contemporary meaning and wording. This feature of the dictionary may be useful for some of the consumers in certain cases. However, other consumers typically expect the dictionary to contain up-to-date explanations with a modern wording, they do not intend to use it like a cultural relic in order to understand ancient texts. It is essential for both consumer-groups, which actually cover every potential purchaser, to know about the special kind of the dictionary. In the first case, in order that the consumers choose this particular dictionary, and in the latter case to ensure them the possibility to decide whether to buy this dictionary thanks to its favourable price in spite of these special circumstances, or to chose another dictionary on the market.

The GVH did not dispute that Könyvmíves Kft. had made some efforts in order to modernize the dictionary before publishing, however, its efforts did not go beyond enlarging the vocabulary. Könyvmíves Kft. missed to update the content of the old headwords and to implement them to the most recent language. Furthermore, many headwords are still written in their archaic form. Thus the modernisation efforts did not change the basically archaic feature of the dictionary.

Based on the above mentioned, the practice of Könyvmíves Kft. was eligible for the deception of consumers, thus the undertaking was fined HUF 500 thousand (approx. EUR 1700). When calculating the amount of the fine the GVH considered as an aggravating circumstance that the infringement affected a defenceless group of consumers (students),

and that the GVH has already imposed a fine on the undertaking and its shareholders for a previous infringement of the same kind. It was taken into account as a mitigating circumstance that the edition 2008 of the dictionary already indicated that „the publication also contains the explanation of archaic, old-fashioned words that are not present anymore in everyday use” and that the dictionary is a „reprint edition”. However, the GVH notes that the indications only refer to the archaic vocabulary, not to the old-fashioned explanations and the numerous times archaic writing form.