



Suspected cartel between newspaper publishers

On 19 September 2011, the Gazdasági Versenyhivatal (GVH – Hungarian Competition Authority) held unannounced inspections on the premises of two county-based newspaper publishing companies. The case handlers of the GVH investigated the business premises of Axel Springer-Magyarország Kft and Inform Média Kft.

On 22 March 2011, the GVH initiated a competition supervision procedure against Axel Springer-Magyarország Kft, Inform Média Kft, Lapcom Lapkiadó és Nyomdaipari Kft and Pannon Lapok Társasága Kft for an alleged infringement of the prohibition against restrictive agreements. Within the framework of this investigation, the GVH decided to hold unannounced inspections on the premises of Axel Springer-Magyarország Kft and Inform Média Kft. According to the available information, the undertakings under investigation (and their predecessors) concluded agreements in 2000 in relation to the “Sunday newspaper” which contained stipulations that aimed to restrict competition and fix prices among themselves.

In accordance with these agreements, the parties mutually undertook not to enter into each other’s regional markets. This restriction not only concerned the “Sunday newspaper”, but also the printed media and the local electronic media. Furthermore, it is presumed that the abovementioned undertakings have also entered into negotiations with regard to the prices of journals and the prices of advertisements.

The GVH suspects that the undertakings under investigation have presumably violated, by this conduct, the provisions of the Hungarian Competition Act with regard to the prohibition of restrictive agreements.

The GVH is empowered by the Competition Act to inspect premises without any preliminary notification. Pursuant to the provisions of the Competition Act, any inspection of premises is subject to the attainment in advance of judicial authorisation.

The initiation of the competition supervision proceeding does not mean that the undertakings in question have actually committed the infringement. The proceeding seeks to clarify the facts and to thus prove that the presumed infringement has been committed. According to the Act these proceedings must be closed within 6 months, however, this time limit can be extended two times by a further 6 months, depending on the complexity of the case.

Case number: **Vj-23/2011**

Budapest, 23 September 2011.

Hungarian Competition Authority
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