

The key to successful and more efficient competition law enforcement is the close collaboration of the V4+ countries' Competition Authorities

The Authorities of the Visegrad Group countries, and also of Austria and Slovenia, often face similar questions in the course of their enforcement activities; whether it relates to the efficiency of their cartel detection activities and the legal toolkits at their disposal, or merger control and ensuring the right of due process. The close collaboration of the regional competition authorities may result in solutions being found to the above-mentioned questions. The representatives of the V4+ countries' Competition Authorities – on the initiative of the Hungarian Competition Authority (GVH) – met for the second time at a competition conference held in Budapest during the Hungarian presidency of the Visegrad Group.

The representatives of the 6 countries (Austria, Czechia, Poland, Hungary, Slovak Republic, and Slovenia) attending the 2nd Visegrad 4+ Competition Conference attempted to respond to common and current questions pertinent to the region. The conference was organised along the following themes: legislation and enforcement questions, cases in the retail trade, and the practice of the compliance programmes.

Miklós Juhász, President of the GVH, explicitly welcomed the benefits of the regional cooperation, emphasising: *“We can learn a lot from each other, if we follow the developments of the V4+ countries' competition law, which the Authorities encounter in their everyday work.”*. Mr. Juhász stated that the existence and work of the Competition Authorities are unquestionable, due to the significant benefits they bring to society. The GVH quantifies the benefits of its activities every two years. The [last assessment](#) revealed that the budgetary spending on the GVH pays off, since in the period of 2011-16, consumers saved a sum that is more than six times the total budget of the GVH due to the work of the authority. He added that the GVH has taken a number of steps in order to promote the compliance of SMEs in the last 4 years, since the date of the last V4 conference.

Maintaining and increasing competitiveness is of crucial importance in Central Europe. Competition authorities have an important role in safeguarding competitiveness by blocking unfair market practices – **Levente Magyar, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade**, pointed out in his opening speech. He emphasised that the 25 years of Visegrad cooperation has brought concrete results in the region, also in the field of competition law enforcement.

Paul Csiszar, Director, Directorate-General Competition of the European Commission, began his introduction by stating: *“Effective competition law enforcement by our NCAs based on sound and fair policy considerations is essential for building strong social market economies in*

our region. Such enforcement enhances economic growth, creates a level playing field for businesses including SMEs, and it leads to better prices, quality and choice to consumers.” He further added: “Today’s conference clearly contributes – by sharing the representatives’ experiences – to successful and more efficient competition law enforcement.”

The members of the session on developments in the legislation and the competition law enforcement in the V4+ countries, which was moderated by **András Tóth, Vice-President of the GVH, Chair of the Competition Council of the GVH**, agreed that a number of similarities exist in the field of competition law in the V4 countries and Austria and Slovenia, which may lay the foundation for enhanced cooperation between the countries. Noted examples were the efforts taken to promote compliance with the rules relating to concentrations, and the introduction and operation of informant programmes aimed at facilitating the detection of cartels.

The session on the questions of compliance summarised the common characteristics of compliance programmes acceptable by the competition authorities in general, primarily from the perspective of the undertakings. **Zoltán Hegymegi-Barakonyi, Lawyer, President of the Hungarian Competition Association**, who moderated the conversation, stressed that the GVH was the first competition authority in the region to make it possible for undertakings under investigation to obtain a fine reduction if they had an internal compliance programme. According to the notice published in January 2018, the GVH may reduce a fine by 10% if an undertaking has an internal compliance programme.

The presentations of the 2nd V4+ Competition Conference will be available on Tuesday (6 February) on the [website](#) of the GVH.

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