

## **The GVH has temporarily suspended the Ask Bongo! premium rate service**

**The Hungarian Competition Authority (GVH) has suspended, via an interim measure, the service and advertising of "Ask Bongo" SMS message information service, which is typically used by adolescents and preadolescents. The GVH has also obliged the service provider, Global AQA Pty Ltd., to immediately disable the advertisements that have already been published but which are still available, and to modify the website of the service. Furthermore, the authority has obliged several undertakings that have been involved in some form in the display of the advertisements and the service to suspend the service and the advertisements; consequently, their involvement is justified in order to ensure the effectiveness of the intervention.**

In February 2020 the GVH launched a [competition supervision proceeding](#) into a number of advertisements promoting a service primarily aimed at children and minors, due to the suspicion that the advertisements in question may have violated the prohibition of unfair commercial practices against consumers.

The competition authority has presumptively proven that the advertisements for the service, although suitable for providing more detailed information, conceal the fees charged to consumers for the use of the service and the way in which the data provided for the use is handled. When assessing the conduct subject to the proceeding, it was an important consideration that the target group of the advertisements included minors, and that the service was available using the telephone contact provided in the advertisements without the provision of any further information.

The urgency of the intervention, i.e. the interim measure, is justified by the fact that children are currently being educated using online tools and are subject to restrictions on their freedom of movement, with the result that they may spend even more time than usual on smartphones and computers and are therefore more likely to face dangerous, potentially infringing content, that may distort their decisions, i.e. contents that may pose data protection risks or encourage the use of paid services which are more difficult to perceive or interpret. The purpose of the interim measure is to prevent further damage.

Besides Global AQA Pty Ltd., which is the service provider of Ask Bongo! and also a party to the proceeding, further obligees are Globoport Media Holding Kft. the publisher of the 'Középsuli' web series), three influencer marketing agencies (P4R Digital Agency Kft., Social Guru Magyarország Kft., Star Network MCN Kft.), Google Ireland Ltd. and Facebook Ireland Ltd., as well as three domestic mobile operators (Magyar Telekom Nyrt., Telenor Magyarország Zrt., Vodafone Magyarország Zrt.).

The GVH also calls on consumers, especially parents and guardians, to consider limiting the use of premium rate services on children's phones and to also review the privacy settings of various applications in order to prevent unnecessary expense and other harm.

Budapest, 1 April 2020

Hungarian Competition Authority

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