

The Bulgarian Competition Authority is to Investigate the Media Sector in the Country

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After initiating sector inquiries on the banking and energy markets in the country the Bulgarian Commission for Protection of Competition (the Commission) will investigate one more sector following a request from the Minister of Economy, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Culture to examine the competitive environment of the media market in Bulgaria.

The analysis will affect the activities of all media service providers in the sector, in particular:

- print media - newspapers, magazines and other periodicals,
- media disseminated through electronic communications networks such as public or commercial electronic media
- licensed or registered public or commercial audio-visual media services or radio services, as well as
- online news services - electronic editions of newspapers, magazines, news agencies and other electronic publications.

In a communication on the Commission's website, the regulatory authority calls on the public to actively assist in the provision of information and data during the procedure. In this regard the Commission is expected to approach market participants with specific requests for information on key issues, subject to research and analysis, which should be carefully addressed.

Sector inquiries will be aimed at gathering and analysing large volumes of market information from as many market participants and interested parties as possible. The Commission shall further examine whether any barriers to entry exist and what is the market concentration and the dynamics of the media sector. Also, depending on its findings and whether they raise certain competition law flags, the CPC may initiate individual procedures against separate market participants. In these procedures, the CPC usually investigates possible prohibited agreements, practices, abuse of dominance or other market behaviours which may contradict competition regulation.

The importance of a sector inquiry should not be underestimated due to the possible financial implications for businesses in the case that an individual proceeding is initiated as a consequence of such inquiry. The sanctions imposed by the CPC are up to 10% of the total turnover of the last financial year.

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