

The Investigation and Prosecution Service of the Belgian Competition Authority closed an investigation against Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI) pursuant to commitments

In 2015, the competition prosecutor general received several complaints against Fédération Equestre Internationale. These complaints concerned: (i) some provisions of the FEI General Regulations which stipulate that the participation of athletes, horses or officials in events that have not been approved by the FEI could be subject to a penalty of six months renewable; (ii) the lack of transparency of the FEI approval process; and (iii) the sanctions imposed on athletes, horses and officials participating in competitions not approved by the FEI. They were likely to foreclose competitors from the market for the organization and commercial operation of 5 * competitions. One of these complaints concerned a provision of the FEI General Regulations which provides that the organization of 5 * competitions must be subject to an application for registration in the FEI calendar two years before the date of the first edition of the contest. Although these complaints were withdrawn, the Investigation and Prosecution Service decided to pursue *ex officio* the investigation.

In its preliminary assessment, the Investigation and Prosecution Service considered potential infringements of competition: (i) the opacity of the approval rules related to new series; (ii) the penalties for participating in events not approved by the FEI; and (iii) the ability given by the conflict of date rules to raise objections to potential new entrants on the market.

After being informed of the preliminary analysis of the Investigation and Prosecution Service, FEI decided to offer commitments to terminate the investigation. These commitments consist, as regards the procedure for approval of new series, in the immediate establishment of a transparent procedure. Regarding the rules concerning the participation in events not recognized by FEI and the conflict of dates, procedural and substantive changes were adopted by the Board of FEI on 20 November 2018. The Board commits to support these changes at the next General Assembly of FEI. These commitments meet the competition concerns of the Investigation and Prosecution Service.

The Investigation and Prosecution Service decided - in view of the commitments received - to close the investigation. Therefore, the Investigation and Prosecution Service did not take a position on whether or not the FEI infringed competition law.

The decision will soon be available on the website of the Belgian Competition Authority.

For more information you may contact:

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The Belgian Competition Authority (BCA) is an independent administrative authority that contributes to the definition and implementation of competition policy in Belgium. Concretely, the BCA pursues anti-competitive practices, such as cartels and abuses of a dominant position, and reviews the main merger operations. The BCA cooperates with the other competition authorities of the member states of the European Union and the European Commission within the European Competition Network (ECN)