

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Hospital concentrations: the Belgian Competition Authority publishes its decision on the Jolimont/Ambroise Paré merger and asks to be heard by the Chamber's Economic Affairs Committee**

On December 21, 2023, the Belgian Competition Authority (BCA) adopted a reasoned decision authorizing the merger between the Jolimont hospital group and the Centre hospitalier universitaire et psychiatrique de Mons Borinage, better known as the Ambroise Paré hospital. This decision implements the analytical framework adapted to hospital mergers developed by the BCA and made public on October 18, 2023 [Press Release nr 44 - 2023 | Belgian Competition Authority](#). This decision is now available on the ABC website: [ABC-2023-CC-50 - version publique ABC Redacted 0.pdf \(abc-bma.be\)](#).

Following the decision by the Council of Ministers on January 26, 2024 to exempt the hospital sector in principle from prior merger control by the BCA, with the exception of transactions between the largest hospital structures with an individual turnover of at least EUR 250 million and a combined turnover of at least EUR 900 million, the BCA has requested the possibility to be heard by the Chamber's "Economy, Consumer Protection and Digital Agenda" Committee, so that it can provide any useful clarifications on the consequences of the proposed exemption.

As a reminder, prior merger control aims to verify that the entities involved in a merger and acquisition transaction will retain the necessary incentives in the future to offer the best products or services at the best possible conditions. The BCA's action in the current wave of hospital mergers in Belgium is aimed in particular at ensuring that the interests of the patient remain at the heart of the strategy of general hospitals, which are private structures for the most part, that the public money which finances the healthcare system is used efficiently, and that the working conditions of hospital personnel are not degraded as a result.

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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)