

## PART 2

### COMPETITION LAW PRACTISES DURING AND AFTER COVID-19 IN TURKEY AND AROUND THE WORLD

#### COVID-19 SÜRECİNDE VE SONRASINDA TÜRKİYE'DE VE DÜNYADA REKABET HUKUKU UYGULAMALARI

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#### ABSTRACT

This article discusses competition law practices in Turkey and around the world during the world-wide Covid-19 pandemic that emerged in 2020 and the measures taken by the competition authorities in Turkey and around the world to reduce the impact of the pandemic.

#### ÖZET

Bu yazıda, 2020 yılında ortaya çıkan ve dünyayı etkisi altına alan Covid-19 pandemisinde Türkiye ve dünyadaki rekabet hukuku uygulamaları ele alınmıştır. Türkiye’de ve dünyada rekabet otoritelerince salgının etkisini azaltmak için alınan tedbirler bu yazı kapsamında irdelenecektir.



#### KEYWORDS

COVID-19, COMPETITION LAW,  
PANDEMIC, COMPETITION  
AUTHORITY



#### ANAHTAR KELİMELER

COVID-19, REKABET HUKUKU,  
PANDEMİ, REKABET KURUMU

## PART 2

Covid-19 has forced competition authorities, like many other institutions, to change their working methods. In this context, merger notifications and control differ from the traditional methods.

Covid-19 birçok kurum gibi rekabet otoritelerini de çalışma yöntemlerini değiştirmeye zorlamıştır. Bu kapsamda birleşme bildirimlerinin yapılması ve incelenmesi geleneksel yöntemden farklılık göstermiştir.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Since Covid-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization on March 12, 2020, peoples' habits have changed. There have been significant changes in our shopping preferences, especially with the excessive demand for food and hygiene products such as disinfectants, cologne, and masks. Before the pandemic, consumers' demand for these products were more periodic, but with the new normal, mass purchases and stockpiling have become a current issue as hygiene products have gone onto everyone's shopping list.

The change in consumption habits has led to different scenarios in the market. In order to mitigate the effects of Covid-19, competition authorities have granted companies cooperation permissions that support the supply chain. In response to abusive behavior by some dominant market players, competition authorities have also taken some approaches and provisions.

Covid-19 has forced competition authorities, like many other institutions, to change their working methods. In this context, merger notifications and control differ from the traditional methods.

## I. GİRİŞ

Covid-19'un tüm insanlığı tehdit eden bir sorun haline gelmesi ve 12 Mart 2020'de Dünya Sağlık Örgütü tarafından "Pandemi" olarak ilan edilmesiyle beraber alışkanlıklarımız değişmiştir. Özellikle gıda ve dezenfektan, kolonya, maske gibi hijyen ürünlerine gösterilen aşırı talep ile alışveriş tercihlerimizde önemli değişiklikler olmuştur. Pandemi dönemi öncesinde tüketicilerin gıda, dezenfektan, kolonya, maske gibi ürünlere olan talebi daha periyodik iken, yeni normal ile birlikte toplu alımlar, stokçuluk gündeme gelmiştir. Dezenfektan, maske gibi hijyen ürünleri tüm insanların alışveriş listesine girmiştir.

Tüketim alışkanlıklarının değişmesi, piyasada farklı senaryolara yol açmıştır. Covid-19'un etkilerini azaltmak için rekabet otoriteleri firmalara tedarik zincirini destekleyici iş birliği izinleri vermiştir. Bunun dışında hâkim durumdaki bazı piyasa oyuncularının durumu suiistimal edici davranışlar sergilemesi sebebiyle rekabet otoriteleri bu konuda rehberlik sağlayarak bazı yaklaşımlar geliştirmiştir.

Covid-19 birçok kurum gibi rekabet otoritelerini de çalışma yöntemlerini değiştirmeye zorlamıştır. Bu kapsamda birleşme bildirimlerinin yapılması ve incelenmesi geleneksel yöntemden farklılık göstermiştir.



States have taken measures such as state aid and tax deferral in order to protect the weakening competition during the Covid-19 crisis and to ensure that enterprises can continue their activities.

## II. TURKEY

The first case of Covid-19, spreading worldwide from the city of Wuhan of China in December 2019, was detected on March 11, 2020 in Turkey. Twelve days after the first cases in Turkey, The Competition Authority reported and closely monitored exorbitant price increases in the food market, especially in the fresh fruit and vegetables. It stated that the heaviest administrative fines in the Law on the Protection of Competition<sup>1</sup> would be imposed on individuals and institutions that carry out anti-competitive practices<sup>2</sup>. Following this public announcement, the President of the Competition Authority, Birol Küle, issued a press release on 25 March 2020. In this press release, he stated that there should be no increase in the price on the field of fresh fruit and vegetables, no decrease in their supply and no increase in fuel, no storage cost and no increase in labor costs. He attributed the price increase to the artificial scarcity caused by actors in the supply value chain that ignored the announcement two days previously. In ad-

Devletler, Covid-19 sürecinde zayıflayan rekabeti koruyabilmek ve teşebbüslerin faaliyetlerine devam edebilmesi adına devlet desteği ve vergi erteleme gibi tedbirler almışlardır.

## II. TÜRKİYE

2019 yılı aralık ayında Çin'in Wuhan kentinde ortaya çıkan ve dünyada baş göstermeye başlayan Covid-19 pandemisinin Türkiye'deki ilk vakası 11 Mart 2020'de tespit edilmiştir. Türkiye'de ilk vakadan tam 12 gün sonra Rekabet Kurumu yaş meyve ve sebze piyasası başta olmak üzere gıda piyasasında fahiş fiyat artışlarının gözlemlendiğini ve Rekabet Kurumu tarafından yakından takip edildiğini bildirmiştir. Bu kapsamda rekabeti bozucu eylemlerde bulunan kişi ve kurumlara Rekabetin Korunması Hakkında Kanun<sup>1</sup>'daki en ağır idari para cezalarının uygulanacağı belirtilmiştir<sup>2</sup>. Bu kamuoyu duyurusunun ardından 25 Mart 2020 tarihinde Rekabet Kurumu Başkanı Birol Küle bir basın açıklaması yapmıştır. Bu basın açıklamasında; özellikle, yaş meyve ve sebzelerin tarla fiyatında bir artışın, arzında bir azalışın veya akaryakıt, depolama, işgücü masraflarında artışın olmadığını belirtmiştir. Fiyat artışını, iki gün önceki açıklamayı dikkate almayan arz değer zincirindeki aktörlerin oluşturduğu yapay kıt-

## FOOTNOTE

1 Official Gazette (OG) dated 13.12.1994, numbered 22140.

2 Rekabet Kurumu, "KAMUOYUNA DUYURU (23.3.2020)", <https://www.rekabet.gov.tr/tr/Guncel/kamuoyuna-duyuru-3b18d865266de-a11811700505694b4c6> (Access Date, 21.01.2021).

## DİPNOT

1 13.12.1994 tarih, 22140 sayılı Resmi Gazete (RG).

2 Rekabet Kurumu, "KAMUOYUNA DUYURU (23.3.2020)", <https://www.rekabet.gov.tr/tr/Guncel/kamuoyuna-duyuru-3b18d865266de-a11811700505694b4c6> (Erişim tarihi, 21.01.2021).

## PART 2

dition, he repeated the statement in his previous announcement that the market would be closely monitored and that the discretionary power of the Competition Authority would be used to the highest level<sup>3</sup>.

On April 6, 2020, the Competition Authority published an announcement emphasizing that all applications, petitions, and information and document submission procedures would be done through the e-Government Gateway<sup>4</sup>. On April 17, 2020, the time limits regarding examinations, researches, and investigations continued, but the following decisions were taken in order to avoid grievance: (i) within the scope of the investigations carried out, the applications regarding requests for additional time for the second and third written defenses to be made within the framework of Article 45 of the Law on the Protection of Competition would be accepted up to April 30, 2020, (ii) matters intended to be presented in addition to a written defense but could not be brought up within the specified period would be accepted during the investigation. It also stated that the parties had the opportunity to state in the third written defense arguments that they could not present within the second written defense period<sup>5</sup>.

lığa bağlamıştır. Ayrıca bir önceki duyurusundaki piyasanın yakından takip edildiği ve Rekabet Kurumu'nun takdir hakkını ceza oranının en yüksek şekilde kullanılacağı ifadesini tekrarlamıştır<sup>3</sup>.

Rekabet Kurumu 6 Nisan 2020'de tüm başvuru, dilekçe ve bilgi-belge sunumu işlemlerinin e-Devlet Kapısı üzerinden yapılabileceğini vurgulayan bir duyuru yayınlamıştır<sup>4</sup>. 17 Nisan 2020'de ise yürütülen inceleme, araştırma ve soruşturmalara ilişkin sürelerin işlemeye devam ettiğini ancak mağduriyet yaşanmaması adına; (i) yürütülen soruşturmalar kapsamında ilgili teşebbüsler tarafından 30 Nisan 2020 tarihine kadar, Rekabetin Korunması Hakkında Kanun'un 45'inci maddesi çerçevesinde yapılacak ikinci ve üçüncü yazılı savunmalarını sunmaları için ek süre tanınması taleplerine ilişkin başvuruların, (ii) yazılı savunmaya ek olarak sunulmak istenen ancak belirtilen süre zarfında yetiştirilemeyen hususların soruşturma süresince kabul edilmesine karar verildiğini duyurmuştur. Ayrıca tarafların ikinci yazılı savunma süresi içinde sunamadıkları savunma argümanlarını üçüncü yazılı savunmada belirtme imkanlarının mevcut olduğunu belirtmiştir<sup>5</sup>.



## FOOTNOTE

<sup>3</sup> Rekabet Kurumu, "Rekabet Kurumu Başkanı Birol KÜLE'nin Yaş Meyve Sebze Fiyatlarına İlişkin Basın Açıklaması (25.3.2020)", <https://www.rekabet.gov.tr/tr/Guncel/rekabet-kurumu-baskani-birol-kule-nin-ya-19def560896eea11811700505694b4c6> (Access Date, 21.01.2021).

<sup>4</sup> Rekabet Kurumu, "COVID-19 Koruma-Kontrol Önlemleri Duyurusu (6.4.2020)", <https://www.rekabet.gov.tr/tr/Guncel/covid-19-koruma-kontrol-onlemleri-duyurusu-6df1b0842d78ea11811800505694b4c6> (Access Date, 21.01.2021).

<sup>5</sup> Rekabet Kurumu, "DUYURU (17.4.2020)", <https://www.rekabet.gov.tr/tr/Guncel/duyuru-91e4ba53dc80ea11811800505694b4c6> (Access Date, 21.01.2021).

<sup>6</sup> OG dated 17.04.2020, numbered 31102.

<sup>7</sup> OG dated 28.05.2020, numbered 31138.

Law No. 7244 on Reducing the Effects of the New Coronavirus (Covid-19) Epidemic on Economic and Social Life and the Law on Amending Certain Laws<sup>6</sup> was published in the Official Gazette on April 17, 2020. The Unfair Price Evaluation Board was established by adding additional articles to Law No. 6585 on the Regulation of Retail Trade. The Directive of the Unfair Price Evaluation Board<sup>7</sup>, which regulates the formation, duties, and authorities of the Unfair Price Evaluation Board, was published in the Official Gazette on May 28, 2020. The Unfair Price Evaluation Board consists of 13 members: the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Treasury and Finance, Ministry of Industry and Technology, and Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry each have 1 member and 4 members represent the Ministry of Commerce. Civil society and the private sector are represented by one member each from the Union of

7244 sayılı Yeni Koronavirüs (Covid-19) Salgınının Ekonomik Ve Sosyal Hayata Etkilerinin Azaltılması Hakkında Kanun İle Bazı Kanunlarda Değişiklik Yapılmasına Dair Kanun<sup>6</sup>, 17 Nisan 2020'de Resmi Gazete'de yayımlanmıştır. Bu kanun ile 6585 sayılı Perakende Ticaretin Düzenlenmesi Hakkında Kanunu'na ek maddeler eklenerek, Haksız Fiyat Değerlendirme Kurulu oluşturulmuştur. Haksız Fiyat Değerlendirme Kurulu'nun oluşumu, görev ve yetkilerini düzenleyen Haksız Fiyat Değerlendirme Kurulu Yönetmeliği<sup>7</sup> 28 Mayıs 2020'de Resmi Gazete'de yayımlanmıştır. Haksız Fiyat Değerlendirme Kurulu 13 üyeden oluşmaktadır. Ticaret Bakanlığı'nı 4 üye, Adalet Bakanlığı, Hazine ve Maliye Bakanlığı, Sanayi ve Teknoloji Bakanlığı ile Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığını birer üye temsil edecektir. Sivil toplum ve özel sektörü ise Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliği, Türkiye Esnaf ve Sanatkarları Konfe-

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Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey, the Confederation of Turkish Traders and Craftsmen, producer and consumer organizations, and the retail sector. Although excessive price liability is regulated in Article 6 of the Law on the Protection of Competition, this provision applies only to enterprises that have a dominant position in the market. The Unfair Price Evaluation Board aims to prevent exorbitant price increases and manufacturer, supplier, and retail business stockpiling practices in times of emergency, disaster, economic fluctuation, and other emergencies regardless of the market situation. Moreover, the disposable mask investigation examined by the Competition Authority, which is mentioned below, was sent to the Unfair Price Evaluation

derasyonu, üretici ve tüketici örgütleri ile perakende sektöründen birer üye temsil edecektir. Her ne kadar fahiş fiyat uygulanması sorumluluğu Rekabetin Korunması Hakkında Kanun'un 6. maddesinde düzenlense de bu hüküm yalnızca piyasada hakim durumdaki teşebbüslere yöneliktir. Haksız Fiyat Değerlendirme Kurulu ile ise piyasadaki durumundan bağımsız olarak olağanüstü hâl, afet ve ekonomik dalgalanma dönemleri ile diğer acil durumlarda üretici, tedarikçi ve perakende işletmelerin fahiş fiyat artışı ve stokçuluk uygulamalarının önüne geçilmesi amaçlanmaktadır. Hatta aşağıda bahsedilecek Rekabet Kurumu'nun incelediği tek kullanımlık maske soruşturmasının Haksız Fiyat Değerlendirme Kurulu'na gönderildiği görülecektir. Haksız Fiyat Değerlendirme

## DİPNOT

<sup>3</sup> Rekabet Kurumu, "Rekabet Kurumu Başkanı Birol KÜLE'nin Yaş Meyve Sebze Fiyatlarına İlişkin Basın Açıklaması (25.3.2020)", <https://www.rekabet.gov.tr/tr/Guncel/rekabet-kurumu-baskani-birol-kule-nin-ya-19def560896eea11811700505694b4c6> (Erişim tarihi, 21.01.2021).

<sup>4</sup> Rekabet Kurumu, "COVID-19 Koruma-Kontrol Önlemleri Duyurusu (6.4.2020)", <https://www.rekabet.gov.tr/tr/Guncel/covid-19-koruma-kontrol-onlemleri-duyurusu-6df1b0842d78ea11811800505694b4c6> (Erişim tarihi, 21.01.2021).

<sup>5</sup> Rekabet Kurumu, "DUYURU (17.4.2020)", <https://www.rekabet.gov.tr/tr/Guncel/duyuru-91e4ba53dc80ea11811800505694b4c6> (Erişim tarihi, 21.01.2021).

<sup>6</sup> 17.04.2020 tarih, 31102 sayılı RG.

<sup>7</sup> 28.05.2020 tarih, 31138 sayılı RG.



## PART 2

## FOOTNOTE

**8 T.C. Ticaret Bakanlığı**, “Ticaret Bakanlığı 81 ildeki market, pazar yeri ve hallerde fahiş fiyat denetimi yaptı”, <https://ticaret.gov.tr/haberler/ticaret-bakanligi-81-ildeki-market-pazar-yeri-ve-hallerde-fahis- fiyat-deneti-mi-y> (Access Date, 20.02.2021).

**9 Rekabet Kurumu**, “ARALARINDA ZİNCİR MARKETLERİN DE BULUNDUĞU 29 TEŞEBBÜS HAKKINDA SORUŞTURMA BAŞLATILDI (7.5.2020)”, <https://www.rekabet.gov.tr/tr/Guncel/aralarinda-zincir-marketlerin-de-bulundu-8828c79f-5f90ea11811a00505694b4c6> (Access Date, 21.01.2021).

**10 T.C. Ticaret Bakanlığı**, “Koronavirüs Salgını Nedeniyle Esnaf ve Sanatkarlar ile Gerçek Kişi Tacirlere Verilecek Destekler Hakkında Duyuru”, <https://ticaret.gov.tr/duyurular/koronavirüs-salgini-nedeniyle-esnaf-ve-sanatkarlar-ile-gercek-kisi-tacirlere-veri> (Access Date, 21.01.2021).

**11** OG dated 24.12.2020, numbered 31344.

**12 Rekabet Kurumu**, “Maske alanında faaliyet gösteren 13 teşebbüs hakkında yürütülen soruşturmaya ilişkin nihai kararın 4054 sayılı Rekabetin Korunması Hakkında Kanun’un 49. maddesi uyarınca açıklanması”, <https://www.rekabet.gov.tr/Dosya/geneldosya/maske-nihai-karar-internet-duyurusu-pdf> (Access Date, 21.01.2021).

**13 Rekabet Kurumu**, “Rekabet Kurumu Başkanı Birol KÜLE, dijital pazarlar ve Covid-19 dönemine ilişkin açıklamalarda bulundu. (9.1.2021)”, <https://www.rekabet.gov.tr/tr/Guncel/rekabet-kurumu-baskani-birol-kule-dijita-b8826a0c7152eb-11812700505694b4c6> (Access Date, 21.01.2021).

**14** OG dated 06.02.2020, numbered 31387.

Board. The Unfair Price Evaluation Board will impose administrative fines from 10 thousand to 100 thousand TL for enterprises found to have made unfair price increases, and from 50 thousand to 500 thousand TL for enterprises found to be stockpiling. By January 27, 2021, the Unfair Price Evaluation Board had imposed a total of 15 million 480 thousand TL administrative fines on 495 enterprises considered to have made exorbitant price increases in food and basic necessities<sup>8</sup>.

Following the Competition Authority's statements that it was following the market closely, it announced, on May 7, 2020, that, according to an analysis made over a period of about a month, the exorbitant price increases by some companies engaged in the production and trade of food and cleaning and hygiene products may violate competition law, and an investigation was initiated against 29 enterprises, including chain markets<sup>9</sup>.

On December 24, 2020, the Ministry of Commerce announced that state aid would be given to reduce the negative effects of Covid-19 on commercial life<sup>10</sup>. In this context, the Presidential Decision on the Aid to be given to Tradesmen and Craftsmen and Real Person Merchants due to the Coronavirus Outbreak, numbered 3323<sup>11</sup>, was published in the Official Gazette. This Decision sates that tradesmen, craftsmen, and real person merchants affected by the epidemic would receive direct aid of 3,000 TL in total at 1,000 TL per month, and monthly rental aid of 750 TL in metropolitan cities and 500 TL monthly in other provinces for three months.



Kurulu, haksız fiyat artışında bulunduğu tespit edilenler hakkında 10 bin TL’den 100 bin TL’ye, stokçuluk yaptığı tespit edilenlere ise 50 bin TL’den 500 bin TL’ye varan idari para cezası uygulayacaktır. Haksız Fiyat Değerlendirme Kurulu tarafından 27 Ocak 2021 tarihine kadar 3 bin 386 dosya karara bağlanarak, gıda ve temel ihtiyaç maddelerinde fahiş fiyat artışı yaptığı değerlendirilen 495 firmaya toplam 15 milyon 480 bin TL’den idari para cezası uygulanmıştır<sup>8</sup>.

Rekabet Kurumu’nun piyasayı yakından takip ettiğini belirttiği açıklamalarının ardından 7 Mayıs 2020’de yaptığı duyuruya göre; yaklaşık bir ayı bulan bir süre zarfında yapılan analizlere göre gıda ve temizlik/hijyen ürünlerinin üretim ve ticareti ile iştigal eden teşebbüslerden bazılarının özellikle fahiş fiyat artışı davranışlarının rekabet hukukunu ihlal eder nitelikte olabileceğine dair kanaate vardığını belirterek, aralarında zincir marketlerin de bulunduğu 29 teşebbüs hakkında soruşturma başlatılmıştır<sup>9</sup>.

Ticaret Bakanlığı 24 Aralık 2020’de Covid-19’un ticari hayat üzerinde olumsuz etkilerinin azaltılmasına yönelik devlet desteği verileceğini duyurmuştur<sup>10</sup>. Bu çerçevede 3323 sayılı Esnaf ve Sanatkarlar ile Gerçek Kişi Tacirlere Koronavirüs Salgını Nedeniyle Verilecek Destekler Hakkında Cumhurbaşkanlığı Kararı<sup>11</sup> Resmi Gazete’de yayınlanmıştır. Karar gereğince; salgından etkilenen esnaf ve sanatkarlar ile gerçek kişi tacirlere aylık 1000 TL olmak üzere toplamda 3000 TL doğrudan gelir desteği ile üç ay boyunca büyükşehirlerde aylık 750 TL, diğer illerde aylık 500 TL kira desteği verilecektir.

On January 5, 2021, the Competition Authority announced that an investigation against 13 enterprises operating in the field of masks was completed<sup>12</sup>. The investigation found that the undertakings in question had not violated the law and therefore there was no need to impose administrative fines. However, it was unanimously decided to send the determinations made by the investigation to the Ministry of Treasury and Finance and to the Unfair Price Evaluation Board, which is tasked with taking any necessary measures to protect market balance and consumers against exorbitant price increases and stockpiling practices.

On January 9, 2021, Competition Authority President Birol Küle made statements on digital markets and the Covid-19 crisis. Birol Küle stated that the majority of previous complaints came from the manufacturing and conventional sectors, that there was an increase in the number of complaints during the Covid-19 period, and that there was an excessive increase in complaints regarding pricing behavior, especially in the health, hygiene, and food sectors<sup>13</sup>.

While the competition authorities in Europe and America took decisions to loosen rules regarding cooperation, the Turkish Competition Authority made no such announcements. In addition, no guidelines for the Covid-19 period have been published.

On February 6, 2021, the Decision on Turnover Loss Aid to be Given to Businesses Engaging in Food and Beverage Services Due to the Coronavirus Outbreak<sup>14</sup> came into effect. This decision states that businesses operating in the food and beverage sector that began before or during the 2019 calendar year and have active obligations as of January 27, 2021, and had a turnover of 3 million TL or less in the calendar year 2019 and a decrease of 50% or more in the calendar year 2020 compared to the turnover in that year (with the NACE 56 general activity classification code), and have value added tax liability, will only be able to benefit once from aid for turnover loss.

The turnover loss aid will be 3 percent of the decreasing amount of the turnover of the enterprises in the calendar year 2020, not less than 2 thousand TL and not more than 40 thousand TL, to be paid at once. Value added tax returns

Rekabet Kurumu 5 Ocak 2021’de maske alanında faaliyet gösteren 13 teşebbüs hakkında yürütülen soruşturmanın tamamlandığını ilan etmiştir<sup>12</sup>. Bu ilana göre söz konusu teşebbüslerin kanunu ihlal etmediklerine, dolayısıyla idari para ceza uygulanmasına gerek olmadığına karar verilmiştir. Ancak soruşturma kapsamında yapılan tespitlerin Hazine ve Maliye Bakanlığı ve fahiş fiyat artışı ve stokçuluk uygulamalarına karşı piyasa dengesini ve tüketicileri korumaya yönelik gerekli tedbirleri almak ve bunların uygulanmasını sağlamak ile görevlendirilen Haksız Fiyat Değerlendirme Kurulu’na gönderilmesine oybirliği ile karar verilmiştir.

Rekabet Kurumu Başkanı Birol Küle, 9 Ocak 2021’de dijital pazarlar ve Covid-19 dönemine ilişkin açıklamalarda bulunmuştur. Birol Küle açıklamalarında daha önce şikayetlerin çoğunluğunun imalat sektöründen ve konvansiyonel sektörlerden geldiğini belirtirken, Covid-19 döneminde şikâyet sayısında artış olduğundan ve özellikle sağlık, hijyen, gıda sektörlerinde fiyatlama davranışlarına yönelik şikayetlerde aşırı artış olduğunu belirtmiştir<sup>13</sup>.

Bütün bunların yanında Avrupa’da ve Amerika’daki rekabet otoriteleri iş birliklerine yönelik kuralları gevşeten kararlar alırken, Türkiye’de Rekabet Kurumu iş birliklerine yönelik açıklama yapmamıştır. Ayrıca Covid-19 sürecine yönelik herhangi bir rehber yayınlanmamıştır.

6 Şubat 2021’de Yiyecek ve İçecek Hizmeti Faaliyetlerinde Bulunan İşletmelere Koronavirüs Salgını Nedeniyle Verilecek Ciro Kaybı Desteği Hakkında Karar<sup>14</sup> yürürlüğe konmuştur. Bu karara göre 2019 takvim yılından önce ya da 2019 takvim yılında başladığı işine devam eden ve 27.01.2021 tarihi itibarıyla faal mükellefiyeti bulunan, 2019 takvim yılındaki cirosu 3 milyon TL ve altında olup söz konusu yıldaki cirosuna oranla 2020 takvim yılındaki cirosu %50 ve üzerinde bir oranda azalan yiyecek ve içecek alanında faaliyet gösteren (NACE 56 genel faaliyet sınıflandırması koduna sahip) katma değer vergisi mükellefiyeti olan işletmeler esas faaliyet konusu üzerinden ciro kaybı desteğinden yalnız bir kez faydalanabilecektir.

Ciro kaybı desteği, tek seferde ödenmek üzere 2 bin TL’den az ve 40 bin TL’den fazla olmamak üzere işletmelerin 2020 takvim yılındaki cirolarının 2019 takvim yılındaki cirolarına göre azalan tutarının yüzde 3’ü olacaktır.

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**14** 06.02.2020 tarih, 31387 sayılı RG.



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submitted for the taxation periods in the calendar years 2019 and 2020, as of January 27, 2021, will be taken as the basis for determining business turnover. The tax returns (including a correction declaration) submitted for the periods in 2019 and 2020 after the said date will not be taken into account in the turnover calculation.

Tradesmen and craftsmen and real person merchants eligible for grant aid under the second and third paragraphs of Article 3 of the Presidential Decision on Aid to be given to Tradesmen and Craftsmen and Real Person Merchants due to the Coronavirus Outbreak, dated December 22, 2020 and numbered 3323, and aid for the loss of turnover, stipulated in the Communiqué on Turnover Loss Aid Program and Implementation Principles to be Provided to Enterprises Engaging in Food and Beverage Service Activities Due to the Coronavirus Outbreak, will have the amount of 3 thousand TL deducted from the turnover loss aid provided under the Communiqué<sup>15</sup>.

### III. THE PRACTISES OF OTHER COUNTRIES

A joint statement by the European Competition Network (ECN) on application of competition law during the Covid-19 crisis was published on March 23, 2020<sup>16</sup>. This joint statement states that in addition to advising the competition authorities that business

işletme cirolarının tespitinde 27 Ocak 2021 itibarıyla 2019 ve 2020 takvim yıllarındaki vergilendirme dönemlerine ilişkin verilen katma değer vergisi beyannameleri esas alınacaktır. Söz konusu tarihten sonra 2019 ve 2020 yıllarındaki dönemlere ilişkin verilen beyannameler (düzeltme beyannameleri dahil) ciro hesaplamasında dikkate alınmayacaktır.

Yiyecek ve İçecek Hizmeti Faaliyetlerinde Bulunan İşletmelere Koronavirüs Salgını Nedeniyle Verilecek Ciro Kaybı Desteği Programı ve Uygulama Esasları Hakkında Tebliğ<sup>15</sup> kapsamındaki ciro kaybı desteği ile 22 Aralık 2020 tarihli ve 3323 sayılı Esnaf ve Sanatkarlar ile Gerçek Kişi Tacirlere Koronavirüs Salgını Nedeniyle Verilecek Destekler Hakkında Cumhurbaşkanlığı Kararı'nın 3'üncü maddesinin ikinci ve üçüncü fıkraları kapsamında verilen hibe desteğini birlikte hak eden işletmelerin, Karar kapsamında hak ettikleri 3 bin TL tutar, bu tebliğ kapsamında sağlanacak ciro kaybı desteğinden mahsup edilecek ve varsa kalan meblağ bu işletmelere ciro kaybı desteği olarak verilecektir.

### III. DİĞER ÜLKE UYGULAMALARI

Avrupa Rekabet Ağı'nın Covid-19 krizi sırasında rekabet hukukunun uygulanmasına ilişkin ortak açıklaması 23 Mart 2020'de yayımlanmıştır<sup>16</sup>. Bu açıklamada rekabet otoritelerine Covid-19 döneminde işletmelerin iş birliği yapmasının tüketicilerin yararına ola-

cooperation in the Covid-19 period would benefit consumers, it would not hesitate to take measures against businesses trying to abuse the current situation. Also, advice has been given to competition authorities on how to deal with the Covid-19 period. Following this statement, many countries such as England<sup>17</sup>, Italy<sup>18</sup>, Spain<sup>19</sup>, Portugal<sup>20</sup>, Greece<sup>21</sup>, Finland<sup>22</sup>, France<sup>23</sup>, Czech Republic<sup>24</sup>, Bulgaria<sup>25</sup>, Romania<sup>26</sup>, Lithuania<sup>27</sup>, Denmark<sup>28</sup>, Austria<sup>29</sup> and Switzerland<sup>30</sup> declared that they support this joint statement. In addition, the member states made similar decisions in accordance with the decisions of the European Competition Network.

The European Competition Network has repeatedly introduced regulations regarding the cooperation of enterprises during the Covid-19 crisis. For example, on 8 April 2020, the EU

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31 Communication from the Commission Temporary Framework for assessing antitrust issues related to business cooperation in response to situations of urgency stemming from the current COVID-19 outbreak 2020/C 116 I 02

The European Competition Network has repeatedly introduced regulations regarding the cooperation of enterprises during the Covid-19 crisis.

Avrupa Rekabet Ağı, Covid-19 sürecinde örnek olabilecek şekilde art arda işletmelerin iş birliklerine ilişkin düzenlemeler getirmiştir.

Commission published the Communication from the Commission Temporary Framework for assessing antitrust issues related to business cooperation in response to situations of urgency stemming from the current Covid-19 outbreak<sup>31</sup>. With this temporary framework, the focus is on the cooperation of companies in making up for any shortages in basic scarce products and services, especially pharmaceuti-

iş birliklerine ilişkin düzenlemeler getirmiştir. Örneğin, AB Komisyonu 8 Nisan 2020'de Covid-19'dan kaynaklanan acil durumlara yanıt olarak ticari iş birliğine ilişkin rekabet sorunlarını değerlendirmek için geçici çerçeveyi<sup>31</sup> yayınlamıştır. Bu geçici çerçeve ile başta ilaç ve tıbbi ekipman olmak üzere temel kıt ürün ve hizmetlerin eksikliğini gidermek için teşebbüslerin iş birliğine odaklan-





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cals and medical equipment. An exception was made to the competition law rules for cooperation in the milk and dairy products, meat, potato, and flower sectors on May 4, 2020<sup>32</sup>.

While, on April 21, 2020, the Netherlands relaxed the rules of cooperation for health insurance companies in order to provide financial support to those providing services in the health sector<sup>33</sup>, on June 1, 2020, Italy allowed the cooperation of pharmacies and mask suppliers two companies for the distribution of disposable surgical masks through pharmacies<sup>34</sup>.

There has been an excessive increase in the demand for health products such as masks and disinfectants since the start of the Covid-19 crisis. Some enterprises wishing to take advantage of the current situation have unfairly increased the price of products in excessive demand. Competition authorities have taken some actions in order to prevent this artificial price increase.

Investigations were opened in Spain<sup>35</sup> and Greece<sup>36</sup> regarding the price increases in health products. The Greek Competition Authority published interim results<sup>37</sup> of the investigation on hospital equipment. According to these interim results, the investigation determined that five of the suppliers examined were potentially acting against competition law, while two of them were found to be acting directly against competition law.

One of the competition law practices most adversely affected by Covid-19 has been the control of mergers and acquisitions due to the difficulty of collecting information and documents and the fact that many employees began working remotely. Many competition authorities requested the postponement of merger and acquisition notifications and electronic transmission of information and documents.

On March 16, 2020, the European Commission asked companies to postpone their merger notifications<sup>38</sup>. It was stated that the information collection processes were disrupted due to Covid-19 but were still operating for companies with important reasons and on April 7, 2020 enterprises were encouraged to apply electronically<sup>39</sup>.

mıştır. 4 Mayıs 2020'de süt ve süt ürünleri, et, patates ve çiçek sektörlerinde iş birliğine yönelik rekabet hukuku kurallarına istisna getirmiştir<sup>32</sup>.

Hollanda 21 Nisan 2020'de sağlık sektöründe hizmet sunanlara finansal destek sağlanması amacıyla sağlık sigortası yapan şirketlere iş birliği kurallarını gevşetirken<sup>33</sup>, İtalya ise 1 Haziran 2020'de tek kullanımlık cerrahi maskelerin eczaneler aracılığıyla dağıtımı için eczaneler ile maske tedarikçisi iki şirketin iş birliğine izin vermiştir<sup>34</sup>.

Covid-19 sürecinin başlamasıyla birlikte maske, dezenfektan gibi sağlık ürünlerinin talebinde aşırı artış olmuştur. Mevcut durumdan istifade etmek isteyen teşebbüsler, talebinde aşırı artış olan ürünlerin fiyatlarını adil olmayan bir şekilde artırmıştır. Bu suni fiyat artışını engellemek amacıyla rekabet otoriteleri harekete geçerek birtakım aksiyonlar almıştır.

İspanya<sup>35</sup>'da ve Yunanistan<sup>36</sup>'da sağlık ürünlerindeki fiyat artışlarına ilişkin soruşturma başlatılmıştır. Yunanistan Rekabet Otoritesi başlatılan hastane ekipmanlarına ilişkin soruşturmanın ara sonuçlarını<sup>37</sup> yayımlamıştır. Yunanistan Rekabet Otoritesi'nin yaptığı soruşturmanın ara sonuçlarına göre; incelenen tedarikçilerin beşinin potansiyel olarak rekabet hukukuna aykırı davrandığı tespit edilirken, ikisinin doğrudan rekabet hukukuna aykırı davrandığı tespit edilmiştir.

Bilgi-belge toplamanın zorlaşması ve birçok çalışanın uzaktan çalışmaya başlaması nedeniyle Covid-19'un olumsuz olarak en çok etkilediği rekabet hukuku uygulamalarından biri birleşme ve devralmaların kontrolü olmuştur. Birçok rekabet otoritesi birleşme devralma bildirimlerinin ertelenmesini veya hut bilgi-belgelerin elektronik yolla iletilmesini talep etmiştir.

Avrupa Komisyonu 16 Mart 2020'de şirketlerden birleşme bildirimlerini ertelemelerini istemiştir<sup>38</sup>. 7 Nisan 2020'de ise Covid-19 nedeniyle bilgi toplama işlemlerinin aksadığını, ancak buna rağmen önemli gerekçeler gösterebilen firmalar için göreve hazır olduğunu belirtmiş ve firmaları elektronik başvuruya teşvik etmiştir<sup>39</sup>.

The UK Competition Authority made some changes to working style<sup>40</sup>. These changes accepted that personnel would work from home for as long as possible, all meetings would be held via video conference or teleconference, and that the legal periods would continue in the same way. At the same time, a guide on mergers and acquisitions was published<sup>41</sup>.

The French Competition Authority announced on March 27, 2020 a one-month suspension of legal periods due to the difficulty of collecting information<sup>42</sup>. A press release on May 18, 2020 stated that the legal deadlines would restart<sup>43</sup>.

The Portuguese Competition Authority imposed a fine on a company in the health sector for acquiring another health sector company without permission. However, in order not to disrupt the service provided, the fine was split into four installments<sup>44</sup>.



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<sup>47</sup> Communication from the Commission Amendment to the Temporary Framework for State aid measures to support the economy in the current COVID-19 outbreak 2020/C 112 I/01; Communication from the Commission Amendment to the Temporary Framework for State aid measures to support the economy in the current COVID-19 outbreak 2020/C 164/03; Communication from the Commission Third amendment to the Temporary Framework for State aid measures to support the economy in the current COVID-19 outbreak 2020/C 218/03; Communication from the Commission 4th Amendment to the Temporary Framework for State aid measures to support the economy in the current COVID-19 outbreak and amendment to the Annex to the Communication from the Commission to the Member States on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to short term export-credit insurance 2020/C 340 I/01; Communication from the Commission Fifth Amendment to the Temporary Framework for State aid measures to support the economy in the current COVID-19 outbreak and amendment to the Annex to the Communication from the Commission to the Member States on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to short-term export-credit insurance 2021/C 34/06

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<sup>50</sup> Department of Justice Office of Public Affairs, "Department of Justice Issues Business Review Letter to Medical Supplies Distributors Supporting Project Airbridge Under Expedited Procedure for COVID-19 Pandemic Response", <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/department-justice-issues-business-review-letter-medical-supplies-distributors-supporting> (Access Date, 28.01.2021).

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The postponement of merger acquisition applications due to competition authorities' measures such as working remotely to maintain social distance resulted in the prolongation of the process and delays in operations. The European Commission issued a statement on March 13, 2020 stating that states can take state aid measures in accordance with EU rules to reduce the economic effects of Covid-19<sup>45</sup>. This statement announced that member states' implementation of measures such as subsidies and tax suspensions based on EU rules can help to eliminate the liquidity problem. The Communication from the Commission Temporary Framework for State aid measures to support the economy in the current Covid-19 outbreak<sup>46</sup> was published on March 19, 2020. Under this framework, EU member states can grant SMEs up to 800,000 euros in grants or refundable credit/tax assistance, and subsidized bank loans. This framework was subsequently expanded five times to further support Covid-19 research and the economy<sup>47</sup>. Many member states have announced measures to support citizens and companies to reduce the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic<sup>48</sup>.

Görüldüğü üzere rekabet otoritelerince sosyal mesafenin korunması amacıyla uzaktan çalışma gibi önlemlerin alınması; birleşme devralma başvurularının ertelenmesi, sürecin uzaması ve işlemlerin gecikmesi sonucunu doğurmuştur. Avrupa Komisyonu 13 Mart 2020'de Covid-19'un ekonomik etkilerini azaltmak için AB kurallarına uygun olarak devletlerin tedbir alabileceğini söyleyen bir bildiri yayınlamıştır<sup>45</sup>. Bu bildiride üye devletlerin AB kurallarına dayanarak sübvansiyon ve vergilerin askıya alınması gibi tedbirlerin uygulanmasının likidite sıkıntısının giderilmesine yardımcı olabileceği ifade edilmiştir. 19 Mart 2020'de ise Covid-19 Salgın Döneminde Devlet Yardımı Tedbirleri İçin Geçici Çerçeve<sup>46</sup> yayımlanmıştır. Bu çerçeveye AB üye devletlerinin KOBİ'lere 800.000 Avroya kadar hibe veya geri ödenebilir kredi/vergi yardımı, sübvansiyon edilmiş banka kredileri verebilmesi sağlanmıştır. Daha sonrasında Covid-19 araştırmalarını ve ekonomiyi daha da desteklemek için bu çerçeve beş kez genişletilmiştir<sup>47</sup>. Birçok üye devlet Covid-19 pandemisinin ekonomik etkisini azaltmak için vatandaşlara ve şirketlere destek tedbirlerini açıklamıştır<sup>48</sup>.



On March 24, 2020, the American Federal Trade Commission and the Justice Department published a joint guide<sup>49</sup> on business cooperation to protect the health and safety of Americans during the Covid-19 outbreak. This guide announced that cooperation requests made by enterprises in the production and distribution of Covid-19-related products will be concluded within seven days. Thereupon, business review letters were published supporting the cooperation of medical supplies distributors<sup>50</sup>, critical medicine distributors<sup>51</sup>, pork producers<sup>52</sup>, antibody producers<sup>53</sup>, and plasma therapy companies<sup>54</sup>.

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Görüldüğü üzere rekabet otoritelerince sosyal mesafenin korunması amacıyla uzaktan çalışma gibi önlemlerin alınması; birleşme devralma başvurularının ertelenmesi, sürecin uzaması ve işlemlerin gecikmesi sonucunu doğurmuştur.

The Canadian Competition Bureau announced on April 8, 2020 that it was aware of the difficulties faced by businesses and would avoid investigating bona fide cooperations<sup>55</sup>. On March 9, 2020, the US Department of Justice warned the business world of violations of competition laws in the production, distribution, and sale of health products<sup>56</sup>. The then US President, Donald Trump,

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## PART 2

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issued an executive order authorizing the Department of Health and Human Services to fine those who impose exorbitant prices on critical health products<sup>57</sup>. In addition, on the basis of the exorbitant price gouging in force in some states of the United States, investigations were opened into exorbitant prices in many states<sup>58</sup>. In states where there is no price gouging law, investigations were conducted based on consumer laws<sup>59</sup>. On the other hand, the Federal Trade Commission declared that seeking to take advantage of consumers' concerns and fears regarding coronavirus, exigent circumstances, or financial distress would not be tolerated<sup>60</sup>. The US Government created the Covid-19 Hoarding and Price Gouging Task Force to combat the overpricing of critical products during the crisis<sup>61</sup> in order to prevent the stockpiling or selling at exorbitant prices of health and medical products, including personal protective equipment, respirators, respirators, sterilization services, and disinfection devices.

Sağlık Bakanlığı'na kritik olarak belirledikleri sağlık ürünlerinde fahiş fiyat uygulayanlara cezai yaptırım yetkisi vermiştir<sup>57</sup>. Ayrıca Amerika Birleşik Devletleri eyaletlerinde yürürlükte olan fahiş fiyat uygulamasına yönelik yasalara dayanılarak birçok eyalette fahiş fiyatlara yönelik soruşturmalar başlatılmıştır<sup>58</sup>. Fahiş fiyat uygulamasına yönelik yasa bulunmayan eyaletlerde ise tüketici kanunlarına dayanılarak soruşturmalar yürütülmüştür<sup>59</sup>. Federal Ticaret Komisyonu ise tüketicilerin Covid-19 pandemisi ile ilgili olarak endişelerinden ve korkularından, zorlayıcı koşullar veya mali sorunlardan yararlanmaya çalışan işletmelerin hoş görülmeceğini açıklamıştır<sup>60</sup>. ABD Hükümeti kriz sırasında kritik ürünlerin aşırı fiyatlandırılmasıyla mücadele etmek için COVID-19 Stokçuluk ve Fahiş Fiyat Görev Gücü'nü oluşturmuştur<sup>61</sup>. Böylece kişisel koruyucu ekipmanlar, solunum maskeleri, solunum cihazları, sterilizasyon hizmetleri ve dezenfekte cihazları dahil olmak üzere sağlık ve medikal ürünlerin istiflenmesinin veya fahiş fiyatlara satılmasının önüne geçilmek istenmektedir.



The US Federal Trade Commission announced on March 13, 2020 that they temporarily switched to the electronic application system for merger and acquisition notifications<sup>62</sup> and on March 17, 2020, announced that the commission had begun to work remotely<sup>63</sup>.

On March 18, 2020, the head of the Canadian Competition Bureau stated that the bureau had begun to work remotely and that the documents to be transmitted should be sent as digital copies rather than hard copies. A letter was published recommending that parties to mergers and acquisitions contact the bureau at the earliest possible date due to the difficulty of the bureau's contact with the market as many business people were also working remotely<sup>64</sup>.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Competition authorities have been taking measures to reduce the negative effects of Covid-19 on competitive environments. Many competition authorities in Europe have published guidelines for the Covid-19 process. Certain actions have been taken by the competition authorities of many countries to adapt working methods to the current situation. On the other hand, while European states have taken measures such as state aid to reduce the negative effects of Covid-19 on the economy, the United States seems to lag behind Europe in this regard. Also, although during the Covid-19 crisis competition authorities in America and Europe have loosened their cooperation rules for supply chains, especially in the food and health sector, time will show whether or not this will work in Turkey.

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Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nde Federal Ticaret Komisyonu 13 Mart 2020'de birleşme ve devralma bildirimleri için geçici olarak elektronik başvuru sistemine geçtiklerini duyurmuştu<sup>62</sup>. 17 Mart 2020'de ise komisyonun uzaktan çalışmaya geçtiği duyurulmuştur<sup>63</sup>.

Kanada Rekabet Bürosu başkanı 18 Mart 2020'de büronun uzaktan çalışmaya başladığını belirterek, iletilecek belgelerin basılı kopya yerine dijital kopya olarak gönderilmesi gerektiğini ifade etmiştir. Birleşme ve devralmaların kontrolünde ise birçok iş insanı da uzaktan çalıştığı için; büronun piyasa ile olan temasının zorlaştığından bahisle, birleşme taraflarının mümkün olan en erken tarihte büroyla iletişime geçmesini tavsiye ettiği bir mektup yayımlamıştır<sup>64</sup>.

## IV. SONUÇ

Rekabet otoriteleri Covid-19'un rekabet ortamlarına olumsuz etkilerini azaltmak için tedbir almaktadır. Avrupa'daki pek çok rekabet otoritesi Covid-19 sürecine yönelik rehberler yayımlamıştır. Çalışma yöntemlerini, içinde bulunduğumuz bu sürece uygun hale getirme konusunda birçok ülkenin rekabet otoriteleri tarafından belirli aksiyonların alındığı gözlemlenmiştir. Öte yandan Avrupa devletleri Covid-19'un ekonomiye olan olumsuz etkilerini sınırlandırmak amacıyla devlet desteği tedbiri alırken, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri, bu konuda Avrupa'nın gerisinde kalmış gözükmektedir. Yine Amerika'da ve Avrupa'da rekabet kurumlarının Covid-19 sürecinde özellikle gıda ve sağlık sektöründe tedarik zincirlerine yönelik iş birliği kuralarını gevşettiği görülse de, Türkiye'de bu yönde bir çalışma yapılıp yapılmayacağını zaman gösterecektir.



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