The Autorité de la concurrence clears the acquisition of Toulouse-Blagnac airport by the Eiffage group

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On 8 November 2019, the Eiffage group notified the Autorité of its plan to acquire sole control of Toulouse-Blagnac Airport ("ATB"), which operates the Toulouse airport (31).

By a decision dated 11 December 2019, the Autorité cleared the repurchase of the interest in ATB previously held by the Chinese company Casil Europe by the Eiffage group without any special conditions.

Markets examined

As Eiffage was already a concessionaire of Lille-Lesquin airport from 1 January 2020, the Autorité examined the impact of the transaction on the European market for the granting of airport management concessions[1], on which the competition takes place at the time of the public bidding procedure.

In addition, the Autorité also examined whether the transaction is likely to produce vertical effects[2] insofar as it concerns the takeover of an airport concession company by a group active in the public works sector.

The Autorité did not identify any competition concerns that may arise after the transaction.

Parties to the transaction, Eiffage and ATB, are simultaneously active on the market for the granting of airport concessions. However, given their accumulated market share, which remains low, any risk of harm to competition could be ruled out.

The Autorité also analysed the effects of the merger on works contracts and the maintenance of airport infrastructures as vertical effects (possibility for Eiffage to use its position to reserve to itself certain construction sites in the airport).

At the end of its analysis, the Autorité ruled out any risk of harm to competition in these markets, given that almost all the contracts awarded by ATB are subject to an advertising or tendering procedure supervised by the provisions of the public procurement code, the Eiffage group does not constitute a major supplier of ATB and represents, each year, only a negligible amount of ATB purchases.

Given these elements, the Autorité cleared the transaction without commitment.

1 The market for granting an airport management concession is upstream of that of the operation of airports.

2Vertical effects are studied when the transaction brings together actors present at different levels of the value chain (for example a producer who takes over a distributor).

> See text of decision 19-DCC-229 of 11 December 2019

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