The Autorité clears the takeover of the group Europa by Comexposium

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The *Autorité de la concurrence* has examined the proposed acquisition of full control of the group Europa, which is active in the organisation of conferences and other events sector, by Comexposium.

The parties to the transaction

Comexposium is jointly owned and controlled by the Paris – Île-de-France Chamber of Commerce and Industry (hereafter the "CCIR") and Predica. It specialises in the organisation of trade fairs and shows covering almost twenty sectors of activity, for the general public and professionals. To a limited extent, Comexposium is also active in the organisation of conferences and other events.

Europa Group is mainly active in the organisation of conferences and other events, particularly in the medical sector. It also offers its clients services related to the organisation of conferences, such as multimedia materials, the welcoming of conference participants or hotel booking services. Europa Group is also active in publishing in the medical sector and in press and public relations specialising in the medical field.

The transaction does not affect competition in the conference organisation markets

To analyse the effect of this acquisition on competition in the conference sector, the *Autorité de la concurrence* looked at two markets in which Comexposium and Europa Group are both active.

In the market for the organisation of conferences and other events (conferences, exhibitions, symposia or conventions), which differs from the market for the organisation of fairs and shows, the *Autorité* found that there were very few overlaps between the parties' activities.

The transaction also gives rise to a very limited additional market share in the market for the provision of "competitive" ancillary services related to the organisation of conferences (such as, for example, welcoming conference participants, catering, etc.). The *Autorité* noted that these "competitive" services are not to be confused with "mandatory" and "exclusive" ancillary services (e.g. electrical connections and plumbing, slinging, signalling, site security, etc.), which are directly linked to the infrastructure of the site concerned and therefore come under site management.

The *Autorité* has ruled out any risk of foreclosure between conference organisation and site management activities

The *Autorité* also examined the upstream market for the management of sites used to host conferences and other events. The CCIR is active in this market through the company Viparis, which it jointly controls alongside Unibail. Viparis owns and operates several convention venues in the Paris region, such as the Palais des Congrès de Paris, Paris Expo Porte de Versailles and Les Salles du Carrousel.

In particular, the *Autorité* found that Viparis faces competition from large European venues capable of hosting events of significant scale. In France, the *Autorité* notes in particular the competitive pressure exerted by sites such as Maison de la Chimie, Palais de la Bourse, Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie and the Disneyland complex, which makes it possible to meet the demand for medium-sized events. Since this alternative competitive offer exists, the *Autorité*

found that a strategy of foreclosing conference venues in favour of conferences organised by Europa Group would have a limited effect on the market.

The *Autorité* has ruled out any risk of harm to competition in relation to Europa Group's publishing activities in the medical sector

The ***Autorité*** examined whether the transaction was likely to enable the new entity to promote the conferences organised by Comexposium through Europa Group's publishing activities in the medical sector, in order to give them greater exposure than the conferences organised by the parties' competitors in this market. Noting Europa Group's weak position in the publishing market for the medical sector, the ***Autorité*** considered that such a strategy would have a limited effect on the market in any event.

The ***Autorité*** therefore cleared the transaction without subjecting it to special conditions.

DECISION 20-DCC-64 OF 07 MAY 2020

regarding the exclusive takeover of Europa Group by Comexposium

Access

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