

ISTANBUL COMPETITION FORUM ANNUAL WEBINAR

in cooperation with UNCTAD

16.12.2020

13.00 Geneva, Switzerland

15.00 Istanbul, Turkey

17.00 Tashkent, Uzbekistan

“Competition Enforcement in Times of Covid-19”

COVID-19 pandemic has been a major shock to our both daily lives and economies and although it has been almost a year since it started, people and the governments still struggle with its consequences. Once it has been understood that the duration of the Covid-19 crisis will be long, governments use all of their power not only to overcome the consequences but also to adopt their policies and actions to this new normal.

Competition law enforcement is inevitably affected from the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis. Challenges faced by the competition law enforcers has been on many different levels from remote-working conditions to how to handle on-going and new investigations at the times of lock-down; from changing policy priorities to deciding on which priorities to focus on helping to overcome the crisis.

The first ICF webinar on current and future challenges faced by competition authorities to protect and promote competition during and after COVID-19 pandemic was held in cooperation with UNCTAD on June 2, 2020, hosting more than three hundred participants, including representatives from international organizations, national competition authorities and academia. Now, in this Annual Webinar, we intend to deepen this discussion and focus on the competition law enforcement changes and challenges faced since the beginning of the crisis.

We have witnessed that in these extraordinary circumstances caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the demand and supply shocks especially in the essential products markets led the competing firms to look for cooperation and collaboration arrangements with one another. Although these may be beneficial to the consumers in terms of accessing to essential goods and services, these initiatives might have anti-competitive effects in the medium to longer term. Moreover, supply and demand changes have also led some firms to engage in exploitative pricing strategies such as price gauging. Regarding pricing behavior, there are a number of questions in terms of competition law enforcement since it might be difficult to differentiate between legal and illegal practices. Other than that, tools of competition agencies for intervening to excessive prices and potential intersection with consumer protection laws and agencies is another challenge faced in this period. Last but not the least, shrinking economies created stress on some sectors, which resulted in firm failures and related mergers. The risk of higher market concentration and power in some markets together with the ongoing economic uncertainty, merger reviews have been more challenging for the agencies.

**Turkish Competition Authority and UNCTAD: Istanbul Competition Forum Annual Webinar
15–16 December 2020**

In this webinar, we expect to find answers to the question of what changes and challenges the competition agencies have faced and do face in their competition law enforcement during Covid-19 crisis.

- What changes and challenges have been faced after the economic disruptions of the Covid-19 pandemic in terms of competition law enforcement?
- In which ways have competition law enforcement contributed to economic recovery initiations of governments?
- Have there been any jurisdictional intersection between competition laws/agencies and other regulatory bodies such as consumer protection laws/agencies?
- What are the main lessons learnt by competition agencies from their experience with such a crisis?
- How will the new landscape for competition law enforcement be after the Covid-19 pandemic?
- What is the role of international cooperation in the aftermath of COVID-19 crisis?