

# Dominance

*Contributing editors*

Thomas Janssens and Thomas Wessely



2016

GETTING THE  
DEAL THROUGH

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# Dominance 2016

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# Turkey

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## General

### 1 Legislation

#### What is the legislation applying specifically to the behaviour of dominant firms?

The main legislation applying specifically to the behaviour of dominant firms is article 6 of Law No. 4054 on the Protection of Competition (Law No. 4054). It provides that ‘any abuse on the part of one or more undertakings, individually or through joint agreements or practices, of a dominant position in a market for goods or services within the whole or part of the country is unlawful and prohibited.’

Article 6 provides a non-exhaustive list of specific forms of abuse, which is, to some extent, similar to article 102 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) (formerly article 82 of the EC Treaty). Accordingly, such abuse may, in particular, consist of:

- (a) *directly or indirectly preventing entries into the market or hindering competitor activity in the market;*
- (b) *directly or indirectly engaging in discriminatory behaviour by applying dissimilar conditions to equivalent transactions with similar trading parties;*
- (c) *making the conclusion of contracts subject to acceptance by the other parties of restrictions concerning resale conditions such as the purchase of other goods and services or; acceptance by the intermediary purchasers of displaying other goods and services or maintenance of a minimum resale price;*
- (d) *distorting competition in other markets by taking advantage of financial, technological and commercial superiorities in the dominated market;*
- (e) *limiting production, markets or technical development to the prejudice of consumers.*

### 2 Non-dominant to dominant firm

#### Does the law cover conduct through which a non-dominant company becomes dominant?

The article 6 prohibition applies only to dominant undertakings. In similar fashion to article 102 of the TFEU, dominance itself is not prohibited, only the abuse of dominance is.

Structural changes through which a non-dominant firm attempts to become dominant (eg, by acquisition of other businesses) are regulated by the merger control rules in article 7 of Law No. 4054. Nevertheless, a mere demonstration of post-transaction dominance is not sufficient for enforcement even under the Turkish merger control rules, and a ‘restriction of effective competition’ element is required. As for the dominance enforcement rules, ‘attempted monopolisation or dominance’ is not recognised under the Turkish competition legislation.

### 3 Object of legislation

#### Is the object of the legislation and the underlying standard a strictly economic one or does it protect other interests?

Influenced by the Turkish Competition Authority’s publication in 2001 of *The Prime Objective of Turkish Competition Law Enforcement from a Law & Economics Perspective* (Gönenç Gürkaynak), the economic rationale

is more frequently quoted in Turkish competition law circles as ‘the ultimate object of maximising total welfare by targeting economic efficiency’. Regulations that were enacted in previous years, albeit not directly applicable to dominance cases, place greater emphasis on ‘consumer welfare’ (see Communiqué No. 2010/4 on Mergers and Acquisitions Subject to the Approval of the Competition Board). Nevertheless, since the legislative history and written justification of Law No. 4054 contain clear references to non-economical interests as well (such as the protection of small and medium-sized businesses, etc), some of these policy interests are still pursued in Turkey, especially in dominance cases, alongside the economic object.

It would only be fair to observe that the Competition Board (the Board) has been successful in blending economic and non-economic interests, and preventing one from overriding the other in its precedents.

### 4 Non-dominant firms

#### Are there any rules applying to the unilateral conduct of non-dominant firms?

Closely modelled on article 102 of the TFEU, article 6 of Law No. 4054 is theoretically designed to apply to the unilateral conduct of dominant firms only. When unilateral conduct is in question, dominance in a market is a condition precedent to the application of the prohibition laid down in article 6. That said, the indications in practice show that the Board is increasingly and alarmingly inclined to assume that purely unilateral conduct of a non-dominant firm in a vertical supply relationship could be interpreted as giving rise to an infringement of article 4 of Law No. 4054, which deals with restrictive agreements. With a novel interpretation, by way of asserting that a vertical relationship entails an implied consent on the part of the buyer and that this allows article 4 enforcement against a ‘discriminatory practice of even a non-dominant undertaking’ or ‘refusal to deal of even a non-dominant undertaking’ under article 4, the Board has in the past attempted to condemn unilateral conduct that should not normally be prohibited since it is not engaged in by a dominant firm. Owing to this new and rather peculiar concept (that is, article 4 enforcement becoming a fallback to article 6 enforcement if the entity engaging in unilateral conduct is not dominant), certain unilateral conduct that can only be subject to article 6 (dominance provisions) enforcement, (ie, if the engaging entity were dominant) has been reviewed and enforced against under article 4 (restrictive agreement rules).

Recently, this has begun to allow a breach of article 6 (dominance) by article 4 (restrictive agreements) behaviour. There are several decisions where the Board warned non-dominant entities to refrain from imposing dissimilar trade conditions to its distributors or did not allow a non-dominant entity to unilaterally adopt a supply regime whereby counterparts would be required to meet minimum objective criteria. Such decisions are all alarming signs of this new trend. The Board’s *3M Turkey* and *Turkcell* decisions are the latest examples of the same trend. In *3M Turkey*, the Board analysed whether 3M Turkey, which was not found to be in a dominant position in the work safety products market, discriminated against some of its dealers under article 4 (restrictive agreements) and not under article 6 (dominance) (25 June 2014, 14-22/461-203). 3M Turkey was cleared without a fine. In *Turkcell*, the Board assessed whether Turkcell’s (Turkey’s dominant GSM operator) exclusive contracts foreclosed the market, based on both article 6 and article 4 (13 August 2014, 14-28/585-253). The Board found that Turkcell did not violate either article 6 or article 4.

## 5 Sector-specific control

### Is dominance regulated according to sector?

Law No. 4054 does not recognise any industry-specific abuses or defences. However, certain sectoral regulators have concurrent powers to diagnose and control dominance in some sectors. For instance, the secondary legislation issued by the Turkish Information and Telecommunication Technologies Authority prohibits 'firms with significant market power' from engaging in discriminatory behaviour between companies seeking access to their network, and unless justified, rejecting requests for access, interconnection or facility-sharing. These firms are also required to make an 'account separation' for pricing the access to their networks on a cost basis. Similar restrictions and requirements also exist for energy companies.

## 6 Status of sector-specific provisions

### What is the relationship between the sector-specific provisions and the general abuse of dominance legislation?

The sector-specific rules and regulations bring about structural market remedies for the effective functioning of the free market. They do not imply any dominance-control mechanisms. The Competition Authority is the only regulatory body that investigates and condemns abuses of dominance.

## 7 Enforcement record

### How frequently is the legislation used in practice?

Cases of abuse of dominance are very frequent in the Turkish competition enforcement. In 2014, the Board decided on a total of no fewer than 163 antitrust infringement cases, 48 of which related to article 6 and 24 of which were mixed (mostly the combination of articles 6 and 4: restrictive agreements, concerted practices and decisions of trade associations). The figures for 2015 are, as yet, unavailable.

Some of the most important cases in the history of Turkish competition law enforcement involved article 6 infringements (eg, *Turkcell* (20 July 2001; 01-35/347-95); *Türk Telekom* (2 October 2002, 02-60/755-305); *Türk Telekom/TTNet* (19 November 2008, 08-65/1055-411); *Turkcell* (23 December 2009, 09-60/1490-379); *Turkcell* (6 June 2011, 11-34/742-230); *Doğan Media Group* (30 March 2011, 11-18/341-103); *Un Ro-Ro AŞ* (1 October 2012, 12-47/1413-474); *Frito Lay* (29 August 2013, 13-49/711-300); *Turkcell* (19 December 2013, 13-71/963-410); *Tüpraş* (17 January 2014, 14-03/60-24) and *Mey İçki* (12 June 2014, 14-21/410-178), which resulted in substantial monetary fines imposed on the incumbent firms. The Board imposed a record-breaking monetary fine against *Tüpraş*, just over 412 million Turkish lira, which equals 1 per cent of *Tüpraş*'s annual turnover for 2013, for abusing its dominant position through excessive pricing practices.

## 8 Economics

### What is the role of economics in the application of the dominance provisions?

The Competition Authority established an economic analysis division in the previous years where case handlers with a background in economics are devoted solely to the economic analysis of antitrust matters. Although past economic expert witness submissions of defending undertakings were not even evaluated or referred to in the reasoned decisions of the Board, the establishment of the new economic analysis division can be viewed as a positive step towards a more economics-oriented article 6 enforcement.

## 9 Scope of application of dominance provisions

### To whom do the dominance provisions apply? To what extent do they apply to public entities?

Dominance provisions (and other provisions of Law No. 4054) apply to all companies and individuals, to the extent that they act as an 'undertaking' within the meaning of Law No. 4054. An 'undertaking' is defined as a single integrated economic unit capable of acting independently in the market to produce, market or sell goods and services. Law No. 4054, therefore, applies to individuals and corporations alike, if they act as an undertaking. State-owned entities also fall within the scope of the application of article 6. While the Board placed too much emphasis on the 'capable of acting independently' aspect of this definition to exclude state-owned

entities from the application of Law No. 4054 at the very early stages of the Turkish competition law enforcement (see, for example, *Sugar Factories* (13 August 1998, 78/603-113)), the enforcement trends made it clear that the Board now uses a much broader and more accurate view of the definition, in a manner that also covers public entities and sport federations (see, for example, *Turkish Coal Enterprise* (19 October 2004, 04-66/949-227) and *Turkish Underwater Sports Federation* (3 February 2011, 11-07/126-38)). Therefore, state-owned entities are also subject to the Competition Authority's enforcement, pursuant to the prohibition laid down in article 6.

## 10 Definition of dominance

### How is dominance defined?

Article 3 of Law No. 4054 defines dominance as 'the power of one or more undertakings in a certain market to determine economic parameters such as price, output, supply and distribution, independently from competitors and customers'. Enforcement trends show that the Board is increasingly inclined to somewhat broaden the scope of application of the article 6 prohibition by diluting the 'independence from competitors and customers' element of the definition to infer dominance even in cases of dependence or interdependence (see, for example, *Anadolu Cam* (1 December 2004, 04-76/1086-271) and *Warner Bros* (24 March 2005, 05-18/224-66)).

The Board considers a high market share as the most indicative factor of dominance. Nevertheless, it also takes account of other factors (such as legal or economic barriers to entry, portfolio power and financial power of the incumbent firm) in assessing and inferring dominance.

## 11 Market definition

### What is the test for market definition?

The test for market definition does not differ from the concept used for merger control purposes. The Board issued the Guidelines on the Definition of the Relevant Market (Guidelines) on 10 January 2008, with the goal of stating, as clearly as possible, the method used for defining a market and the criteria followed for taking a decision by the Board, in order to minimise the uncertainties undertakings may face. The Guidelines is closely modelled on the Commission Notice on the Definition of Relevant Market for the Purposes of Community Competition Law (97/C 372/03). The Guidelines applies to both merger control and dominance cases. The Guidelines consider demand-side substitution as the primary standpoint of market definition. They also consider supply-side substitution and potential competition as secondary factors.

## 12 Market-share threshold

### Is there a market-share threshold above which a company will be presumed to be dominant?

Although not directly applicable to dominance cases, the Guidelines on Horizontal Mergers confirm that companies with market shares in excess of 50 per cent may be presumed to be dominant. The Competition Authority's Guidelines on the Assessment of Exclusionary Abusive Conduct by Dominant Undertakings (Guidelines on Exclusionary Abuses), published on 29 January 2014, and the Board's past and recent precedents, make it clear that an undertaking with a market share lower than 40 per cent is unlikely to be in a dominant position (paragraph 12 of the Guidelines on Exclusionary Abuses and the Board's decisions such as *Mediamarkt*, 12 May 2010, 10-36/575-205; *Pepsi Cola*, 5 August 2010, 10-52/956-335 and *Egetek*, 30 September 2010, 10-62/1286-487). That said, the Board's decisions and Guidelines on Exclusionary Abuses are clear that market shares are the primary indicator to the dominant position, but not the only one. The barriers to entry, the market structure, the competitors' market positions and other market dynamics, as the case may be, should also be considered.

## 13 Collective dominance

### Is collective dominance covered by the legislation? If so, how is it defined?

Collective dominance is covered by the Turkish competition legislation. The wording 'any abuse on the part of one or more undertakings' of article 6 clearly prohibits abuses of collective dominance (see question 1). Turkish competition law precedents on collective dominance are neither abundant nor sufficiently mature to allow for a clear inference of a set of minimum conditions under which collective dominance would be alleged. That said,



the Board has considered it necessary to establish 'an economic link' for a finding of abuse of collective dominance (see, for example, *Biryay* (17 July 2000, 00-26/292-162) and *Turkcell/Telsim* (9 June 2003, 03-40/432-186)).

#### 14 Dominant purchasers

**Does the legislation also apply to dominant purchasers? If so, are there any differences compared with the application of the law to dominant suppliers?**

While the law does not contain a specific reference to dominant purchasers, or a monopsony market, dominant purchasers may also be caught by the legislation, if and to the extent their conduct amounts to an abuse of their dominant position.

The enforcement track record indicates that no article 6 cases involved a finding of infringement and imposition of monetary fines on dominant purchasers. However, the Board did not decline jurisdiction over claims of abuse by dominant purchasers in the past (see, for example, *ÇEAS* (10 November 2003, 03-72/874-373)). Agreements to exert exploitative purchasing power between non-dominant firms have also been condemned under article 4 (*Cherry Exporters* (24 July 2007, 07-60/713-245)).

#### Abuse in general

#### 15 Definition

**How is abuse defined? Does your law follow an effects-based or a form-based approach to identifying anti-competitive conduct?**

Law No. 4054 is silent on the definition of abuse. It only contains a non-exhaustive example list of specific forms of abuse (see question 1). Article 2 of Law No. 4054 adopts an effects-based approach to identifying anti-competitive conduct, with the result that the determining factor in assessing whether a practice amounts to an abuse is the effect on the market, not the type of conduct.

#### 16 Exploitative and exclusionary practices

**Does the concept of abuse cover both exploitative and exclusionary practices?**

The concept of abuse covers both exploitative and exclusionary practices. It also covers discriminatory practices.

#### 17 Link between dominance and abuse

**What link must be shown between dominance and abuse?**

Theoretically speaking, a causal link must be shown between dominance and abuse. The Board does not yet apply a stringent test of causality, and it has in the past inferred abuse from the same set of circumstantial evidence that was also employed in demonstrating the existence of dominance.

Article 6 also prohibits abusive conduct on a market different to the market subject to dominant position. The Board found incumbent undertakings to have infringed article 6 by engaging in abusive conduct in markets neighbouring the dominated market (see, for example, *Türk Telekom* (2 October 2002, 02-60/755-305) and *Turkcell* (20 July 2001, 01-35/347-95)).

#### 18 Defences

**What defences may be raised to allegations of abuse of dominance? Is it possible to invoke efficiency gains?**

The chances of success of certain defences and what constitutes a defence depend heavily on the circumstances of each case. It is also possible to invoke efficiency gains, as long as it can be adequately demonstrated that the pro-competitive benefits outweigh the anti-competitive impact.

#### Specific forms of abuse

#### 19 Price and non-price discrimination

Both price and non-price discrimination may amount to an abusive conduct under article 6. The Board has in the past found incumbent undertakings to have infringed article 6 by engaging in discriminatory behaviour concerning prices and other trade conditions (see, for example, *TTAS*, (2 October 2002, 02-60/755-305) and *Türk Telekom/TTNet* (19 November 2008, 08-65/1055-411)).

#### 20 Exploitative prices or terms of supply

Exploitative prices or terms of supply may be deemed to be an infringement of article 6, although the wording of the law does not contain a specific reference to this concept. The Board condemned excessive or exploitative pricing by dominant firms in the past (see, for example, *TTAS* (2 October 2002, 02-60/755-305), *Belko* (6 April 2001, 01-17/150-39) and *Tüpraş* (17 January 2014, 14-03/60-24)). That said, complaints on this basis are frequently dismissed by the Competition Authority because of its welcome reluctance to micromanage pricing behaviour.

#### 21 Rebate schemes

While article 6 does not refer to rebate schemes as a specific form of abuse, rebate schemes may also be deemed to constitute an abuse. In *Turkcell* (23 December 2009, 09-60/1490-379), the Board condemned the defendant for abusing its dominance by, among other things, applying rebate schemes to encourage the use of the Turkcell logo and refusing to offer rebates to buyers that work with competitors. The Board adopted a similar approach concerning the rebate schemes used by Dogan Media Group and fined the defendant for abusing its dominance through, inter alia, rebate schemes (30 March 2011, 11-18/341-103).

#### 22 Predatory pricing

Predatory pricing may amount to a form of abuse, as evidenced by many precedents of the Competition Board (see, for example, *TTNet* (11 July 2007, 07-59/676-235); *Denizcilik İşletmeleri* (12 October 2006, 06-74/959-278); *Coca-Cola* (23 January 2004, 04-07/75-18); *Türk Telekom/TTNet* (19 November 2008, 08-65/1055-411); *Trakya Cam* (17 November 2011, 11-57/1477-533), *Tüpraş* (17 January 2014, 14-03/60-24); *THY* (30 December 2011, 11-65/1692-599) and *UN Ro-Ro* (1 October 2012, 12-47/1413-474)). That said, complaints on this basis are frequently dismissed by the Competition Authority due to its welcome reluctance to micro-manage pricing behaviour. High standards are usually observed for bringing forward predatory pricing claims.

#### 23 Price squeezes

Price squeezes may amount to a form of abuse in Turkey and recent precedents have involved the imposition of fines on the basis of price squeezing. The Board is known to closely scrutinise allegations of price squeezing (see, for example, *Türk Telekom* (19 October 2004, 04-66/956-232); *TTNet* (11 July 2007, 07-59/676-235); *Dogan Dağıtım* (9 October 2007, 07-78/962-364); and *Türk Telekom/TTNet* (19 November 2008, 08-65/1055-411)).

#### 24 Refusals to deal and access to essential facilities

Refusals to deal and access to essential facilities are common forms of abuse, and the Competition Authority is very familiar with this type of abuse (see, for example, *Eti Holding* (21 December 2000, 00-50/533-295); *POAS* (20 November 2001, 01-56/554-130); *Ak-Kim* (4 December 2003, 03-76/925-389); and *Çukurova Elektrik* (10 November 2003, 03-72/874-373)).

#### 25 Exclusive dealing, non-compete provisions and single branding

Exclusive dealing, non-compete provisions and single branding are normally dealt with under article 4 of Law No. 4054 (restrictive agreements, concerted practices and decisions of trade associations). On that note, Block Exemption Communiqué No. 2002/2 on Vertical Agreements does not cover exclusive vertical supply agreements of an undertaking holding a market share above 40 per cent. Therefore, a dominant undertaking is an unlikely candidate to engage in non-compete provisions and single-branding arrangements without any significant pro-competitive effects and efficiency gains. There have also been cases in the past where the Competition Board found an infringement of article 6 on the basis of exclusive dealing arrangements (see, for example, *Karbogaz* (23 August 2002, 02-49/634-257)). Similarly, the Board imposed a fine on Mey İçki (the allegedly dominant undertaking in the market for the alcoholic beverage raki), for its abusive conduct through which it prevented sales points from selling Mey İçki's competitors' products through exclusivity clauses and, therefore, foreclosed the market (*Mey İçki* (12 June 2014, 14-21/470-178)).

## 26 Tying and leveraging

Tying and leveraging are among the specific forms of abuse listed in article 6. The Board assessed many tying, bundling and leveraging allegations against dominant undertakings. However, so far, there have been no cases where the incumbent firms were fined based on tying or leveraging allegations. However, the Board ordered some behavioural remedies against incumbent telephone and internet operators in some cases, in order to have them avoid tying and leveraging (*TTNET-ADSL* (18 February 2009, 09-07/127-38)).

## 27 Limiting production, markets or technical development

Limiting output, markets or technical development is among the specific forms of abuse listed in article 6. However, there have been no cases where the incumbent firms were fined as a result of limiting output, markets or technical development. Similar behaviour by multiple undertakings has been condemned under article 4 as a form of cartel (*White Meat Cartel* (25 November 2009, 09-57/1393-362)).

## 28 Abuse of intellectual property rights

While the precedents of the Board do not yet include a finding of infringement on the basis of abuse of intellectual property rights, abuse of intellectual property rights may constitute an infringement of article 6, depending on the circumstances. This issue has not yet been brought to the Competition Authority's attention.

## 29 Abuse of government process

While the precedents of the Board do not yet include a finding of infringement on the basis of abuse of a government process and this issue has not been brought to the Competition Authority's attention yet, there is no reason why such abuses should not lead to a finding of an infringement of article 6, if adequately demonstrated.

## 30 'Structural abuses' – mergers and acquisitions as exclusionary practices

Mergers and acquisitions are normally caught by the merger control rules contained in article 7 of Law No. 4054. However, there have been some cases, albeit rare, where the Board found structural abuses through which dominant firms used joint venture arrangements as a back-up tool to exclude competitors. This was condemned as a violation of article 6 (see, for example, *Biryay I* (17 July 2000, 00-26/292-162)).

## 31 Other types of abuse

The list of specific abuses contained in article 6 is not exhaustive and other types of conduct may be deemed abusive. However, the enforcement track record shows that the Board has not been in a position to review any allegation of other forms of abuse such as strategic capacity construction, predatory product design or process innovation, failure to predisclose new technology, predatory advertising or excessive product differentiation.

## Enforcement proceedings

### 32 Prohibition of abusive practices

**Is there a directly applicable prohibition of abusive practices or does the law only empower the regulatory authorities to take remedial actions against companies abusing their dominant position?**

The article 6 prohibition is directly applicable to companies. Law No. 4054 allows the Board to take appropriate actions to compel companies abusing their dominant position to take remedial actions. This is in conjunction to the directly applicable prohibition.

### 33 Enforcement authorities

**Which authorities are responsible for enforcement and what powers of investigation do they have?**

The national competition authority for enforcing the competition law in Turkey is the Competition Authority, a legal entity with administrative and financial autonomy. The Competition Authority consists of the Board, presidency and service departments. As the competent body of the Competition Authority, the Board is responsible for, inter alia, investigating

and condemning abuses of dominance. The Board has seven members and is seated in Ankara.

The service departments consist of five technical units. There is a 'sectoral' job definition of each technical unit. A research department, a leniency unit, a decisions unit, an information management unit, an external relations unit and a strategy development unit assist the five technical divisions and the presidency in the completion of their tasks.

The Board has relatively broad investigative powers. It may request all information it deems necessary from all public institutions and organisations, undertakings and trade associations. Officials of these bodies, undertakings and trade associations are obliged to provide the necessary information within the period fixed by the Board. Failure to comply with a decision ordering the production of information may lead to the imposition of a turnover-based fine of 0.1 per cent of the turnover generated in the financial year preceding the date of the fining decision (if this is not calculable, the turnover generated in the financial year nearest to the date of the fining decision will be taken into account). The minimum fine amount for 2015 is 16,765 Turkish lira. Where incorrect or incomplete information has been provided in response to a request for information, the same penalty may be imposed.

Article 15 of Law No. 4054 also authorises the Board to conduct on-site investigations. Accordingly, the Board can examine the books, paperwork and documents of undertakings and trade associations, and, if need be, take copies of the same; request undertakings and trade associations to provide written or verbal explanations on specific topics; and conduct on-site investigations with regard to any asset of an undertaking.

Law No. 4054, therefore, provides great authority to the Competition Authority on dawn raids. A judicial authorisation is obtained by the Board only if the subject undertaking refuses to allow the dawn raid. While the mere wording of the law allows oral testimony to be compelled of employees, case handlers do allow delaying an answer so long as there is a quick written follow-up correspondence. Therefore, in practice, employees can avoid providing answers on issues that are uncertain to them, provided that a written response is submitted in a mutually agreed timeline. Computer records are fully examined by the experts of the Competition Authority, including deleted items.

Officials conducting an on-site investigation need to be in possession of a deed of authorisation from the Board. The deed of authorisation must specify the subject matter and purpose of the investigation. The inspectors are not entitled to exercise their investigative powers (copying records, recording statements by company staff, etc) in relation to matters that do not fall within the scope of the investigation (ie, that which is written on the deed of authorisation). Refusing to grant the staff of the Competition Authority access to business premises may lead to the imposition of a turnover-based fine of 0.5 per cent of the turnover generated in the financial year preceding the date of the fining decision (if this is not calculable, the turnover generated in the financial year nearest to the date of the fining decision will be taken into account). The minimum amount of fine for 2015 is 16,765 Turkish lira. It may also lead to the imposition of a periodic daily-based fine of 0.05 per cent of the turnover generated in the financial year preceding the date of the fining decision (if this is not calculable, the turnover generated in the financial year nearest to the date of the fining decision will be taken into account) for each day of the violation.

### 34 Sanctions and remedies

**What sanctions and remedies may they impose?**

The sanctions that could be imposed for abuses of dominance under Law No. 4054 are administrative in nature. In the case of a proven abuse of dominance, the incumbent undertakings concerned shall be (separately) subject to fines of up to 10 per cent of their Turkish turnover generated in the financial year preceding the date of the fining decision (if this is not calculable, the turnover generated in the financial year nearest to the date of the fining decision will be taken into account). Employees or members of the executive bodies of the undertakings or association of undertakings (or both) that had a determining effect on the creation of the violation are also fined up to 5 per cent of fine imposed on the undertaking or association of the undertaking. After the recent amendments, the new version of the Competition Law makes reference to article 17 of the Law on Minor Offences to require the Board to take into consideration factors such as the level of fault and amount of possible damage in the relevant market, the market power of the undertakings within the relevant market, duration of the infringement, recidivism, cooperation or driving role of the



### Update and trends

The year in review was marked by changes in the composition of the Board. Three members of the Board, including the President, completed their term in office in April 2015. The incumbencies of President of the Board, Professor Nurettin Kaldırımçı, Vice-President Kenan Türk and member of the Board Dr Murat Çetinkaya were terminated. As of 24 June 2015, Professor Ömer Torlak will be serving as the new President of the Board, while Arslan Narin will be a new Vice-President and Kenan Türk will be a new member of the Board.

While the year in review did not witness record fines for abuse of dominance positions, the Board recently closed two significant investigations. In *Turkish Airlines*, the Board cleared the flagship carrier from allegations of anti-competitive behaviour through the abuse of its alleged dominant position. The Board decided that the required conditions of violation were not met (14-54/932-420, 25 December 2014). In *Coca-Cola*, the Board initiated an investigation based on the allegations that Coca-Cola violated articles 4 and 6 of Law No. 4054.

After a long investigation, the Board concluded that Coca-Cola did not conduct any practices towards sales points that could systematically lead to the prevention of competitors from penetrating into the market or hinder their activities in the market (15-10/148-65, 5 March 2015).

After a long wait on the sidelines, the Draft Proposal for the Amendment of the Competition Law was submitted to the Grand National Assembly of the Turkish Republic on 23 January 2014. The Draft Law introduces the *de minimis* rule, which enables the Board to ignore certain cases that do not exceed a certain market share or turnover threshold, and introduces the European Union's Significant Impediment of Effective Competition Test to the Turkish control regime in place of the current dominance test. It also contains settlement provisions for certain cases, which are intended to be used by case handlers allowing them to advise the Board in instances where the parties subject to the investigation did not commit violations. In those cases, the Board can decide to wholly or partially end an investigation.

undertakings in the infringement, financial power of the undertakings, compliance with the commitments, etc, in determining the magnitude of the monetary fine.

In addition to the monetary sanction, the Board is authorised to take all necessary measures to terminate the abusive conduct, to remove all de facto and legal consequences of every action that has been taken unlawfully, and to take all other necessary measures in order to restore the level of competition and status as before the infringement.

The highest fine imposed to date in relation to abuse of a dominant position is in the *Tüpraş* case where *Tüpraş* incurred an administrative monetary fine of over 412 million Turkish lira (equal to 1 per cent of the relevant undertaking's annual turnover for the relevant year).

### 35 Impact on contracts

#### What are the consequences of an infringement for the validity of contracts entered into by dominant companies?

Article 56 of Law No. 4054 provides that agreements of undertakings and decisions of trade associations that infringe article 4 are invalid and unenforceable with all their consequences. The issue of whether the 'null and void' status applicable to agreements that fall foul of article 4 may be interpreted to extend to cover contracts entered into by infringing dominant companies is a matter of continuing controversy. However, contracts that give way to or serve as a vehicle for an abusive contract may be deemed invalid and unenforceable because of violation of article 6.

### 36 Private enforcement

#### To what extent is private enforcement possible? Does the legislation provide a basis for a court or authority to order a dominant firm to grant access (to infrastructure or technology), supply goods or services or conclude a contract?

Articles 9 and 27 of Law No. 4054 entitle the Board to order structural or behavioural remedies, that is, require undertakings to follow a certain

method of conduct such as granting access, supplying goods or services or concluding a contract. Failure by a dominant firm to meet the requirements so ordered by the Board would lead it to initiate an investigation, which may or may not result in finding of infringement. The legislation does not explicitly empower the Board to demand performance of a specific obligation such as granting access, supplying goods or services or concluding a contract through a court order.

### 37 Availability of damages

#### Do companies harmed by abusive practices have a claim for damages?

A dominance matter is primarily adjudicated by the Board. Enforcement is supplemented with private lawsuits as well. Articles 57 et seq of Law No. 4054 entitle any person who is injured in their business or property by reason of anything forbidden in the antitrust laws to sue the violators for three times their damages plus litigation costs and attorney fees. Therefore, Turkey is one of the exceptional jurisdictions where a treble damages clause exists in the law. In private suits, the incumbent firms are adjudicated before regular courts. Because the treble damages clause allows litigants to obtain three times their loss as compensation, private antitrust litigations increasingly make their presence felt in the article 6 enforcement arena. Most courts wait for the decision of the Competition Authority, and build their own decision on that decision. The majority of private lawsuits in Turkish antitrust enforcement rely on refusal to supply allegations.

### 38 Recent enforcement action

#### What is the most recent high-profile dominance case?

The most recent high-profile dominance case is *Tüpraş* (17 January 2014, 14-03/60-244), where Turkey's incumbent energy company has been fined over 412 million Turkish lira, the equivalent of 1 per cent of *Tüpraş*'s annual turnover in 2013, for abusing its dominant position through excessive



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pricing practices. This is the highest fine levied on a single undertaking in the Competition Authority's enforcement history, with an amount almost double the previous highest fine on a single undertaking (a monetary fine of 213.4 million lira against Garanti Bankası, one of the biggest banks in Turkey). Another high profile dominance case is *Turkcell* (6 June 2011, 11-34/742-230), where the incumbent dominant GSM operator was fined just over 91.9 million Turkish lira for engaging in practices that led to de facto exclusivity and single branding in favour of Turkcell and denied competitors access to sub-dealers.

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