

The Italian authority fines four companies for media rights collusion

On April 20, 2016, the Italian competition authority issued a fine of EUR 66 million on broadcasters Sky Italy and RTI-Mediaset, as well as the Italian Football League and the marketing agency Infront Italia, for rigging an auction for football broadcasting rights.

According to the authority, the parties altered the outcomes of the league's June 2014 tender worth nearly EUR 1 billion for the allocation of media rights for "Serie A" matches for seasons 2015 through 2018. In particular, the authority held that the tender organizer Infront Italia and the Football League ignored the results of the auction and proposed private negotiations with only two broadcasters, RTI-Mediaset and Sky Italy. The agreement prevented competitors like Eurosport from winning the bid and discouraged potential new entrants from submitting bids. This case was brought to the attention of the competition authority following protests by unsuccessful bidders claiming a lack of transparency on the part of the organizers.

The authority imposed the highest fine on RTI-Mediaset (EUR 51.4 million), which it found responsible for collusion from the opening of the bid envelopes. Infront Italia received a EUR 9 million fine, while the Football League was fined approximately EUR 2 million. Sky Italy, which initially opposed the collusion but later adhered to it, received a fine of EUR 4 million.

RTI-Mediaset, Infront Italia and the Football League have decided to appeal the decision, while Sky Italy said in a statement that it had not yet made a decision whether to launch an appeal. RTI-Mediaset indicated that it will claim unequal treatment and ask the Administrative Tribunal for an interim order suspending the payment of the fine pending its full judgment.