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Bulgaria's €76 million Kaufland case comes at a pivotal moment for the EU Unfair Trading Practices framework

November 2026

The Bulgarian Commission on Protection of Competition (CPC) has imposed financial sanctions totalling nearly €76 million on Kaufland Bulgaria EOOD & Co KD, one of the country's largest food retailers, for three instances of unfair trading practices (UTPs) involving Bulgarian food producers.

At a high level, the CPC identified three categories of infringements:

- **Pressure to reduce supply prices** – Requiring suppliers to lower their delivery prices, allegedly exploiting Kaufland's stronger bargaining position and prioritising its own commercial interests to the detriment of suppliers.
- **Unjustified deductions** – Deducting remuneration for services provided by the retailer to suppliers, from the prices payable for supplied products, in bad faith.
- **Obstructing price increase negotiations** – Creating unjustified obstacles and prolonging negotiations when suppliers requested increases in their supply prices.

A standout enforcement figure in the wider EU context

What makes the Bulgarian decision particularly interesting is its scale when placed against the broader EU enforcement picture.

According to the European Commission's December 2025 Evaluation Report on Directive (EU) 2019/633 on unfair trading practices in the agricultural and food supply chain (UTP Directive), roughly one-third of investigations closed between 2021 and 2024 found infringements (754 in total), which resulted in €41.9 million in fines across the EU between 2022 and 2024. The €75.65 million imposed in Bulgaria is thus approximately 1.8 times the EU-wide total for that period.

An EU framework approaching its next chapter

The timing is also noteworthy, as the European Commission is expected to revisit the UTP Directive in the coming months. The revision, initially planned for the third quarter of 2026, has been postponed, with a discussion tentatively scheduled for 24 November 2026.[1]

In parallel, the ministers of agriculture of the Visegrad Group, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia presented a joint declaration on strengthening the fight against UTPs in the agricultural and food supply chain during the Agriculture and Fisheries Council (AGRIFISH) meeting on 26–27 October 2026.

[1] Liste des points prévus à l'ordre du jour des prochaines réunions de la Commission



The forthcoming revision has already prompted considerable debate, raising a number of important questions, including:

- Should the €350 million turnover threshold be removed to extend the UTP Directive's protection to a wider range of suppliers?
- Should the blacklist of prohibited UTPs be expanded to capture emerging commercial practices that may not be adequately addressed by the current rules?
- Have existing safeguards sufficiently addressed suppliers' fear of retaliation, or are stronger enforcement mechanisms and more proactive investigations needed?

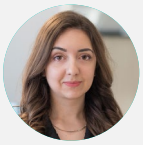
What comes next?

The Kaufland case illustrates the significant financial exposure that can arise under the EU UTP framework. As the commission prepares to revisit the UTP Directive, the debate over how best to balance the interests of suppliers and buyers, and where the boundaries of fair commercial practices should lie, is becoming increasingly important. The coming months may therefore prove pivotal in shaping the future of the EU UTP framework.

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