



## NATIONAL AUTHORITY FOR TRADE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

### PRESS RELEASE

#### **On the trail of virtual traps – nationwide consumer protection investigation into the world of video games**

**The National Authority for Trade and Consumer Protection (NATCP), in cooperation with government offices under its professional supervision, has launched a nationwide investigation to monitor video games from a consumer protection perspective. The aim of the investigation is to uncover and curb unfair commercial practices against consumers, especially minors.**

The current investigation is closely linked to the NATCP's participation between March 31 and April 11, 2025, in an international action ("sweep") coordinated by the International Consumer Protection Enforcement Network (ICPEN) focusing on mobile and online games. During the international investigation, consumer protection authorities in 22 countries inspected a total of 439 mobile and online games and found manipulative elements encouraging spending in almost all of them.

The results of the sweep revealed that a significant proportion of the games examined contained:

- loot boxes, which can increase the risk of gaming addiction due to their gambling-like nature, • virtual currencies, whose non-transparent exchange system makes it difficult to track spending,
- so-called "dark patterns," such as urgent, hard-to-refuse offers or time-limited events,
- pay-to-win models, where the purchase of paid content is essential for progress.

Based on these experiences, the latest domestic investigation by the NATCP and the government offices under its professional supervision will examine whether game software manufacturers apply the age rating system of the Pan European Game Information (PEGI) or, in the absence thereof, clearly display the warning "Not recommended for persons under the age of 18!" warning clearly on the packaging. The inspection will focus in particular on loot boxes, virtual currencies, dark patterns, and pay-to-win models.

The global video game market reached \$184 billion in revenue in 2024, and the trend is expected to continue. Parallel to this growth, "freemium" models, which offer paid additional content in games that are accessible for free, are becoming increasingly prominent. Although this practice is not illegal in itself, it becomes problematic when payment is essential to maintain the gaming experience or progress, or when the game explicitly encourages spending through addictive mechanisms.

The NATCP aims to make the purchasing mechanisms used in video games clearer and more transparent for consumers, especially parents and young gamers, thereby promoting conscious and safe gaming for all age groups.

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National Authority for Trade and Consumer Protection