

The Heads of the Czech Competition Agency were the Guests of the Hungarian Competition Authority

4 February 2022, Budapest - The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Czech Office for the Protection of Competition were welcomed by the President and leaders of the Hungarian Competition Authority (GVH) on Thursday. The heads of the two authorities discussed, among others, the Visegrad Cooperation, the priorities of the Czech EU Presidency in the field of competition and current professional matters.

The GVH hosted Petr Mlsna, Chairman of the Czech Office for the Protection of Competition, and Kamil Nejezchleb, Vice-Chairman of the Czech Office for the Protection of Competition, at an expert meeting in Budapest on 3 February 2022. At the meeting, the heads of the GVH discussed a number of issues affecting both authorities with their Czech colleagues. During the discussion, many topics were touched upon, such as the V4 Competition Conference that will be held in Hungary at the end of April, the priorities of the Czech EU Presidency and the recent experiences of competition law enforcement. The latter includes, for example, the tools and results of the fight against cartels and the lessons learned from the competition authorities' actions to curb construction price increases that have been a major concern in both countries.

In the course of the discussion, the parties agreed that a cautious approach by the authorities to the environmental sustainability arguments of companies in the case of restrictive agreements is the appropriate approach, i.e., such arguments are only acceptable if the benefits of the agreement fully compensate consumers.

The discussion also covered how to make the most effective use of the so-called ECN+ Directive, which strengthens the procedural powers of EU competition authorities, in terms of cartel detection and evidence gathering in situations that challenge competition authorities in the digital age. These include, for example, the issue of evidence derived from data stored in the cloud or information from telephone conversations.

The liability of individuals and parent companies involved in cartels, i.e., certain issues related to the imposition of fines jointly and severally and at company level, were discussed at the meeting.

Both competition authorities have identified the issue of European regulation of global online service providers, the dominant position of big tech companies, as a major issue. The parties agreed that the new EU regulation will primarily give the European Commission powers, but that national and regional markets in the sector can be separated, so it is crucial that Member States have room for manoeuvre to tackle the dominant position of tech giants.

The leaders of the two competition authorities agreed to continue technical discussions at expert level on some of the topics opened up at the meeting.

Press Office of the GVH