

"Hungarian national interest in the enlargement of the European Union to the Western Balkans"

On 20th June, 2023 a bilateral meeting was held in Brussels between the European Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement, Olivér Várhelyi and Csaba Balázs Rigó, President of the Hungarian Competition Authority (GVH). During the exchange of views, the parties reviewed the relations between the enlargement of the European Union and the professional activities of the Hungarian Competition Authority. Olivér Várhelyi and Csaba Balázs Rigó agreed that the enlargement of the European Union is the national interest of Hungary, and therefore they will further strengthen their cooperation from now on.

At the meeting, Olivér Várhelyi pointed out that it is necessary to help the countries that are waiting for accession or are at different stages of accession to embrace EU values and to help reflect this commitment in national legislation.

The accession of the Western Balkan countries - Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, - and as well as Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia to the EU is in the European Union and Hungary's national interest as well. The candidate countries must be made aware that respect for EU values is necessary not only during the accession process, but also after they become full members. The harmonisation of competition rules with the EU legal order is an important task, in which the national competition authorities have traditionally played an active role - pointed out Olivier Várhelyi, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement.

At the meeting, President Rigó confirmed that the GVH is engaged in intensive international cooperation with a great number of international organisations. The GVH is a member of the European Competition Network (ECN), participates in the work of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and operates a Regional Competition Training Centre in Budapest (RCC). The Training Centre has been providing support in the field of competition law and competition policy since 2005, building on the expertise of the two organisations, mainly to competition authorities in Eastern, South-Eastern, Central European and Western Balkan countries. Hungary thus plays a leading role in the region in terms of participation in the development of transition economies and technical assistance.

"On behalf of us, we will provide all the professional assistance we can to the national competition authorities at different stages of EU accession to align their competition rules with EU law as quickly as possible. We will also share our enforcement experience and procedural practices. We are also delighted to cooperate with Commissioner Várhelyi, to ensure the Hungarian national interests and our mutual goals", emphasized President Rigó.

During the exchange of views, the parties reviewed in detail how the GVH can get involved in international programmes supporting the accession of countries to the EU and agreed to meet regularly in the future and review the results of their cooperation from time to time.