C/2024/4494

11.7.2024

Prior notification of a concentration

(Case M.11538 – CEZ / BCI / CZECH GAS NETWORKS JV)

(Text with EEA relevance)

(C/2024/4494)

1. On 4 July 2024, the Commission received notification of a proposed concentration pursuant to Article 4 of Council Regulation (EC) No 139/2004 ([1]).

This notification concerns the following undertakings:

— ČEZ, a.s. ('ČEZ', Czechia), controlled by the Czech State through its Ministry of Finance,

— Varese IRR LP ('Varese', Canada), controlled by British Columbia Investment Management Corporation ('BCI', Canada),

— Czech Gas Networks S.à r.l. ('CGNS', Luxembourg), currently ultimately controlled by Macquarie Group Limited (Australia) and BCI.

ČEZ and Varese will acquire within the meaning of Article 3(1)(b) and 3(4) of the Merger Regulation joint control of CGNS.

The concentration is accomplished by way of purchase of shares.

2. The business activities of the undertakings concerned are the following:

— ČEZ is active in the production, distribution, trading, and sale of electricity and heat, the trading and supply of natural gas, coal mining, operation of gas boiler rooms, telecommunications, informatics, nuclear research, planning, construction, and maintenance of energy facilities, mining raw materials, and the processing of energy by-products,

— Varese is a limited partnership whose investments primarily relate to the infrastructure, timber, and agriculture sectors. Varese is ultimately controlled by BCI, an agent of the Government of British Columbia, Canada, that invests in fixed income, public equities, private equity, infrastructure, renewable resources, real estate, and commercial mortgages,

— CGNS is the holding company of GasNet, s.r.o. (Czechia). GasNet, a Distributor System Operator in Czechia, owns, operates, and maintains a network of pipelines used for the distribution of natural gas in Czechia.

3. On preliminary examination, the Commission finds that the notified transaction could fall within the scope of the Merger Regulation. However, the final decision on this point is reserved.

4. The Commission invites interested third parties to submit their possible observations on the proposed operation to the Commission.

Observations must reach the Commission not later than 10 days following the date of this publication. The following reference should always be specified:

M.11538 – CEZ / BCI / CZECH GAS NETWORKS JV

Observations can be sent to the Commission by email or by post. Please use the contact details below:

Email: COMP-MERGER-REGISTRY@ec.europa.eu

([1]) OJ L 24, 29.1.2004, p. 1 (the 'Merger Regulation').

Postal address:

European Commission
Directorate-General for Competition
Merger Registry
1049 Bruxelles/Brussel
BELGIQUE/BELGIË