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Petko Nikolov has been appointed Director of the Patent Office

Former CPC leader and favorite of several governments nominated by Economy Minister Bozhidar Lukarski

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Petko Nikolov, longtime chairman of the Commission for Protection of Competition (CPC), who was recently replaced by Yulia Nenkova after 13 years in office, has been heading the Patent Office since Tuesday. His appointment as chairman of the institution responsible for the protection of intellectual property was made by order of the prime minister at the suggestion of Economy Minister Bozhidar Lukarski. This was announced by the press center of the Council of Ministers after a question from "Capital Daily". On the Patent Office's website, the appointment was marked in one sentence. Nikolov takes over from Kamen Veselinov, who is retiring.

The reasons for Nikolov's appointment are quite general and mainly lie in the fact that his candidacy meets the legal requirements. Although Lukarski's office said other nominations were being discussed, no names were given. Thus, doubts remain that Nikolov was provided with a good position after more than a decade of understanding with various governments headed by the CPC.

Nomination by law

The Ministry of Economy clarified that Nikolov's candidacy fully meets the requirements for chairman and deputy chairmen of the Patent Office. Among them are to have worked in the field of industrial property for more than ten years and to have a higher technical or legal education. The press center also stressed that holding the position does not require a selection or competition.

Precisely because of suspicions that Nikolov is preparing to head the Patent Office, back in September last year the deputies from the Reformist Bloc Martin Dimitrov and Petar Slavov asked the Prime Minister whether such individual appointments should not take place after a public procedure and competition. "Obviously this is about looking for a job for one person, which is not a good approach," Dimitrov told Mediapool on Tuesday.

Due to the lack of transparency, it is not clear whether other nominations have actually been discussed. In response to a question from "Capital Daily" from the Ministry of Economy, they specified that several applications were considered, "including people who have held this position over the years or have been deputies in the department", but did not give names. Nikolov was elected because of his many years of administrative experience as chairman of the supervisory board of the Privatization Agency and chairman of the CPC.

About the experience in the CPC

Nikolov's emblem will remain his record 13-year term at the helm of the antitrust agency. He was elected twice by two governments - NMSS in 2003 and GERB in 2010. Even after his term expired in September 2015, he continued to head the commission until the election of a new chairman in June this year.

Defined by the owner of the bankrupt CCB Tsvetan Vassilev as "always ready chairman of the CPC", there are enough reasons for Nikolov to believe that as chairman of the antimonopoly body he was more than favorable to the MRF MP Delyan Peevski in resolving transactions affecting his interests. For example, in the recent history of the commission, there are five cases that the body has resolved in record time of several working days with a legal deadline of at least a month. Four of them are related to Peevski - the takeover of Vodstroy 98 by Varna-based Hydrostroy, the purchase of Technomarket Bulgaria by NSN Investment, the acquisition of Channel 3 by New Bulgarian Media Group, and no more. A few curious are also the given several speed approvals of shareholder casts in "

For those over 13 years, the commission has failed to uncover a single large cartel. For the new CPC leadership, for example, remains the investigation into the coordination of fuel prices, which during Nikolov's time was limited to loudly advertised by his press office inspections in the offices of oil companies.

Self-satisfied

At a press conference in late May, the former chairman of the CPC announced the institution he heads as the most active in antitrust action in the European Union. For the five months of 2016, the commission initiated ten proceedings and accordingly ruled on ten. Nine rulings have been filed for allegation of a violation under Art. 15 (prohibited agreements - ed. Note) and Art. 21 (prohibition of abuse of monopoly or dominant position - ed. Note) - something that, according to Nikolov, no other commission in the EU. In 2015, the priority was the electricity sector.

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