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Gazprom Seeks More of Germany's Wingas

By The Moscow Times

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Gazprom is looking to increase its stake in German gas trader Wingas as it seeks to expand its presence in marketing and storage, Interfax reported, citing gas market sources.

Gazprom owns just under 50 percent of Wingas, which is controlled by BASF's Wintershall and has long wanted to strengthen its foothold in Germany. It already supplies 30 percent of Germany's gas imports.

The move is likely to put the European Commission on alert.

It has been investigating Gazprom's practices in Europe, as it suspects the company has hindered the free flow of gas across the EU's 27 countries, preventing supply diversification and imposing unfair prices on its customers.

Gazprom supplies a quarter of Europe's gas.

Interfax said Gazprom may expand in marketing and storage after Wingas spins off its transportation unit in accordance with European Union regulations.

Gazprom and Wingas were not immediately available for comment.

The head of the Federal Anti-Monopoly Service, Igor Artemyev, has criticized Gazprom and the Federal Tariffs Service in an interview with Kommersant, Interfax reported. "I consider Gazprom an especially inefficient company, which has enough money and simply needs to set its house in order," he told the newspaper when asked whether the state should help Gazprom if the gas monopoly requires it. "I think they [Gazprom] don't need to be given anything. If they ask, we will consider export revenue and [the company's] margin on the domestic and external market. We will also take much more into account," he said.

Artemyev was no less harsh in his criticism of the FTS, which, in his view, acts in the interests of monopolies. "I believe that the Federal Tariffs Service is the perpetual and main defender of monopolies in our country," he said, in reference to results of reforms to the electricity sector.

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