

The Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB) said in a statement that it sees a number of commitments in the energy section of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) which raise concerns about energy security and cannot contribute in real terms to the sector's recovery and resilience. CITUB argues that in the context of the current energy crisis it is unacceptable to shut down reliable coal-fired energy facilities. CITUB insists on reconsidering the commitment in the NRRP for ensuring a reduction by 40 % until 2026 of the annual CO2 emissions from the electricity generation sector from their 2019 level, as this will bind Bulgaria with conditions for a deep-going change in the Maritsa East energy complex as soon as in the next three years.

CITUB also argues that the planned reform intended to improve the corporate management of the state-owned companies in the energy sector by separating them from the Bulgarian Energy Holding (BEH) will give rise to grave administrative and financial problems which will affect the production and investment programs of key enterprises employing thousands of people.

Furthermore, stripping the National Electricity Company (NEK) of its role as a public supplier and scrapping electricity quotas on the regulated market in 2022 will significantly impact the price of electricity for end customers. Against the background of the current price crisis, it is inadmissible to plan for a liberalization of the electricity market for small customers which is set to commence in 2023 and continue in 2025. Scrapping the crosssubsidies to the companies under the umbrella of BEH, coupled with the liberalization of the market in 2023 and 2025, will result in having equal electricity prices for households and buyers on the free market, which will prove unaffordable to many households.

CITUB further argues that the envisaged project for a national infrastructure of electricity storage facilities with a total charge energy capacity of 6,000 MWh did not find support in the professional community and has not been included as an option in any strategic analysis of the development of the electricity sector in Bulgaria discussed in the past three months.

CITUB holds that the scope of the project for big battery facilities should be cut back.

CITUB urges for adopting a national energy strategy until 2030, with a view until 2050, to guarantee that Bulgaria's energy security is safeguarded, and to ensure a just energy transition and coping with the social and economic challenges in the sector.