

Bulgarian electricity transmission system operator ESO has recorded huge interest from investors in new renewable energy projects. Since the beginning of 2021; 22 requests have been received for the connection of new power plants to the transmission network, with an installed capacity of 1,971 MW, compared to 14 requests for plants with a total capacity of 478 MW in the same period in 2020.

For comparison, currently the installed capacity in renewable energy in Bulgaria, excluding hydropower, is about 2,000 MW. This means that, if these investments are realized, the capacity of RES power plants will be doubled.

This interest can be largely explained recently adopted amendments to the Energy Law. Power plants put into operation after 1 January 2021, with the exception of small roof solar installations which are entitled to preferential prices, are exempted from the obligation to pay 5 % of their revenues to the Electricity System Security Fund. This is a big step forward in terms of ensuring the profitability of free market projects and attracting more investors. Based on applications from the beginning of 2021, ESO has issued seven approvals for the connection of new power plants to the network, with a total installed capacity of 364 MW. Also, preliminary contracts were signed with four investors for direct connection to the electricity transmission network of new capacities of 190 MW.

As of 1 January 2021, 11 new small-scale power plants have been put into operation, with installed capacity of 0.03 MW each, and one project with an installed capacity of 3.24 MW. According to experts, that number could be much higher if ESO provided transparency regarding the so-called free network capacity. This information could direct investors to where they can locate their projects, but are not currently publicly available.