

About 1,000 miners and workers at Bulgaria's largest coal-fired power plant Maritsa East 2 marched on the streets of Sofia to protect their jobs and urge the Government to support the coal mining industry.

Protesters have called on the interim Government to guarantee that it will not accelerate the closure of coalmines and power plants at the Maritsa East basin in southern Bulgaria, despite EU plans to decarbonize its economy by 2050.

Bulgaria plans to submit a deadline for coal phase-out to the European Commission by the end of the week in order to be able to benefit from funding from the European Recovery Mechanism.

The protesters claim that an earlier shutdown of coal-fired power plants, which provide about 40 % of Bulgaria's electricity consumption, would lead to problems with electricity supplies and increasing prices.

About 10,000 workers are employed at the Maritsa East lignite complex in southern Bulgaria. Unions say the complex provides a livelihood for more than 100,000 people in the EU's poorest country and have vowed to continue putting pressure on the new Government that should be formed following the general elections in mid-November.