

# Bulgaria: Recommendation to initiate Toplofikatsiya Sofia probe

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Due to many alerts and complaints against Toplofikatsiya Sofia, national Ombudsman Diana Kovacheva has sent a recommendation to the Commission for Energy and Water Regulation (KEVR) to initiate an extraordinary probe into Toplofikatsiya Sofia over the annual equalized bills.

Her recommendation was prompted by the numerous alerts and complaints received against Sofia's heating utility in relation to the sums it has to return to its customers following the retroactive drop of the heating price for the 5 August 2019 – 31 March 2020 period, as well as the implementation of the quality indices for the 2019-2020 heating season.

The National Ombudsman also informed the energy regulator that owners of apartments in buildings where energy efficiency measures have been taken, have expressed indignation at their higher heating bills. The letter also stresses that Toplofikatsiya Sofia made available a calculator allowing customers to check what sums will be paid back to them, as late as on 21 August, nearly at the end of the deadline for claims to the equalized bills.

KEVR already launched an investigation of district heating services provider Toplofikatsiya Sofia for reports of inflated bills in April.

State-owned gas supplier Bulgargaz refunded almost 103 million euros to its customers, due to an agreement with Russian Gazprom on lower gas prices. He stressed that this agreement struck earlier in March is the main reason why wholesale gas price is now 52 % lower compared to a year before. Of these 103 million euros, Sofia district heating utility got some 30.7 million euros.