

Under the EU Green Deal, the use of coal in electricity generation is to be phased-out by 2030.

Politicians in Bulgaria have been avoiding this important issue for a long time, and recently the European Commission has urged the Government to adopt strict deadlines for its coal phase-out plan. Preferably, this should take place with the National Recovery and Resilience Plan. For this purpose, besides funding under the plan, Bulgaria is to receive additional 2.02 billion euro from the Just Transition Fund.

However, last week, caretaker Ministers of Economy and Finance, Kiril Petkov and Assen Vassilev have visited the Maritsa East coal mining EN basin, which provides employment for more than 20,000 workers. The two Ministers signed the petition in defense of the coal mines and coal-fired power plants, launched by the trade unions - the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (CITUB) and the Podkrepa Confederation of Labor. Minister Vassilev said that he is against the construction of natural gas-fired power plant within TPP Maritsa East 2, a project the caretaker cabinet had included in the National Recovery and Resilience plan.

CITUB President Plamen Dimitrov said that for more than two years, the trade unions have been demanding that the future of coal mining in Bulgaria be clearly outlined by the authorities, at the same time pointing out that alternatives do exist. Bulgaria could use the tools of the recovery plan and of the Just Transition Fund, as well as the resources from the various operational programs. These funds could be used to ensure the operation of coal mining companies and thermal power plants until replacement capacities are built.

Regarding natural gas, its price has gone up year-over-year by 200 %. Assuming it is going to replace coal, what would the price of electricity be, when even today, the consumers are protesting about high electricity prices, Dimitrov concluded.