

# Serbia: EPS introduces a unique electricity billing system

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The goal is to increase billing from the current 95.5 to 96.8 percent by 2019

With the goal to increase the revenues Electric Power Industry of Serbia is planning to introduce a unique electricity billing system, while expert public believes that technological improvement is good foundation but insufficient itself to achieve the goal.

EPS points out that introducing a unique electricity billing system, centralization of power purchase agreements and introducing smart metering system in this year, would provide additional EUR 9645 income. The goal is to improve electricity billing in the next three years and to achieve 95.5 percent this year, to reach 96.4 percent in 2018 and to reach 96.8 percent in 2019. This would allow the company to operate more profitably, which would provide additional funds necessary for investments in the construction of new plants and reconstruction of outdated production facilities.

-EPS currently uses several different information systems for the calculation and billing of electricity. In order to improve operation and better relations with customers and energy market liberalization request, it was decided to introduce a unified software solution for the information system for calculation and billing of electricity, in order to provide better quality services and achieve greater efficiency in the field of calculation and billing. In addition, due to diversity of systems in Serbia, it is necessary to enable centralized management of data related to billing and calculation. The public procurement for the introduction of this system is underway- EPS says for our daily.

Deregulation of energy market, or operation in conditions of more equal suppliers who are competing for their share in sales, puts new requirements to improve relations with customers before EPS, both as supplier and as a distribution system operator, which provides services to all suppliers, as it owns the distribution system operator (DSO). At the same time, the main task is to keep the highest percentage of customers primarily by quality and accessible service. To prepare for the changes in the market, EPS has to reach the necessary level of transparency and efficiency and to standardize and harmonize business processes with the support of information technology solutions. The introduction of a unique system for managing the processes of bidding, contracts, billing and integration should increase the efficiency of operation. Installed automatic standardized processes should also facilitate and simplify the processes and at the same time raise the level of precision in the whole billing chain.

Slobodan Ruzic, a former deputy Minister of Energy, told for Danas that the implementation of modern technologies is important and useful thing but that is not sufficient to increase the percentage of billing.



-Modern technological solutions are certainly desirable and definitely help in some segments. However, this does not mean that billing would be improved in a significant percentage based only on that. Modern technology can contribute in terms of faster determining which consumers do not pay electricity bills, which should be disconnected due to default etc. Technology can also detect the theft of electricity and failures as well but cannot be an absolute guarantee that all consumers would pay electricity bills. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to have the will of the state which should enable EPS to carry out collection smoothly - explains our source.

He adds that it is possible that a centralized billing system will have in some areas the possibility of remote measurement and disconnection of unscrupulous consumers and better updating of lists of defaulters, but the main thing for a better collection is to set such rules that would ensure that all consumers regularly pay their electricity bills.

Vojislav Vuletic, energy expert, shares this opinion. - What happens with those citizens who do not pay electricity bills. When debt increases, they are disconnected from the network. The question rises why the state allows discrimination that is reflected in the fact that some consumers have to pay the bills while on the other hand, some companies do not pay their obligations regularly. It's nice that EPS introduces new technologies, but it cannot eradicate non-payment of electricity bills until the state does not allow effective implementation of the process and supports its implementation. By increasing the billing, reducing losses and more effective prevention of theft EPS would obtain necessary funds for investments in production facilities, which is one of the key issues in the process of EPS functioning - concludes Vuletic.