

There are a lot of investors from the EU, the U.S. and Russia interested in investing in Serbia's energy sector," Energy minister Aleksandar Antic said on the presentation of new energy law in the national assembly of Serbia.

Starting from January 1, 2015, under the new energy law, Serbia will be fully implementing all measures of the European Union's Third Energy Package relevant to the sectors of gas, electric power and renewable energy sources, which will make Serbia the first country in the region to implement all these provisions, Antic said.

The new law will ensure security and efficiency of supply of energy products to consumers, improve the investment climate, improve operation in the gas and electricity markets, and ensure the participation of foreign entities in the electrical energy market and implementation of European legislation in this area, the minister said.

Antic stressed that the government and the Energy Ministry led a responsible social policy in that area, pointing out that in the coming year, RSD 700 million dinars would be set aside for those who could not pay for electricity, and they would get 120-240 kilowatt hours of electricity per month and certain quantities of gas for free.

"In line"

The energy bill the parliament will discuss on Friday should bring Serbia's regulations in that field in line with EU legislation, Tanjug reported.

The new bill is proposed in order to harmonize Serbian legislation with that of the EU in a comprehensive and efficient way and solve problems noticed in practice, according to the argumentation for the bill.

The bill includes all the measures from the Third Energy Package of the EU related to the gas and power supply sectors, while renewable energy sources are only indirectly covered, because of the changes in the way the power supply sector works, Aleksandar Antic said earlier.

The bill brings more accurate and better organized administrative procedures while also removing the faults related to how energy licenses are issued and how the privileges power supplier status is gained, Antic underscored.

The bill is expected to help increase the number of power and gas suppliers on the market, which will raise competition and make the market, which opens on January 1, 2015, operate more successfully, according to the argumentation.

This creates the possibility of having new suppliers appear on the market, increasing competitiveness and allowing consumers to choose suppliers freely, based on the conditions they offer.

According to the Energy Agency, there are currently over 80 licensed power suppliers and 33 natural gas suppliers.

The bill allows foreign companies to obtain power supply licenses as well.

The proposed act defines much of the administrative procedure, which creates the

conditions needed for investing in energy production facilities that use renewable sources. The bill improves the procedures related to renewable energy production, which provides better conditions for investors, since renewable energy needs to reach a share of 27 percent in Serbia's total energy consumption by 2020.

This document needs to be adopted urgently because Serbia has agreed to incorporate the directives from the Third Energy Package into its legislation by January 1, 2015, as well as to open its power and gas markets completely, so all consumers, including households, would be able to choose their supplier freely.