

EnergyMin Popescu: Vulnerable energy consumer to be subsidized

The draft law defining the vulnerable energy consumer will be approved as soon as possible, and the people who really need it will be subsidized, Energy Minister Virgil Popescu said on Tuesday.

"The vulnerable consumer had to be defined ahead of time and today I had a discussion with Minister Turcan [Minister of Labour, Raluca Turcan - editor's note], and tomorrow she will send me the bill. I believe that after the discussions it will be approved soon. (..) It is based on the same principle: the vulnerable consumer will be subsidized, people who really need a subsidy will pay less," Virgil Popescu told private television broadcaster Digi 24.

Asked why the Ministry of Energy did not intervene in the dispute with the National Energy Regulatory Authority (ANRE) regarding the contracts that consumers must conclude once with the liberalization of electricity prices, Popescu replied that "the liberalization of this price and market rules are supposed to be made by ANRE and not by the Ministry."

The Minister of Labour and Social Protection, Raluca Turcan, met on Tuesday with the representatives of the employers' and trade unions' confederations, one of the topics of discussion being the draft normative act regarding the establishment of social protection measures for the vulnerable energy consumer.

According to a relevant ministry's release sent to AGERPRES, regarding the protection of the vulnerable consumer in the energy system in order to prevent and fight poverty, the draft normative act discussed and agreed with the trade unions and employers' confederations proposes the following measures for social protection: aid for social protection housing during the cold season, the energy supplement and the ban on disconnection from energy sources.

The electricity market was completely liberalized on January 1, 2021. Starting with this date, consumers who were until now in a regulated regime and kept the current contract, risked paying higher prices by 13-26pct.

ANRE announced that it extends until March 31, 2021, from January 31, the period in which household consumers can conclude supply contracts on the regulated market, and suppliers have agreed to this proposal.