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Consumers to get much-needed extra protections from their energy suppliers

Consumers would get extra protections from their energy suppliers, according to [new proposals the European Commission published today](#) to revamp the bloc's electricity market.

The proposals seek to address some of the worst effects of the energy crisis on consumers, when rapidly rising fossil gas prices sent electricity prices through the roof.

The Commission is proposing a raft of new measures, including more choice of contracts, better consumer protections and the possibility for consumers to 'crowd-share' with their peers any excess electricity they produce (e.g., from their solar panels). Other measures should also help to stabilise electricity prices.

BEUC Director General Monique Goyens said: "Consumers have paid an enormous price for the ongoing energy crisis – first through rapidly rising bills, second through the inflationary impact this had on many other basic goods and services, like food. The Commission's plans to offer consumers extra protections are much needed. For instance, vulnerable consumers who are unable to pay for their electricity bills would not need to fear disconnections anymore. Consumers would have more clarity about what they're agreeing to and suppliers would not be able to change the rules of the game after a contract is signed. They would be prevented from unilaterally increasing the price of fixed-price contracts before they expire. This is a major move, seeing how most consumers were left with no choice when their contract changed. Requiring energy suppliers to buy more of their energy ahead of time should also help to stabilise electricity prices for consumers. We hope to see the same ambition from the European Parliament and Member States on these proposals now".

What the proposals would mean in detail:

- **Vulnerable consumers would be protected against electricity disconnections.** Suppliers and national regulators would be required to support consumers struggling to pay their energy bills, by providing energy savings advice.
- Energy suppliers would be required to offer **fixed price offers. Unilateral price increases of these offers would be banned.**
- **An obligation for energy suppliers to inform consumers in concise and simple language** about the terms of conditions of their contracts.
- **Broadening consumers' right to share the electricity they produce** with their peers (e.g. the excess electricity produced by rooftop solar panels). This would facilitate consumers' access to cheap renewable electricity even without owning solar panels or joining an energy community.
- A requirement for countries to **appoint a supplier of last resort.** When suppliers go bankrupt, this would allow consumers to be swiftly switched onto a new supplier and receive all information that they need in a timely manner.
- **A requirement for energy suppliers to 'hedge'** their supply contracts, buying energy ahead of time, making them less vulnerable to sudden price spikes to avoid bankruptcies.

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