

# Cyprus: Protection of energy consumers

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## **Perspective on protection of energy consumers in the policy debate**

Energy consumers in Cyprus are protected by means of two measures: disconnection prohibition for specific groups of vulnerable individuals in special circumstances and a special electricity tariff available to vulnerable consumer groups defined according to national legislation (Kyprianou & Serghides, 2020). Both measures concern electric power, which is the only source of energy distributed on a nationwide grid.

Prohibition of disconnection in critical periods was implemented as a temporary measure in 2014 and was available to a wide range of vulnerable consumers, as specified within Decree 218/2013 on the Law for the Regulation of Electricity Market (Kyprianou et al., 2019; MCIT, 2013). In 2015 this measure became permanent and was revised to apply only to vulnerable consumers living in life-threatening conditions (MECIT, 2015).

The special electricity tariff has been offered to a wide range of vulnerable consumers since 2006 and is financed from a surcharge on the electricity bills of all other consumers (a public service obligation) (Kyprianou & Serghides, 2020). In the period 2013-2016 it was revised several times in order to better specify (and expand) the groups of vulnerable individuals allowed to benefit from it. For example, individuals suffering from multiple sclerosis and those using haemodialysis have been officially recognized as groups of vulnerable consumers entitled to the special tariff (EAC, 2018). A new ministerial order is expected to be released in 2020, revising definitions of qualifying vulnerable consumer groups and imposing income criteria (Mesimeris et al., 2020).

The abovementioned measures are framed within legislation regarding the regulation of the electricity market and are linked to the definition of vulnerable

consumers (Cyprus Parliament, 2012). Vulnerable consumers are linked to energy poverty in the legislation on the regulation of the electricity market (Cyprus Parliament, 2012, p. 79); however, there is no mention of minimum or maximum amounts of energy consumption allowed per individual or for specific groups of vulnerable consumers. Therefore, although measures are superficially linked to energy poverty in Cyprus, they are not directed specifically to energy vulnerable consumers but instead to an array of individuals vulnerable to poverty in general.

## **Research perspective on protection of energy consumers in the policy debate**

At the moment there has been no academic research published on the protection of energy consumers in policy debates. Data can be found on the EPOV database of knowledge and resources (EPOV, 2018).

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