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With the surge in photovoltaic capacity, ambitious plans for renewables overall and a collapse in the coal power segment, Bulgaria needs urgent grid upgrades alongside energy storage. Solar and wind power are intermittent - completely dependent on the weather. To provide balancing - achieve equilibrium with intraday shifts in electricity demand, the government earmarked a large chunk of funds from its National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) for subsidies for energy storage units.

The deadline for applications is November 21. The RESTORE program will cover expenses incurred after June 25, the Ministry of Energy said. Companies will compete for EUR 589 million.

Hydropower plants can balance the grid as well, though risks are rising with chronic drought conditions. Moreover, the country’s only pumped storage hydropower plant, Chaira, is still out of order. Bulgaria is developing a plan for another two large facilities of the kind.

The Ministry of Energy acknowledged that it is issuing the public call for standalone energy storage units after a long delay. The main objective of the investment is to facilitate a significant increase in the share of wind and solar power in the energy mix and to guarantee the security and stability of the national electricity system.

The scheme is intended for at least 3 GWh of usable (guaranteed) storage capacity for the grid. The selected units need to be connected to the transmission network, run by Electricity System Operator or ESO, even if they also work on the distribution level - low-voltage network, according to the rules of the competitive procedure.

Each firm can apply for up to EUR 75.9 million per project. Participants can qualify multiple projects, but combined state per beneficiary aid can’t surpass one sixth of the total sum - EUR 98.2 million. The maximum is 50% of eligible costs and no more than EUR 189,700 per MWh, excluding value-added tax.

The selected energy storage facilities must be put into operation by the end of March 2026. Authorities will check the status of every project in May 2025, the announcement reads.

Renalfa IPP commissioned its first utility-scale battery energy storage system in June. The 25 MW - 55 MWh facility in the town of Razlog in southwest Bulgaria is colocated with a 33 MW photovoltaic plant.

Bulgaria is relying heavily on battery technology and energy storage overall in its energy transition. Belgian company ABEE launched a EUR 1.1 billion project in December for a battery plant, recycling facility and a research and development center.

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