FRAUDS BY ENERGY PROVIDERS - UOKIK’S DECISION

* **The President of UOKiK issued a decision on the Proton Polska Energia company (former Gasoenergia Polskie Zakłady Energetyczne).**
* **The company misled consumers, including by impersonating their current electricity and gas provider.**
* **The fine on Proton Polska Energia amounted to almost PLN 380,000.**

**[Warsaw, 6 March 2020]** The President of the Office of Competition and Consumer Protection (UOKiK) issued a decision regarding the Proton Polska Energia company (former Gasoenergia Polskie Zakłady Energetyczne). Its representatives visited consumers at home, offering them new contracts for supplying electricity and gas. The company also contacted consumers by phone.

UOKiK initiated proceedings against Gasoenergia after receiving consumer complaints and notifications from consumer ombudsmen. According to them, the company’s representatives visited consumers at home claiming to represent their current energy or gas provider. They offered to conclude a new, more advantageous contract or informed about the need to extend/update the old contract or the need to read the meter. The documents presented to consumers to sign were described as a confirmation of the work performed. Only when customers received an invoice did they realise they had concluded a contract with a new provider. Moreover, the salesmen told them the new contract would be more advantageous and the charges would be lower. It turned out to be not true.

*“Misleading consumers as to the undertaking's identity is not only illegal, but also unethical. The more so as the victims of such practices are mainly elderly people who are very trusting and often also lonely. This is another decision regarding impersonation of the current service provider resulting in a financial penalty,”* says Tomasz Chróstny, President of UOKiK.

The Gasoenergia representatives did not give copies of concluded contracts to consumers, thus preventing them from reading their content. This also hindered the pursuit of potential claims. In addition, they did not provide information about the customer’s right to withdraw from the off-premises contract within 14 days.

The salesmen also concealed from consumers that when signing a contract for energy supply they also signed a contract for gas supply, and vice versa. Moreover, they exerted pressure on consumers when concluding the contract and prevented them from reading the content. The company also sent letters to consumers, from whom the salesmen did not obtain all the data, suggesting that failure to complete the requested documents or provide information the salesmen did not obtain during home visits would inevitably result in legal liability, including financial penalty. The company used the *Rzetelna Firma* (Reliable Company) programme mark in its correspondence without any right to do this because it did not participate in this programme.

**The President of UOKiK concluded that the Proton company (former Gasonenergia) violated the collective interests of consumers, therefore a fine of almost PLN 380,000** (PLN 379,242) **was imposed on the company.**

**Be careful when signing a contract with an energy provider!** [Watch a short video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=34&v=g3_swDLSfHc) and learn how to avoid traps. You can seek free assistance from a consumer ombudsman in your city or district or by calling the consumer helpline: 801 440 220.

**Consumer support:**

Phone: +48 801 440 220 or +48 22 290 89 16 – consumer helpline
e-mail: porady@dlakonsumentow.pl
[Consumer ombudsmen](https://uokik.gov.pl/pomoc.php) – in your town or district
Regional Consumer Centres: Phone: +48 22 299 60 90 [dlakonsumenta.pl](http://www.dlakonsumenta.pl/) organisation