

PRESS RELEASE

Natural Gas Consumption in Western Europe sets a new record in 1998

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According to preliminary figures and estimates from Eurogas Member Companies and from the natural gas organisations in Greece, Luxembourg and Portugal, total natural gas consumption in Western Europe¹ amounted to almost 14365 Petajoule (PJ) i.e. 368 billion cubic metres (BCM)², i.e. 309 million tons of oil equivalent (MTOE)³, up by 4.1% in comparison to 1997, when gas consumption in Western Europe reached almost 13795 PJ / 354 BCM / 297 MTOE.

This increase confirms the general trend of a steady growth of gas consumption, after the decrease induced by warm weather in 1997 and in spite of even milder weather conditions in some European countries in 1998. The consumption in 1998 sets a new record, well above the previous record level in 1996 of 13888 PJ / 356 BCM / 299 MTOE.

The main reasons for this recovery are:

- strong increases in gas consumption for power generation (both by power companies and industrial customers for auto-production of electricity);
- firm growth of gas consumption in the industrial sector;
- steady increase in the numbers of customers in all sectors.

The increases in customers numbers confirm the fact that, owing to its environmental and economic benefits, natural gas remains the preferred fuel in the energy market. Over the last 5 years' period, natural gas consumption in Western Europe has increased by 26%, and the number of customers by 12%, reaching the level of nearly 78 millions of customers (number of gas sales meters).

In 1998, as in previous years, there have been large differences by country in national consumption development. In Finland, Belgium, Denmark and Italy, total gas consumption increased respectively by 15.1%, 10.0%, 9.2% and 7.6%, in particular because of a strong increase in gas consumption for power generation and a good rise in the number of customers. Demand rose firmly in Spain as well (+6.7%), thanks to the increase of consumption in the industrial and residential sectors. In the United Kingdom and in France demand grew in all sectors, resulting in an overall increase respectively of 3.6% and 6.7%.

Total supplies in Western Europe (own production and imports) amounted to just over 14350 PJ / 368 BCM / 309 MTOE, and were slightly lower than consumption. The difference was taken from storage.

Indigenous production (Norway included) accounted for 68% of total supplies; imports from Russia for 18%, Algeria for 13%, and other sources for less than 1%.

The UK was confirmed as the largest gas producing country in Western Europe in 1998 (with 3500 PJ / 90 BCM / 75 MTOE), followed by the Netherlands (2662 PJ / 68 BCM / 57 MTOE).



Eurogas is the European Union of the Natural Gas Industry. In 1998, the member companies of Eurogas employed about 150.000 persons, and supplied over 200 million individual consumers.

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¹ See attached table

² Applied calorific value : 39MJ/cubic metre GCV

³ Applied calorific value : 41.86 PJ/MTOE NCV

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DEVELOPMENTS IN WESTERN EUROPEAN* NATURAL GAS CONSUMPTION 1996 – 1998

PETAJOULE (PJ)	1996 CONSUMPTION	1997 CONSUMPTION	1998 CONSUMPTION (PRELIMINARY)	% CHANGE 1998/1996 (PRELIMINARY)	% CHANGE 1998/1997 (PRELIMINARY)
AUSTRIA	317.3	305.1	312.6	-1.5%	2.5%
BELGIUM	549.1	523.8	576.3	5.0%	10.0%
DENMARK	155.2	160.5	175.3	3.4%	9.2%
FINLAND	138.3	135.0	155.4	12.4%	15.1%
FRANCE	1,508.6	1,453.0	1,550.0	2.7%	6.7%
GERMANY	3,331.1	3,222.2	3,235.0	-2.9%	0.4%
GREECE	1.9	7.7	31.5	1557.9%	309.1%
IRELAND	123.3	128.9	130.4	5.8%	1.2%
ITALY	2,140.6	2,209.0	2,377.3	11.1%	7.6%
LUXEMBOURG	28.4	29.1	29.3	3.2%	0.7%
NETHERLANDS	1,733.3	1,631.4	1,617.8	-6.7%	-0.8%
PORTUGAL	0.0	4.0	32.2	NC	705.0%
SPAIN	387.7	514.4	549.1	41.6%	6.7%
SWEDEN	37.6	37.5	37.3	-0.8%	-0.5%
SWITZERLAND	110.6	106.7	109.9	-0.6%	3.0%
UNITED KINGDOM	3,325.0	3,325.0	3,446.0	3.6%	3.6%
TOTAL (PJ)	13,888	13,793	14,365	3.4%	4.1%
TOTAL (MTOE)	299	297	309	3.4%	4.1%
TOTAL (BCM)	356	354	368	3.4%	4.1%

* Norway, though a major gas producer, has insignificant inland consumption.

The figures in the table are expressed in Petajoules (PJ) because of different national gas qualities with different calorific values

Total figures are expressed in million tons of oil equivalent (1 MTOE = 41.86 PJ NCV) and in billion cubic meters (BCM), with a typical Gross Calorific Value of 39 MJ per cubic meter