

Natural gas: common rules for the internal market

1991/0385(COD) - 22/06/1998 - Final act

OBJECTIVE: to further the completion of the internal energy market by establishing common rules for the transmission, distribution, supply and storage of natural gas. **COMMUNITY MEASURE:** Directive 98/30/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning common rules for the internal market in natural gas. **SUBSTANCE:** The directive lays down the rules relating to the organisation and functioning of the natural gas sector, including liquified natural gas (LNG), access to the market, the operation of systems and the criteria and procedures applicable to the granting of authorisations for transmission, distribution, supply and storage of natural gas. The directive introduces competition into the natural gas sector to improve the Community's competitiveness and reinforce security of supply while introducing public service obligations. The internal market in natural gas will be gradually opened up on the basis of both qualitative and quantitative criteria, but Member States may if they wish open up their market more rapidly than the directive requires. The internal market must be built up by establishing a right of access to the network and the possibility to build new parallel pipelines. Member States may opt for a negotiated access network or a regulated access network or both types of network. Access to upstream pipeline networks is needed to create a competitive market in natural gas, but such access must take account of the special economic, technical, and operational characteristics of such networks. Access to the network and authorisation to construct and/or operate networks must be based on the principles of objectivity, transparency and non-discrimination. It must be possible to refuse access to the network under certain circumstances; reasons must be given for such refusals. An independent authority must be designated in each Member State to settle disputes concerning access to the network. Derogations must be possible in certain cases to take account of the special characteristics of the natural gas market; in particular, such derogations may be granted to avoid serious economic and financial difficulties because of 'take or pay' obligations. Differences between national networks are recognised: consequently, temporary derogations must also be possible with regard to national markets and other geographically limited zones where the natural gas market has not yet reached a developed stage. **ENTRY INTO FORCE:** 10/08/1998. **DEADLINE FOR TRANSPOSITION:** 10/08/2000.