press release
Milano, 30 November 2021

Hera Group: with NexMeter the gas meter goes green

Hera's smart gas meter 4.0, the first of its kind internationally in terms of safety functions, is already prepared for its first experimentation in the network with hydrogen, and its construction in recycled plastic further confirms the commitment to the energy transition and circularity. Not only equipped with outstanding technology and functions, including reducing gas dispersion into the atmosphere, the device is at the centre of the first experimentation in Italy with the use of hydrogen in domestic gas distribution

With the Hera Group, also gas distribution is going green. NexMeter, Hera's smart gas meter 4.0, the first of its kind worldwide in terms of cutting-edge technology and safety functions, including reducing gas dispersion into the atmosphere, will be made from recycled plastic and can already be used for distributing hydrogen in the network up to a maximum of 20% compatibility, with a trial planned in the coming months.
This advanced meter is therefore a concrete example of the Hera Group's commitment to the energy transition and carbon neutrality, focusing on green gases, such as biomethane, hydrogen and green syngas, and contributing to the fight against climate change.
Furthermore, it results from Hera's experience and know-how in management of the gas distribution service, combined with continuous investments in innovation, research and development, and confirms the Group's collaboration with outstanding partners: Panasonic, the Japanese multinational global leader in electronic products and components, and Pietro Fiorentini, an Italian company and market leader in creating products and services for the entire natural gas chain.
The advanced version of NexMeter will be previewed today in Milan at Enlit, the most important event in the sector.

NexMeter gets the "stamp" for hydrogen operation
The new NexMeter is now ready to be used with hydrogen distributed through the network, having obtained the "stamp of approval" certifying its compatibility with green gas mixtures. This is thanks to the metrological certification carried out by Tifernogas, a notified body pursuant to the relevant Directives (2014/32/EU MI-002 and MI-008), and the construction analysis concerning the compatibility of its materials with blending hydrogen and methane, carried out by RINA, an international engineering, consulting, inspection, quality assurance and quality control company in the energy sector.

An immediate debut: initial experiments with hydrogen in the domestic gas network soon to be underway
NexMeter's first field test involving hydrogen will be carried out during the next few months, as part of a wider set of activities aimed at certifying the entire Hera Group's supply chain as qualified to use green gases. More specifically, it involves introducing a mixture of natural gas and hydrogen into a portion of the distribution network managed by the Group, involving around thirty households in Castelfranco Emilia in Modena province.
This is the first experiment of this kind in Italy as regards domestic gas distribution, and it aims at studying innovative solutions to contribute to the local area's needs as regards decarbonisation, with benefits for the environment as well.
The trial is also part of the Group's broader strategy for developing hydrogen in a two-fold perspective: on the one hand, upgrading its assets, starting with the gas distribution networks, and on the other, creating new business opportunities, which Hera can make the most of by leveraging its multi-business expertise, including partnerships with other major industrial operators.

A green device with environmental benefits with over 68% of its elements made in recycled plastic

NexMeter's advanced functions have numerous environmental and economic benefits: eliminating leaks reduces methane dispersion, which in turn is highly polluting, while the entire process of optimising gas network management has a positive impact on the performance and emissions of user appliances, first and foremost boilers. Its ability to detect and signal to users even the smallest gas leaks also helps contain costs in their bills. But that's not all: the new NexMeter model will be the first meter on the market with most of its components made of recycled plastic, reaching over 68%.

To achieve this result, the Hera Group, which has always been committed to the circular economy and regenerating resources, can count on the expertise of its subsidiary Aliplast, a leader in plastic recycling and regeneration, with plants in Italy and abroad, and an annual production of around 100,000 tonnes of recycled plastic.

The metre's manuals are also green and smart, with a QR code included on the meter instead of a classic instruction manual, to avoid paper consumption, and packaging in recycled cardboard.

300,000 NexMeter meters installed by 2023 in earthquake-prone areas

The previous model of NexMeter, we should recall, was already equipped with advanced functions, including a cutting-edge "mini-computer" offering absolute precision and safety, since it is capable of intercepting in real time even minimal leaks or tremors in the event of earthquakes. Launched in 2019, these devices are still being installed, with 70,000 devices already in operation. Thanks to approximately 45 million in investments, the Group's goal is to reach 300,000 NexMeters installed by 2023, 200,000 of which will be made of recycled plastic. The areas concerned are those served by the Hera Group's distribution companies, starting with areas classified as at risk of earthquakes or where the latter have recently occurred, such as Emilia-Romagna and Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

"With NexMeter, two years ago, we gave concrete proof of our ability to invest and innovate in a sector that remains quite traditional, such as gas distribution, paying particular attention to safety and reducing gas dispersion into the atmosphere, a factor that was also at the centre of debates during the recent Cop26 – states **Stefano Venier, CEO of the Hera Group** – Today, with this new version of the device, ready for hydrogen and made of recycled plastic, we are taking a further step forward, continuing to exploit our in-depth experience in this field with the skills offered by the most qualified partners, nationally and internationally. Actions and investments for the circular economy and innovation guide, indeed, the strategies set out in our Business Plan, in line with European guidelines and the goals on the UN 2030 Agenda. As a local multi-utility, we also have the task of growing while promoting sustainable development in the communities we serve, with advanced solutions that respect the environment and meet the safety and quality needs of citizens. NexMeter is a tangible example of our commitment to carrying out this mission in the best possible way."

"We are honoured to have contributed to the development of NexMeter which today added the use of green gas, especially hydrogen, to the safety functions, meeting the needs that the ecological transition imposes – states **Motokazu Nishii, Head of Meter Device Business, Smart Energy System Business Division, Electric Works Company, Panasonic Corporation** – This was possible thanks to Panasonic technology in ultrasonic measurement and safety functions with experience on the market for over 35 years, and, more importantly, to the collaboration with the Hera Group. The result is NexMeter which is a unique reference in the smart gas metering market. Panasonic will continue to work with the Hera Group to create a company where people can live better and more comfortably thanks to the use of clean energy and increasingly innovative solutions".

"The NexMeter, whose first version was already extremely innovative due to its advanced sensors and safety functions, has in this new phase achieved greater component sustainability and hydrogen compatibility" – states **Cristiano Nardi, Executive Chairman of the Pietro Fiorentini Group** – The

project's success confirms Pietro Fiorentini's commitment towards establishing a continuous and constructive dialogue with our partners Hera and Panasonic, in order to work together in creating technologically advanced, competitive and fully environmentally friendly solutions, all of which are very important issues for our Group."

*The **Hera Group** is among Italy's largest multi-utilities, working mainly in the environment (waste collection and treatment), energy (electricity and gas distribution and sales, energy services) and water (aqueduct, sewerage and purification) sectors. Other services offered include public lighting and telecommunications. The Group employs over 9,000 employees who meet the needs of about 5 million citizens in over 300 municipalities mainly located in Emilia-Romagna, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Marche, Tuscany and Abruzzo. A listed company since 2003, as of 18 March 2019 Hera has been included in the FTSE MIB. In 2020 the company has also been included by S&P Global in the Dow Jones Sustainability Index, both World and Europe, been confirmed once again in 2021 as the world's best multi-utility in all three ESG dimensions.*

https://eng.gruppohera.it/

***Panasonic Corporation** is a global leader developing innovative technologies and solutions for wide-ranging applications in the consumer electronics, housing, automotive, and B2B sectors. The company, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2018, operates 522 subsidiaries and 69 associated companies worldwide and reported consolidated net sales of Euro 54.02 billion (6,698.8 billion yen) for the year ended the 31st of March 2021. Committed to pursuing new value through collaborative innovation, the company uses its technologies to create a better life and a better world for customers.*

https://www.panasonic.com/global

***Pietro Fiorentini**, founded in Bologna in 1940, is today one of the major industrial companies in the North East of Italy, with headquarters in Arcugnano (Vicenza). The Group has around 30 locations amongst its manufacturing and commercial sites, both in Italy and abroad, and employs around 2,000 people worldwide. In 2020 it reached consolidated revenues around € 400 million, an increase of about 21% compared to 2019, over 67% generated inside EU. At the core of the company's production is a wide range of technologically advanced solutions all along the multi-gas system, with a leadership position in the Smart Metering sector and more generally in Smart Grids. More recently, as part of the energy transition process, the Group is accelerating its efforts to seize the new opportunities related to green energy sources such as biomethane, hydrogen and power to gas.*

https://www.fiorentini.com/en/

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