

press release

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The Hera Group presents NexMeter, the meter with the future in the mind: innovation and safety

The 2019 European Utility Week includes a preview of the new smart gas meter 4.0, provided with advanced technology and functions, and features that are unique on the international scene. Thanks to investments coming to 45 million euro, the first 300,000 units will be installed in some areas served by Hera

NexMeter, the new gas meter 4.0 conceived by the Hera Group, looks towards the future, today: provided with avant-garde technology and functions, above all concerning safety, and “environment friendly”, its features cannot be found elsewhere on the international scene.

This “smart” device was born out of the experience gained by Hera, one of Italy’s largest multi-utilities. The fruit of the know-how accumulated over time in gas distribution service management, it also owes much to the continuous investments made in innovation and research and development. The Hera Group has already allocated roughly 45 million euro in investments to install the first 300,000 meters over the upcoming three years.

The companies chosen as partners are among the most qualified, nationally and internationally: the Japanese multinational Panasonic, a global leader in electronic product and component manufacturing, and Pietro Fiorentini, one of Italy’s foremost enterprises involved in providing products and services for the entire natural gas sector.

Precisely because of its advanced functions and the international team involved in its development, a preview of NexMeter was given yesterday afternoon in Paris, in the prestigious setting of the 2019 European Utility Week, the sector’s most important showcase.

A “mini-computer”, leading the way in innovation and safety

NexMeter is much more than a gas meter: it’s a “mini-computer” whose features outperform the other devices now seen on the market. Provided with advanced technology – now, for the first time, contained within the device itself and based on algorithms, sensors and ultrasounds – and characteristics giving it an unrivalled precision, it offers advanced safety functions, supporting a fundamental aspect of gas services.

The specific monitoring and warning tools with which it is provided allow it to prevent accidents in a range of situations, offering greater protection to buildings and citizens, along the lines of electric circuit breakers.

For example, the system’s regular functioning is constantly checked by verifying supply and network pressure, immediately reporting any excess

USEFUL LINKS

<https://eng.gruppohera.it/>

<https://eng.gruppohera.it/nexmeter/>

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or drop. The meter is able to signal any kind of gas leak: not only large, short-term losses due to breakage or voluntary damage, but also the smaller, continuous leaks that customers might not notice right away. It can thus interrupt supply in case of irregularities, making the system safe. Furthermore, it is able to detect tremors caused by earthquakes in real time, and in this case as well it interrupts gas supply and thus acts towards providing better safety.

Real time communication between metres, control systems and users

In addition to periodically sending ordinary information as to actual consumption, like other smart gas meters, in case of emergency NexMeter is activated and contacts the Group's central remote control facility in Forlì. This avant-garde technological centre is one of Europe's largest, and monitors Hera's networks and plants across the entire area served in real time. In turn, the remote control facility, if it has a certain way to contact the user, attempts to send them a warning signal. In any event, the device's status can be checked by customers themselves on the meter's display, thanks to a simple and immediately comprehensible interface.

NexMeter is environment friendly

Not only is NexMeter "smart" and precise, it's also a green assistant who will help cut spending for consumption. Thanks to its ability to detect even slight gas leaks and signal them to users, NexMeter contributes to reducing the cost of bills.

Furthermore, it benefits the environment by promoting a smart use of energy and favouring a rational use of resources. By eliminating leaks, indeed, it also reduces methane dispersion, which is highly pollutant, while the entire process of optimising gas network management has a positive effect on the performance and emissions of many devices, first and foremost hot water heaters. NexMeter – in addition to being entirely compatible with all kinds of networks and plants – is already suitable for future "clean gas" systems, such as biomethane.

One can only add that it is the first meter built out of materials that contain recycled plastic, reflecting Hera's long-standing attention towards the environment and a circular economy. Moving in this same direction, Hera was the first company in Italy to introduce recycled plastic materials into the tubes of its own networks.

An opportunity for local areas: the first installations and the next steps

Following up on the opportunities offered by the large-scale gas meter substitution foreseen by Italian regulations (resolution ARG/gas 155/08), Hera's new 4.0 meter meets possible developments in legislation in advance, introducing features that go beyond current requirements and putting innovative technology at the service of the needs shared by household and non-household users.

As early as the next few months, installation of the device will be launched in some areas served by the Group: overall, during the next three years, 300,000 devices will be installed in localities served by Hera, mainly in Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Emilia-Romagna, in the provinces of Modena and Ferrara, areas classified as being at risk of earthquakes or in which similar events have recently occurred.

A valuable project

NexMeter's features respect the interventions outlined in the 2019-2021 strategic framework drafted by Italy's Energy, Network and Environment Authority (ARERA). These objectives are challenging in terms of innovation, safety and attention towards the environment, with respect to which the Italian authority orients sector companies. The presentation of NexMeter confirms that the Hera Group is fully able and ready to act on these indications, making the most of its employees' professional skills and potential for innovation.



"With NexMeter", states **Stefano Venier**, CEO of the Hera Group, "we are bringing a new wave of innovation into a business, gas distribution, that is still quite traditional. To develop it in the best way possible, we have brought together our considerable experience in the gas distribution sector together with the skills of the most qualified national and international partners. In a broader sense, innovation is one of our strategic priorities, sustained by a significant economic investment, coming to over 380 million euro in the five years covered by our latest Business plan. It is with initiatives such as this, indeed, that the Hera Group carries out its own mission, already today, with technology coming from the future, meeting the needs of the citizens who live in the areas we serve. All of this is accompanied by constant attention towards the environment: our meter in fact promotes a smart use of energy and an efficient use of resources, which are two of the drivers according to which the Hera Group has established its commitment towards sustainability".

"This project could not be accomplished without Gruppo Hera's solid desire and intention to develop and deploy new gas smart meter which equipped with safety functions. It is honourable for Panasonic to contribute as a key devices supplier of which technology had been proven more than 35 years with 120 million sets delivered in Japan and will enormously enhance the safety level in the gas distribution network in Italy" said **Anton Terasaki**, Managing Director of Smart Energy System Business Division Appliances Company, Panasonic Corporation.

"We are very enthusiastic about our work on this innovative project for smart meters with advanced features in safety and reliability. It will provide Hera's customers and the entire supply chain with a significant amount of data, fundamental for a safe, efficient and enlightened use of gas", states **Cristiano Nardi**, Executive Chairman of the Pietro Fiorentini Group. "Our collaboration with Panasonic fully respects our policy of open innovation that leads us to collaborate with many international partners, universities and research centres".

*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 almost 9,000 employees who meet the needs of 4.4 million citizens in over 350 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.*

***Panasonic** is worldwide leader in the development and manufacture of electronic products for a wide range of consumer, business, and industrial needs. Based in Osaka, Japan, the company recorded consolidated net sales of 8.0 Trillion Yen for the year ended in March 31 2019. The Company's shares are listed on the Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, and New York (NYSE: PC) stock exchanges.*

***Pietro Fiorentini** is an international group comprising twenty-six branches and subsidiaries. Based in Arcugnano (Vicenza), it provides a wide range of products, systems and services to the Oil & Gas sector, with eleven manufacturing facilities worldwide. It was recently included by the Centro Studi ItalyPost in a list of the one hundred Italian companies having an annual turnover coming to between 120 and 500 million euro who have performed the best operationally and financially from 2011 to the present. Pietro Fiorentini's mission is strongly oriented towards customer centricity and environmental protection, applying the most modern technologies to meet the needs of the market and to promote the development of clean and safe energy, thanks to new solutions including renewable gas and hydrogen.*