Price Comparison Tools: case studies

Annex 1 to CEER Draft advice on Price Comparison Tools

Ref: C11-CEM-45-05a
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INFORMATION PAGE

Abstract

This document (C11-CEM-45-05a) presents eleven case studies on Price Comparison Tools (PCT) for customers provided by NRAs.

This report is an Annex to CEER Draft advice on Price Comparison Tools (C11-CEM-45-05).

Target Audience

Energy suppliers, traders, gas/electricity customers, gas/electricity industry, consumer representative groups, network operators, Member States, academics and other interested parties.

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Related Documents

CEER/ERGEG documents

- CEER Draft advice on Price Comparison Tools, CEER, September 2011, Ref. C11-CEM-45-5, http://www.energy-regulators.eu/portal/page/portal/EER_HOME/EER_CONSULT/OPEN%20PUBLIC%20CONSULTATIONS/Price%20Comparison%20tools/Background
- GGP on indicators for retail market monitoring for electricity and gas, ERGEG, October 2010, Ref. E10-RMF-27-03, http://www.energy-regulators.eu/portal/page/portal/EER_HOME/EER_PUBLICATIONS/CEER_PAPERS/Customers/Tab1/E10-RMF-27-03_final%20GGP%20IRMM_12-Oct-2010.pdf
- Status Review of the implementation of EC Good Practice Guidance for Billing, September 2010, Ref, E10-CEM-36-03, http://www.energy-regulators.eu/portal/page/portal/EER_HOME/EER_PUBLICATIONS/CEER_PAPERS/Guidelines%20of%20Good%20Practice/Other/E10-CEM-33-05_GGP-ComplaintHandling_10-Jun-2010.pdf
- GGP on customer complaint handling, reporting and classification, ERGEG, June 2010, Ref. E10-CEM-33-05, http://www.energy-regulators.eu/portal/page/portal/EER_HOME/EER_PUBLICATIONS/CEER_PAPERS/Guidelines%20of%20Good%20Practice/Other/E10-CEM-33-05_GGP-ComplaintHandling_10-Jun-2010.pdf
- Status review of the definitions of vulnerable customer, default supplier and supplier of last resort, ERGEG, July 2009, Ref. E09-CEM-26-04, http://www.energy-regulators.eu/portal/page/portal/EER_HOME/EER_PUBLICATIONS/CEER_PAPERS/Customers/Tab/E09-CEM-26-04_StatusReview_16-Jul-09.pdf
- Customer Information Handbook. A review of good practices, ERGEG, December 2006, Ref. E06-CPR-04-03, http://www.energy-

regulators.eu/portal/page/portal/EER_HOME/EER_PUBLICATIONS/CEER_PAPERS/Customers/2006/E06-CPR-04-03_Customer_Info_Handbook.pdf

External documents

- The functioning of the retail electricity markets for consumers in the European Union - Commission staff working paper, EC, November 2010, Ref. SEC(2010)1409 final, http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/strategy/docs/SWD_function_of_retail_electricity_en.pdf
- An energy policy for consumers - Commission staff working paper, EC, November 2010, Ref. SEC(2010)1407 final, http://ec.europa.eu/energy/gas_electricity/doc/forum_citizen_energy/sec(2010)1407.pdf

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1 Introduction

When developing its *Draft advice on price comparison tools*[1], CEER built its work upon case studies provided by NRAs. This document provides a summary of those case studies mentioned in the aforementioned draft advice.

Eleven NRAs provided information on either a price comparison tool run by the NRA (or in one case in cooperation with the NRA) or on private Price Comparison Websites (PCW) implemented in their country. One case study[2] also provided information on the PCW run by a consumer organisation.

This report provides case studies for the following countries:

1. Austria;
2. Belgium;
3. France;
4. Germany;
5. Italy;
6. The Netherlands;
7. Portugal;
8. Slovenia;
9. Spain;
10. Sweden; and
11. The United Kingdom (Great Britain).

The screen shots of the price comparison tools are in the local language of the country.

[1] CEER Draft advice on Price Comparison Tools, CEER, September 2011, Ref. C11-CEM-45-5

[2] delivered by the Portuguese NRA

2 Austria[3]

2.1 Independence

The only Austrian price comparison tool, the "Tarifkalkulator" was developed and is operated by the National Regulatory Authority (NRA). There was a small amount of financing by the Austrian Labour Chamber and the Austrian Chamber of Business. However, the regulator is solely responsible for the tool, providing its technical support, its administrators and taking care of most of the data insertion into the tool (although some suppliers have user-accounts to enter data themselves).

In order to get a list of all available offers, the user has to insert his/her postal code and his/her consumption[4] and click on "start".

2.2 Exhaustiveness

There are 60 suppliers covered in the comparison tool (representing 43% of Austrian suppliers). Only very small suppliers are not included in the database, therefore more than 95% of customers find all offers relevant to their profile. All alternative suppliers are covered. This means that customers who do not find their incumbent supplier in the calculation, in any case find all offers of other suppliers.

Local offers
Since users have to provide their postal code for a calculation, it is rather easy to depict local offers. However, some very small suppliers are not covered by the tool.

Who provides the data and how
Suppliers provide their price lists to the NRA for data entry. However, a considerable part of suppliers have an administrator account in the tool's system, enabling them to enter data themselves (E-Control's administrators check these for correctness). In the future, the majority of suppliers should be able to enter data themselves.

Legal obligation for companies to provide data
For the moment there is not a legal obligation for companies to provide data, but with the implementation of the 3rd Package suppliers have to provide their price information on all standard offers for customers who consume up to 100.000 kWh/annum (electricity) and 400.000 kWh/annum (gas).

[3] Situation as of March 2011

[4] estimation of consumption can be made based on size of household or flat

2.3 Transparency

Based on a yearly consumption in kWh, the Tarifkalkulator compares yearly prices[5]. On the basis of the user's current supplier and its offer, a yearly saving is calculated in Euro and depicted on the first list of results.

A detailed splitting of the prices in its components (i.e. energy, network and taxes) is available by clicking on every offer listed, as well as a detailed depiction of the relevant energy price in cent/kWh (excluding VAT).

The scale of consumption used as a basis of comparison is one year.

The Tarifkalkulator can compare offers for electricity and gas respectively, but not in combination (multi-utility offers).

2.4 Correctness & Accuracy

Data are constantly checked by the responsible administrators within E-Control, who investigate with suppliers, on supplier websites and also through information presented by customers (notifications of upcoming price changes which have to be indicated to customers 2 months before they become effective). The most powerful security mechanisms are however competitors who always have an eye on other suppliers' offers.

Price information presented in the Tarifkalkulator is updated daily. Therefore, it only compares current prices of all suppliers. If there is a price change planned and known in advance, the price tool shows a warning sign announcing an upcoming price increase.

Entry of a consumption value by the user is necessary to enable a comparison. If the user does not have his/her actual consumption value at hand, which is quite common, it is possible to create an estimation of yearly consumption based on the size of the user household (electricity) or size of living space (gas).

On the first page of the results (i.e. the ranking) only one cumulative yearly price is indicated. On the detailed page of every offer the price is split into all components.

Concerning bonuses and rebates, there are two possibilities of comparing offers: including rebates a customer gets for switching; and excluding those rebates for switching.

In any case, a rebate for switching is not deducted from the offer chosen as "my current offer of my current supplier".

All other rebates are only deducted if the bonus is not subject to certain conditions or regulations (such as minimum contract duration, binding period and etc.)

Data depicted are updated daily.

[5] i.e. energy + network + taxes and levies + VAT

Online user figures demonstrate that more than 90% of users reach a result.

2.5 User-friendliness

Relevant effort has been put in both the tool design and its usability, so that users find it easy to navigate and reach a valid comparison.

The measures taken to make the tool user-friendly are the following:

- Use of colours
- Use of button design
- Use of icons and user-dialogues

2.6 Accessibility

Customers may receive a calculation by phone on the Energy hotline, or via mail, email or fax, depending on the channel they prefer.

Concerning the special needs of disabled users, E-Control website follows the suggestions of the WAI-A organisation[6], which means it reaches a web accessibility standard of WCAG 2.0 (Web Content Accessibility Guidelines)[7].

The Tarifkalkulator can be found on E-Control website and also on the website of two big Austrian newspapers, on the website of the Austrian Chamber of Labour and Federal Economic Chamber.

Hyperlinks to the Tarifkalkulator on E-Control website are numerous.

The tool is advertised through the following means:

- Cooperation with 2 big, national newspapers.
- Direct link to the tool on all E-Control advertisements in newspapers and on websites, as well as on all E-Control informational materials.
- Participation in fairs and other customer information events

In 2010 more than half a million users have calculated a comparison with the Tarifkalkulator.

2.7 Additional information

Contract term, methods of payment are not compared but listed for every offer on the subpage listing all details.

[6] http://www.w3.org/WAI/

[7] http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG/

Other aspects of customer information (e.g. how to switch supplier, etc.) can be found in the Tarifkalkulator (short information under “Wechseln”) and on E-Control website (in greater detail).

The information on the energy mix is indicated for every offer, using a bar chart on the first (ranking) page of the result.

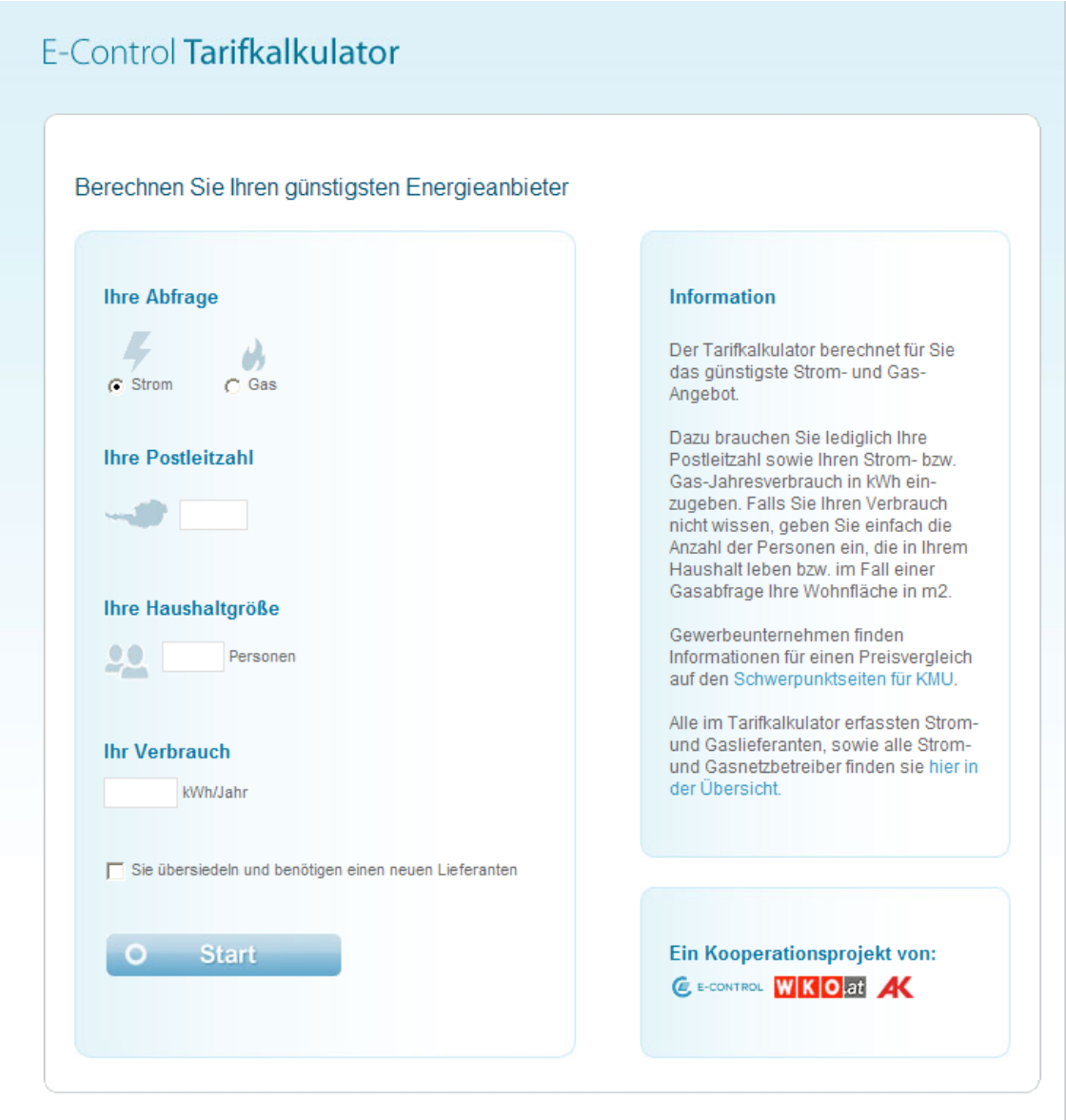

Figure 1: Price comparison tool in Austria - First page

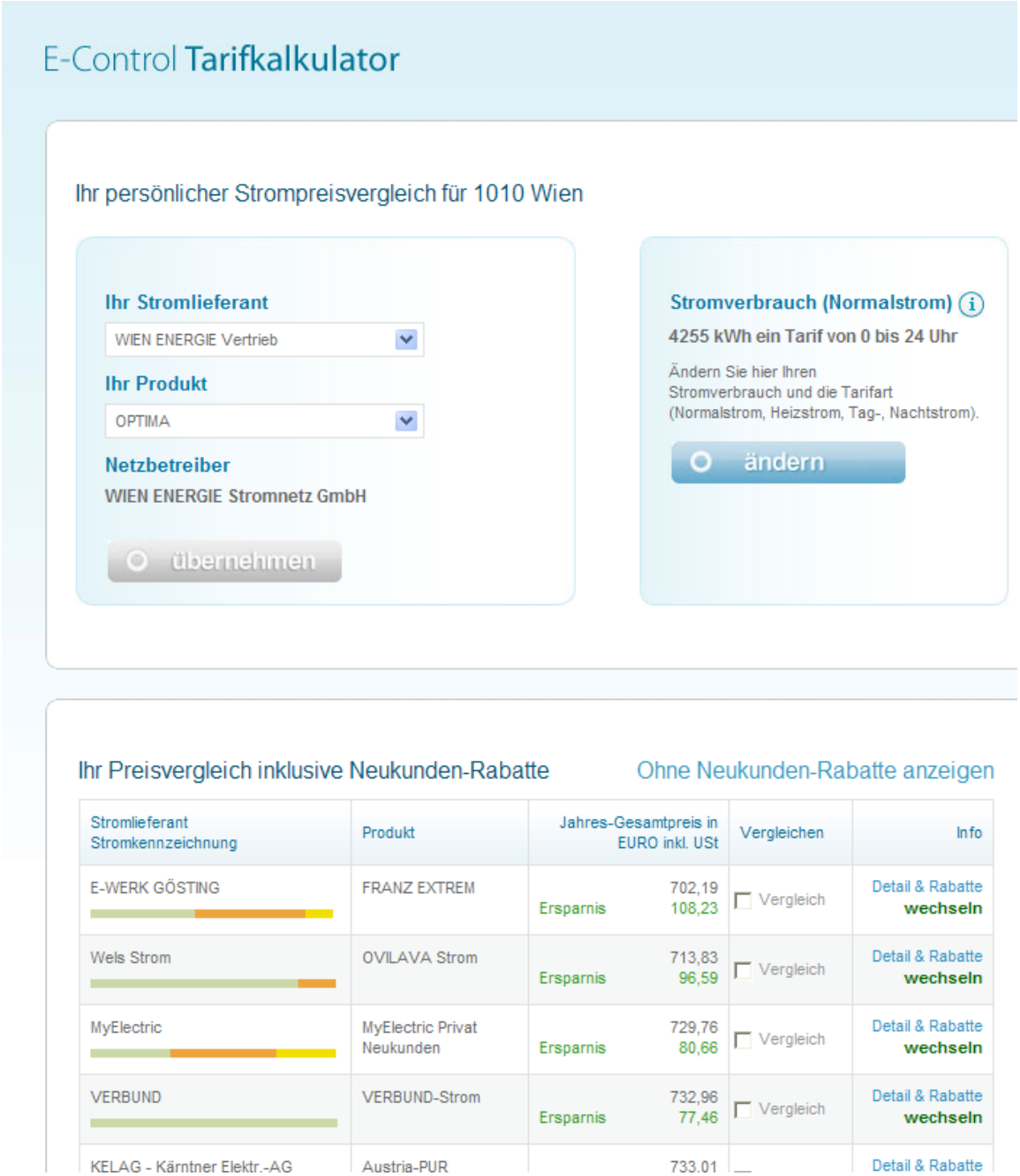

Figure 2: Price comparison tool in Austria - Ranking page (Part 1)

KELAG - Kärntner Elektr.-AG	Austria-PUR	Ersparnis	733,01 77,41	Vergleich	Detail & Rabatte wechseln
VKW Vorarlberger Kraftwerke AG	VKW Österreichstrom	Ersparnis	744,19 66,23	Vergleich	Detail & Rabatte wechseln
oekostrom	oekostrom basic	Ersparnis	745,90 64,52	Vergleich	Detail & Rabatte wechseln
Energie Klagenfurt GmbH	EKG-Strom	Ersparnis	748,22 62,20	Vergleich	Detail & Rabatte wechseln
AAE Naturstrom Vertrieb GmbH	AAE Naturstrom	Ersparnis	751,72 58,70	Vergleich	Detail & Rabatte wechseln
AAE Naturstrom Vertrieb GmbH	AAE Kleinwasserkraft	Ersparnis	761,93 48,49	Vergleich	Detail & Rabatte wechseln
AAE Naturstrom Vertrieb GmbH	AAE Naturstrom PLUS	Ersparnis	772,14 38,28	Vergleich	Detail & Rabatte wechseln
WEIZER Naturenergie	WNE Basistarif	Ersparnis	776,23 34,19	Vergleich	Detail & Rabatte wechseln
switch	switch strom	Ersparnis	777,71 32,71	Vergleich	Detail & Rabatte wechseln
Unsere Wasserkraft	Unsere Wasserkraft HAUSHALT	Ersparnis	778,01 32,41	Vergleich	Detail & Rabatte wechseln
WIEN ENERGIE Vertrieb	OPTIMA Online	Hinweis Ersparnis	783,72 26,70	Vergleich	Detail & Rabatte wechseln
WIEN ENERGIE Vertrieb	OPTIMA Neuanlage	Hinweis Ersparnis	810,42 0,00	Vergleich	Detail & Rabatte wechseln
WIEN ENERGIE Vertrieb	OPTIMA	Preis Ihres Produkts	810,42	Vergleich starten	Detail & Rabatte wechseln
Naturkraft Energievertrieb	NaturStrom Privat	Mehrkosten	828,44 18,02	Vergleich	Detail & Rabatte wechseln
oekostrom	oekostrom premium	Mehrkosten	830,15 19,73	Vergleich	Detail & Rabatte wechseln

Erneuerbare Energie Fossil Nuklear Tagesaktuelle Preise, 15.02.2011

Figure 3: Price comparison tool in Austria - Ranking page (Part 2)

E-Control **Tarifkalkulator**

Detailinformationen **VERBUND**

Ihre Angaben

Datum:	15.02.2011
Stromlieferant:	VERBUND
Produktname:	VERBUND-Strom (Strom)
Tarifart:	ein Tarif von 0 bis 24 Uhr
Verbrauch:	4255 kWh/Jahr
Netzbetreiber:	WIEN ENERGIE Stromnetz GmbH

Verbund

Serviceline
Am Hof 6a
Wien 1010

Tel: 0800 210 210
Fax: 05 0313 - 51 889
E-Mail: info@verbund.at
web: http://www.verbund.at

VERBUND-Strom (Strom)

Energiepreis	**325,62**
Arbeitspreis gesamt	310,62
Grundpauschale	15,00
Netztarif	**203,08**
Netznutzungsentgelt	
Arbeitspreis	145,10
Leistungspauschale	8,76
Netzverlustentgelt	20,42
Entgelt für Messleistungen	28,80
Steuern und Abgaben	**107,64**
Elektrizitätsabgabe	63,83
Zählpunktpauschale	15,00
Gebrauchsabgabe für die Stadt Wien	28,81
Summe	**636,34**
Rabatte	**-25,53**
☑ **Neukundenbonus: 1 Monat Gratis-Strom** Einmaliger VERBUND-Strom-Bonus für Neukunden bezogen auf den Jahresverbrauch und den reinen Energieanteil. Anteilige Verrechnung bei einer Belieferungsdauer von unter einem Jahr. Aktion gültig bis auf Widerruf.	-25,53
Nettogesamtpreis	**610,81**
Umsatzsteuer	**122,16**
Bruttogesamtpreis	**732,97**

Preisdetails

Arbeitspreis (exkl. USt.) - Staffelmodell
0 - 100.000 kWh 7,30 Cent/kWh

Grundpauschale (exkl. USt.)
0 - 100.000 kWh 1,25 Euro/Monat

Mehr Informationen:
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Stromlieferanten wechseln

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3. Abschicken und fertig

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Zusatzinformationen VERBUND-Strom (Strom)

Gültigkeitsbeginn
01.05.2010
Gültigkeitsende
bis auf Widerruf
Bindefrist
keine
Zahlungsarten / Zahlungsintervalle
Abbuchungsauftrag: monatlich
Kündigungsfrist
zwei Monate

Energieträger

100,00%

Erneuerbar

Erneuerbare Energie	**100,00%**
Wasserkraft	100,00%

Figure 4: Price comparison tool in Austria - Detailed information page

E-Control **Tarifkalkulator**

Produktvergleich
WIEN ENERGIE Vertrieb, E-WERK GÖSTING, VERBUND

Ihre Angaben

Datum:	15.02.2011
Stromlieferant:	WIEN ENERGIE Vertrieb GmbH & Co KG
Produktname:	OPTIMA
Tarifart:	ein Tarif von 0 bis 24 Uhr
Verbrauch:	4255 kWh/Jahr
Netzbetreiber:	WIEN ENERGIE Stromnetz GmbH

Stromlieferanten wechseln

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Stromlieferant	WIEN ENERGIE	FRANZ EXTREM	Verbund
Produkt	OPTIMA	FRANZ EXTREM	VERBUND-Strom
Energiepreis	**364,64**	**317,00**	**325,62**
Arbeitspreis gesamt	352,64	317,00	310,62
Grundpauschale	12,00	0,00	15,00
Netztarif	**203,08**	**203,08**	**203,08**
Netznutzungsentgelt			
Arbeitspreis	145,10	145,10	145,10
Leistungspauschale	8,76	8,76	8,76
Netzverlustentgelt	20,42	20,42	20,42
Entgelt für Messleistungen	28,80	28,80	28,80
Steuern und Abgaben	**107,64**	**107,64**	**107,64**
Elektrizitätsabgabe	63,83	63,83	63,83
Zählpunktpauschale	15,00	15,00	15,00
Gebrauchsabgabe für die Stadt Wien	28,81	28,81	28,81
Summe	**675,36**	**627,72**	**636,34**
Rabatte	*0,00*	**-42,55**	**-25,53**
Abbucherbonus 2 Tage FreiEnergie jährlich bei Bankeinzugsermächtigung	☐ -2,00		
Sofort-Zahler-Rabatt		☐ -5,00	
Neukundenbonus bei vorzeitiger Vertragsauflösung wird der Rabatt aliquot berechnet.		☑ -42,55	
Neukundenbonus: 1 Monat Gratis-Strom Einmaliger VERBUND-Strom-Bonus für Neukunden bezogen auf den Jahresverbrauch und den reinen Energieanteil. Anteilige Verrechnung bei einer Belieferungsdauer von unter einem Jahr. Aktion gültig bis auf Widerruf.			☑ -25,53
Nettogesamtpreis	**675,36**	**585,17**	**610,81**
Umsatzsteuer	**135,07**	**117,03**	**122,16**
Bruttogesamtpreis	**810,43**	**702,20**	**732,97**
	wechseln	wechseln	wechseln

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Figure 5: Price comparison tool in Austria - Comparison of different offers

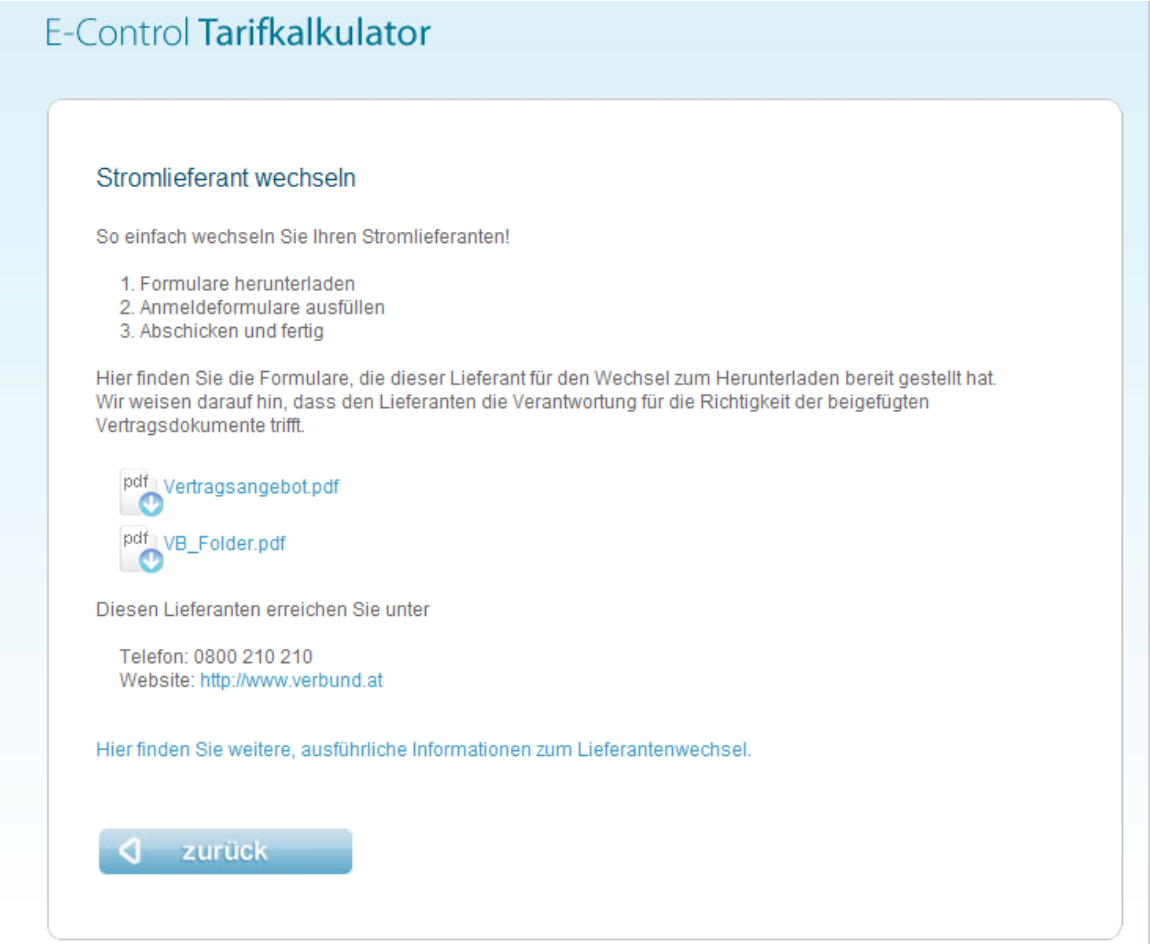


Figure 6: Price comparison tool in Austria - Information page with information how to switch to one offer (listing contract information and fill-out form of this supplier)

3 Belgium[8]

3.1 Independence

In Flanders there are several price comparison tools, most of them are privately owned and operated. The only price comparison tool that is owned by the government is the "V-test", which is published on the website of the Flemish Regulator of Electricity and Gas (VREG)[9]. The price comparison tool is funded by a part of the budget of the VREG.

Close to the end of each month, every supplier uploads the data (for example price tariffs) that are valid in the next month for each of its products in the VREG-database. Afterwards, the VREG 'locks' these data (so the suppliers no longer can change the uploaded data) and does several checks before publishing them.

3.2 Exhaustiveness

As one of the legal tasks of the VREG is to offer an objective comparison of all the prices, every product that meets VREG-criteria will be shown in the price comparison tool. The criteria state that:

1. Every consumer in a (grid) area has to be able to subscribe;
2. A product has to be sufficiently different from all the other products of the same supplier: if only the name is different from an already existing product or if only the product differs from an already existing product on criteria that are not in the tool, the VREG does not publish this product, but adds a remark to the already existing product, explaining that the supplier offers a variant.

Suppliers have a legal obligation to give the data that is required by the VREG to fulfil his task. If a supplier does not give the information, the VREG can impose a fine. However, so far, no fines have been imposed by VREG. In order to handle these situations, the VREG considers more efficient the following approach: if a supplier does not upload its (correct) data by the deadline, the tool will state that the (correct) data was not received by the VREG in time. As soon as they give the data to the VREG, the latter fills them in the database and publishes them (after checking).

As suppliers consider the V-test as a free marketing tool, they will try to deliver the data as quick as possible, even if the deadline is past.

3.3 Transparency

Households can choose to make the price comparison for electricity and/or gas. At the moment, small businesses can only make a price comparison for electricity. One of the objectives of the VREG for this year is to extend the price comparison tool for small businesses with gas.

[8] The information was provided by VREG and refers to Flanders

[9] www.vreg.be

The price comparison tool shows the different product prices in Euro for the consumption of one year, based on the data that has been filled in by the customer. If the consumer makes a comparison for electricity and gas, the prices for electricity and gas are shown in different tables.

The price shown in the tool is the total price including taxes and network tariffs and are always without discounts (temporarily or permanent).

3.4 Correctness & Accuracy

Consumers are able the fill in every consumption (household consumers: electricity < 100.000 kWh and gas < 150.000 kWh; small professional consumers: electricity < 60.000 kWh) that they want the comparison to be based on. Household consumers who have no idea of their consumption are able to choose 'I do not know my consumption' and for these consumers the data are given for the following categories:

- Electricity:
  - Da (600 kWh)
  - Db (1.200 kWh)
  - Dc (3.500 kWh: 1.600 kWh day and 1.900 kWh night)
  - Dc1 (3.500 kWh)
  - Dd (7.500 kWh: 3.600 kWh day and 3.900 kWh night), De and also (and gas: D1, D2, D3 and D3b)
  - De (20.000 kWh: 3.600 kWh day, 3.900 kWh night and 12.500 kWh exclusive night)
  - De1 (20.000 kWh: 7.500 kWh and 12.500 kWh exclusive night)

- Gas:
  - D1 (2,326 kWh)
  - D2 (4,652 kWh)
  - D3 (23,260 kWh)
  - D3b (34,890 kWh)

Suppliers have to upload the tariffs for the price components energy and taxes, as well as the total price for the different categories[10] Afterwards, the VREG computes the total price based on the component-tariffs given by the suppliers and compares these total prices with the total prices uploaded by the suppliers.

In order to check whether a supplier does not cheat, the VREG takes a few samples, computing the total price based on the price lists and the offers made by suppliers on their websites, as well as checking their price simulation tools and computing the energy price, if it regards a product with a variable character, i.e. based on a formula, every month.

[10] Household consumers: electricity (Da, Db, Dc, Dc1, Dd, De and De1) and gas (D1, D2, D3 and D3b); small professional consumers: electricity: Ia (30,000 kWh: 17,500 kWh day and 12,500 kWh night) and Ib (50,000 kWh, i.e. 29,000 kWh day and 21,000 kWh night)

Furthermore, the VREG checks once per year the energy prices of all products with a variable character that were uploaded in the previous year.

Even though suppliers (who upload the data by the deadline given by the VREG) have to make sure the uploaded data corresponds with the data on their price lists, it is the VREG who is responsible for the published data in the price simulation tool.

The VREG is responsible for data security. This security is guaranteed by providing each contact person of a supplier with a different login and by making sure that suppliers are not able to see the data imported by other suppliers in the tool. Furthermore, before publication the VREG locks the databases so suppliers can no longer change the data that are valid for the next month (the VREG can make corrections to the uploaded data, if necessary).

The product prices in the price simulation tool are not split into different composing price elements (energy, network costs, etc.), but in the tool there is a criteria 'Character of the price' which can be fix, partly fix/variable or variable (as each composing element can be fix or variable). In the detailed information on the tool, available on the VREG-website, it is shown for every product which component is fix or variable.

The offered prices by the suppliers change at a maximum rate of once a month. The data that are valid in month X, are normally published on the 1st working day of month X.

There was no survey on how the tool is perceived. However, there was a survey on how information given by the VREG (including the tool and the information on it) is perceived. In our last market survey (2010), 90% of respondents said that the information given by the VREG is useful and reliable. 88% of the respondents said that the provided information is clear.

3.5 User-friendliness

The website including the tool has been copywrited. Within the copywriting[11], attention is paid to using an easy understandable language and short sentences. The website and the tool have been designed in a way that it is easy for the users of the website and tool to find the items they are looking for.

The comparison tool consists of several steps (i.e. energy type, zip code, tariff, usage and result) so consumers do not get confused by a possible information overload. On every level there is a 'Go back – button'.

Furthermore, consumers are able to sort the compared data. Results are initially given in alphabetical order (1. supplier name; 2. product name), but consumers can sort the displayed products by price (low-high/high-low) or by any other comparison-criteria (fixed or variable prices, duration of the contract and amount of green electricity[12]).

Consumers are able to print the results of the comparison by clicking on the 'Print button'. On this level, there is also an 'Again button'.

[11] By copywriting, it is intended the activity of writing words, carefully selecting and editing those words in order to make the text more appealing to readers.

[12] Only for electricity

On the website of the VREG, there is a detailed explanation of the price comparison result. There is also a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section available. If consumers (still) have problems understanding the tool, they can call the free telephone number 1700.

3.6 Accessibility

The comparison tool can be found on the home page of the VREG-website (figure 7).

The VREG has received the AnySurfer-label[13] for the website, including the price comparison tool. This means that the VREG website is certified for use by the visually impaired. For other disabled persons or persons who do not have access to the internet, it is possible to call the free telephone number 1700.

In 2010 the tool was used 596.686 times for a household-comparison and 21.913 times for small businesses. These numbers are similar to data for 2009 (597.048 for households and 23.890 for small businesses). The higher number of visits registered in 2009 are due to the promotional campaign regarding the name change of the comparison tool to “V-test”.

3.7 Additional information

The V-test shows also the social tariff, a special tariff for vulnerable customers that is nearly the same for all suppliers (and distribution areas) and that consists of the lowest energy price with the lowest distribution tariff (Figure 8).

There are also plans to display in the price comparison tool the tariffs of the Distribution Grid Operators (DGOs) in their role as social supplier. The DGOs are social suppliers for those households who do not find a new supplier in time after their commercial supplier has ended the contract. By displaying these DGO-tariffs, the given households can see that they will be better off with a commercial supplier, because these tariffs are higher than the average price of commercial suppliers.

As mentioned above, the tool not only shows the price, but also the contract term, the character of the price (fix, partly fix/variable or variable) and for electricity also the percentage of electricity from renewable resources to be supplied (not the entire fuel mix). Other aspects of customer information (e.g. how to switch supplier, etc.) are not included in the price comparison tool, but this information is available on the website.

At the moment there is no quality of service included in the price comparison tool. One of VREG objectives for this year is to monitor suppliers’ quality of service, by making relevant data available through the tool. The monitoring of quality includes monitoring call centres and complaint/enquiry handling services provided by suppliers.

Since a few months, consumers can choose to fill in their e-mail address, name and end date of their contract(s), in order to receive a reminder to use the price comparison tool 75 days before the renewal date of the contract(s). (Figure 9).

[13] for more information on AnySurfer, please see http://www.anysurfer.be/en/index.html

Figure 7: Price comparison tool in Belgium (Flemish region) - First screenshot

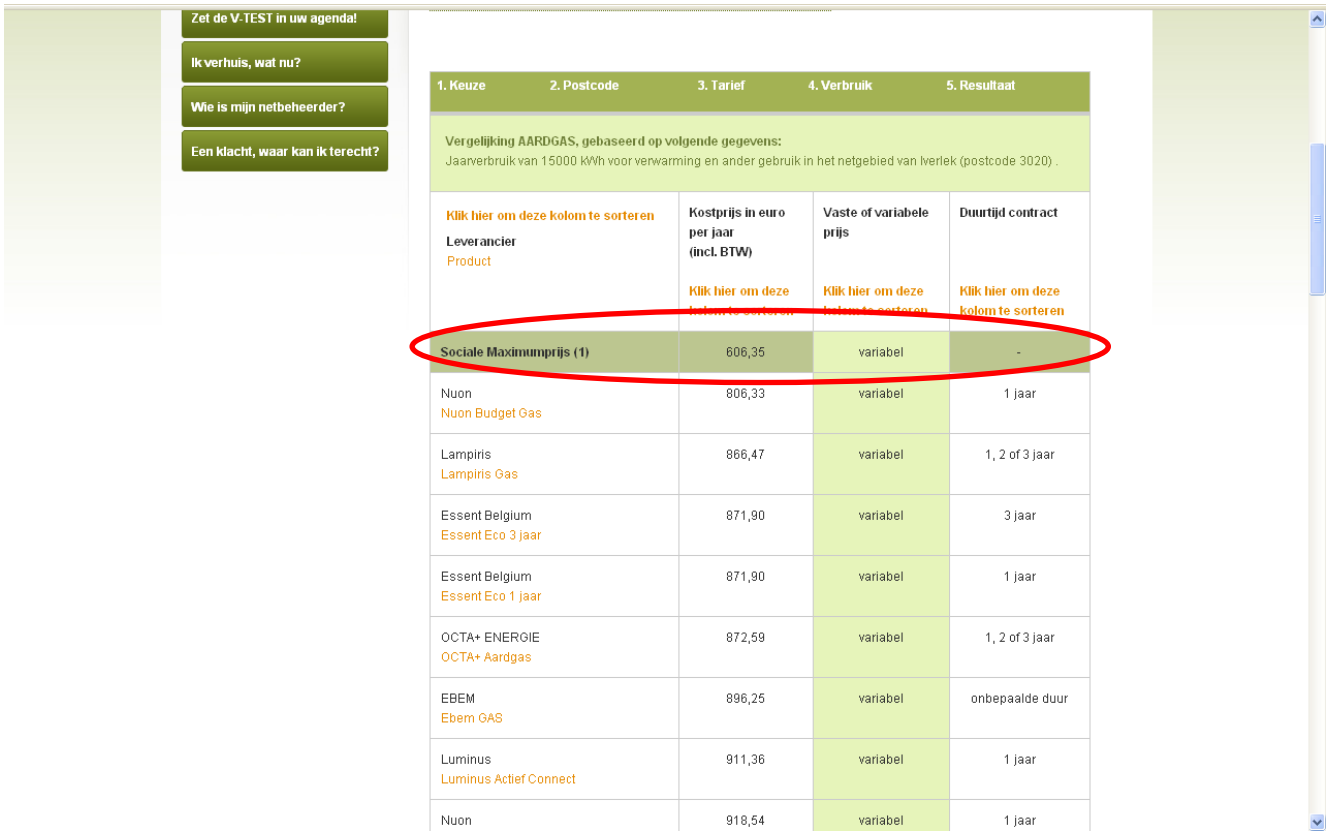


Figure 8: Price comparison tool in Belgium (Flemish region) - Second screenshot

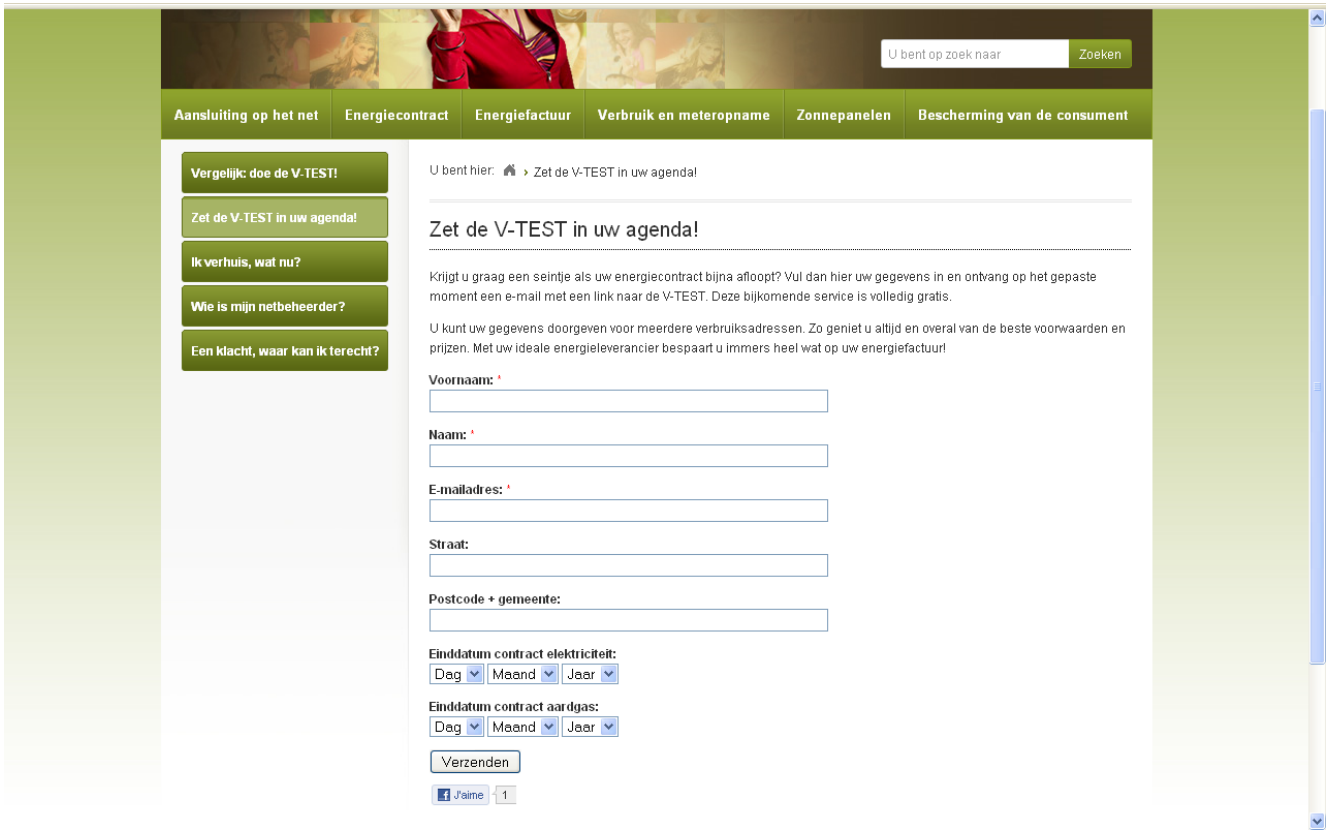


Figure 9: Price comparison tool in Belgium (Flemish region) - Third screenshot

4 France

4.1 Independence

The service of price comparison (Energie-Info) was created by public authorities (the energy regulator and the national energy ombudsman), in consultation with stakeholders in the energy sector. Suppliers registered in the tool agree that the information provided in the extranet is complete, fair, sincere and of quality. They are committed to providing consumers with a transparent overview of their offers. An activity log records all actions performed in the secure extranet. A daily report is sent to the administrator of the service.

Registered suppliers are in charge of the information entered in the extranet, on their behalf. The national energy ombudsman and the NRA are in charge of monitoring compliance with the *charter* establishing the terms of use for suppliers willing to introduce their offers in the tool.

The service of price comparison is entirely funded by the national energy ombudsman and the NRA.

4.2 Exhaustiveness

Registered suppliers commit to publish in the comparison tool all their current offers available to consumers, for all communes concerned. To date, only one supplier (providing services to less than 10.000 customers) did not wish to publish its offers in the comparison tool.

Offers available in the price comparison tool are voluntarily registered, via a secure extranet, by suppliers who wish to participate in the service, and who meet the conditions outlined in the charter to which they must adhere.

There is no legal obligation for companies to provide data. The involvement of suppliers is based on voluntary action on their part, in respect of the operating charter.

Suppliers who do not wish to participate in the price comparison tool cannot be included in the suppliers search engine, another tool developed by the national energy ombudsman and the NRA, allowing energy consumers to find supplier offers in their commune.

4.3 Transparency

The tool offers several levels of comparison.

Through the table of results, the consumer can compare the following:
- possible billing of subscription fees;
- the mechanism of price evolutions (indexed, regulated rates, etc.);
- the estimated cost for one year subscription, except trade discounts (and the unit costs of subscription and kWh);
- the estimated cost for one year subscription, including special discounts;
- the percentage of green power (electricity supply offers only).

Consumers can also compare up to three offers on all following components:
- characteristics of the offer (name, type of supply - regulated or market rates - etc.)
- services and options (customer relationship services, services related to energy supply, other services available in the offer);

- offer price (annual cost, subscription and consumption costs, etc.).
- contractual arrangements;
- billing and payment terms;
- conditions for price adjustment;
- conditions of cancellation;
- customer service and claims;
- a presentation of the trademark;
- green electricity (percentage and origin of green energy, etc.).

The price comparison service allows consumers to compare offers available in a given commune, however, it does not allow them to compare offers with their current contract, as gains or losses.

The comparison is based on one-year consumption.

It is possible to make comparisons for the supply of electricity and natural gas. Three alternatives are offered to consumers:
- comparison of electricity offers between them;
- comparison of natural gas offers between them;
- simultaneous comparison of offers for both electricity and natural gas, including the possibility to present only the offers "packaged" by the same supplier.

4.4 Correctness & Accuracy

Each registered supplier is responsible for the information related to its offers. The administrator of service gets a daily summary of interventions made by operators in the secure extranet, in order to verify accuracy and quality of the information entered. Consumers can also report an anomaly to the administrator of the service through a button clearly identifiable on all screens in the tool. Finally, a dynamic self-regulation takes place between registered suppliers.

The date of offers updating is not displayed on the price comparison tool. Registered suppliers commit, at least, to update their data within 5 workdays following any changes regarding their offers or other relevant information.

The comparison of offers may be made following 3 different options:
- the consumer knows his/her annual consumption, entered directly in kWh;
- the consumer does not know his/her consumption but on the other hand he/she knows the amount of his/her bills. In this case, the customer enters this monthly or yearly amount, including or not taxes. His/her annual consumption is calculated by the comparison tool on the basis of regulated retail rates effective at the date of his/her research for his/her commune;
- the consumer knows neither consumption nor the amount of his/her invoices. In this case, the comparison is based on average reference consumption.

The estimated annual costs per year (with or without special discounts) includes all taxes imposed on the supply of energy. They are presented including all taxes for household consumers and excluding taxes for business consumers. However, the value of each tax is not detailed, only the overall annual cost is published.

Registered suppliers have the opportunity to choose between two forms of commercial actions:
- Special offers: these are occasional discounts;
- Discounts: these are recurrent discounts (over several years for example - feature to come).

Special offers and discounts can cover the cost of the subscription, the consumption or the amount of the invoice. Discounts can be recorded as a package price, percentage of reduction (with possibility to define a limit).

4.5 User-friendliness

The price comparison tool proposes to consumers a tangible example of the energy markets liberalisation and guides them through it. Thus, each field is (or can be) accompanied by a contextual help to provide consumers with keys to understand the energy supply. Furthermore, many links to the website www.energie-info.fr are present in order to provide the most comprehensive and detailed information.

The clarity of labels and their accuracy, the simplicity of the approach and fast access to comparative data contributes significantly to the usability of the tool. The opportunity for consumers to use the tool without having any information is another interesting factor. Finally, ergonomics and design of screens, their length, etc. are essential to encourage consumers to use the tool.

The price comparison tool was created by the national energy ombudsman and the NRA. At the beginning, the Austrian regulator was interviewed to share its experience on such a project. In the process of developing the specifications, a qualitative survey was conducted among a panel of professionals and individual consumers by independent polling firm so that the tool best meets the needs of users.
From definition of needs to functional revenues, all the specifications have been presented and discussed with all interested stakeholders (suppliers, consumer organisation, etc.).

4.6 Accessibility

Consumers who do not have access to Internet may contact the Energie-Info consumer service by phone[14]. Tele-advisors then perform the desired comparison and send the results by mail.

Social tariffs are not set up in the tool. However, information on such rates is available on the website www.energie-info.fr

4.7 Additional information

The consumer can compare up to 3 offers in detail:
- characteristics of the offer (name, type of supply - regulated or market rate - etc.)

[14] At the number 0810 112 212

- services and options (customer relationship services, services related to energy supply and other services available in the offer);
- the offer price (annual subscription costs and consumption costs, etc.).
- contractual arrangements;
- billing and payment terms;
- conditions for price adjustments;
- conditions for cancellation;
- customer service and complaint handling services;
- a presentation of the mark;
- green electricity (percentage of green energy source, etc.).

Contextual help available at each stage of the comparison as well as links to the website www.energie-info.fr provide much information about the markets opening, the conditions for access to energy, the rights and obligations of both suppliers and consumers, etc.

The share of green electricity supply is displayed as well as the composition of sources of production.

The price comparison tool does not assess the quality of service of suppliers.

In 2010, the comparison tool received about 180.000 visits, 30% of which have been completed comparisons. These figures have to be compared to the total number of switches in France (about 300.000 in 2010 in gas and electricity for residential consumers).

Criteria (household or industrial customer, type of energy, postal code, consumption, etc.) to choose from in order to obtain the personalised list of offers available.

Figure 10: Price comparison tool in France - Main page

Figure 11: Price comparison tool in France - Compared offers

Figure 12: Price comparison tool in France - Details for the selected offer

5 Germany

Price comparison websites (PCW) for energy consumers are one important key to enable competition in energy markets. Only with price comparison tools the face of competition becomes visible for household and business customers. These tools empower consumers by providing them with the transparency and information about supply offers they need in order to identify the product that fits their needs best.

The German case study on PCW in the energy market is a best-practice example in terms of enabling competition by being a market facilitator in energy markets. PCW are providing accurate and up-to-date data to the consumer in a clear and user-friendly manner.

In Germany PCW are operated by private companies. They are independent from energy companies, energy suppliers or network operators. There is no PCW run by the government or the regulator in Germany. Therefore it is a purely market driven model.

In order to distinguish private-operated PCW from other (i.e. regulator) PCW, we refer to them as PPWC (private price comparison websites) in the text.

5.1 How private price comparison tools work

All relevant German PPCW compare electricity and gas prices. All PPCW are updating their offer data daily. The available offers are ranked by overall costs for the first year of delivery. In addition, all price components as well as relevant contractual information is provided in detail for each offer.

The price calculators allow free entry of consumption (kWh/year) for energy consumers and provide advice on annual consumption, if the latter is not known to the consumer. Bonuses and rebates are calculated into the annual energy costs, if those are granted without any individual conditions to be met on behalf of the consumer. Moreover, PPCW offer a large variety of filter criteria, providing the option to ignore products with pre-payment or deposit payments, ignore bonuses and rebates in the cost calculation or focus only on offers with renewable energy mix and/or price guarantees. Some PPCW offer filter criteria for contract duration, termination period and other details on top. All PPCW display exhaustive information on the energy mix of the offers.

Many PPCW provide user ratings in order to display customer satisfaction with certain providers. This enables consumers to review experiences of other consumers. This mechanism forces energy suppliers to provide a satisfactory process and service management in order to avoid negative user ratings on PPCW. Some PPCW conduct annual ratings for the 200 top electricity and the 100 top gas suppliers in order to define the user-friendliness of the contractual terms (payment terms, contract duration, recognition period etc.) and the quality of the service (mystery calls, hotline costs and availability, website quality and content). The data security of customer data in the switching process is certified for all relevant PPCW.

All PPCW offer free hotlines and a free e-mail, fax and postal service, in order to serve all clients independent of internet access. Many PPCW offer the switching process by paper as well as via internet and provide free PDF download of contract forms or the free delivery of contract forms by email or post.

Relevant contract terms are provided in detail by all PPCW. In some cases, this includes payment methods for the most relevant offers. Information on the energy sources and indication of green energy is provided by all PPCW. Moreover, all sites provide exhaustive information on the switching process itself to the consumer. Some PPCW use third party consumer satisfaction measurement tools (e.g. www.ekomi.de) or have certified consumer satisfaction with excellent ratings (e.g. TÜV Saarland). Verivox as market leader in the German PCW-segment has brokered 2 mio electricity and 0.6 mio gas contracts since 2007.

5.2 The business rational

The business model established by PPCW is the “honest broker” that provides all relevant price information to energy-consumers and enables them to switch their energy supplier directly on the online platform. These PPCW earn commissions from energy suppliers. They are an example of a second-level competition and are purely market driven. Within the competition landscape the PPCW have established a well accepted position in the eyes of the stakeholders (suppliers, consumers, regulators, consumer watchdogs, cartel authorities, national and local government, political parties and the media).

The “honest broker” business model follows a “win-win-win” strategy like there are many more in the internet these days. First, the energy consumers win transparency, have free and unlimited access to an exhaustive data base and can switch easily utilising one of the PPCW. All services provided are free for them. Secondly, the suppliers are able to acquire new customers over the PPCW for most efficient commercial terms. The commission terms of PPCW are by far lower than via any other sales channel. The economical ratio is simple, but vigorous: the internet enables a completely new, cheap and scalable consulting opportunity for lower sales costs. The third “winner” in this model is the PPCW itself. It can provide the service to the energy consumer for free being financed by commissions, advertising and sales of aggregated market data (commissions are due only if a switch was completed successfully).

All PPCW place the price comparison tool prominently on their website. They compete with each other on online marketing and sales channels like search engine marketing (SEM), press coverage, online marketing activities like banner advertising, offline marketing, online and offline sales co-operations and even TV advertising. This competition drives much attention to the different PPCW and pushes the market development in general by motivating end consumers to switch their supplier.

5.3 Offering best service for energy consumers

It is in the core interest of the PPCW to provide the best service possible to the consumers in order to be financially successful. This mechanism is an example of well working “checks & balances” within this second-level competition. PPCW compete with each other for the best service, the best price data, the most user-friendly website and the best deals accessible. PPCW drive switching forward through their own economical motivation.

The PPCW business model by default is oriented to seek the end consumers' trust and fulfill the energy consumers needs and expectations. This makes the trust of the consumer become the PPCW core marketing target. Protecting the brand by serving the energy consumer best is their key imperative. It will not survive and be successful, if it fails in this respect. Feedback and criticism from all perspectives therefore are taken very serious and result in continuous adaptation, improving the PPCW service permanently.

All PPCW understand that user-friendliness is a key success factor. Therefore, websites provide multiple help to understand the price comparison tools, like mouse over help texts for all criteria and vocabulary, short movies and free brochure to download on "how to switch", free telephone hotline to receive answers to any question. Additionally, some PPCW provide guidelines about how they function in order to provide transparency to energy consumers and energy suppliers about their way of working.[15]

5.4 Providing timeliness and reliability of information/data

The data presented is maintained by the PPCW themselves or closely aligned data service providers. It is partly delivered directly by the suppliers, partly actively researched by using information from suppliers published in the Internet. Comprehensive and fine-tuned software tools as well as permanent monitoring of the energy industry, media and critical consumers ensure the data presented to always be accurate and current.

One of the core competences of PPCW is database management. The market leader of PPCW is having all offers of all suppliers accurate and up-to-date on a daily level. This means to manage more than 18,500 price offers of nearly 1,200 suppliers presenting billions of data points in a huge database – because offers differ depending on the postal code. An offer contains the pricing information and all relevant contractual terms. One PPCW-operator collects the price data with its own data team of 25 employees, other PPCW buy data from third party data providers specialised on energy-related data. Additionally, the PPCW have established mechanisms of data quality checks including loops of consumer and provide feedback.

Even though there is no legal obligation for energy suppliers to give data about prices and offers to the PPCW there is a dynamic mechanism to obtain the data. First, default suppliers ("Grundversorger") are forced by law to publish their prices on their websites – with other suppliers it might be more difficult to get the data. Either way in this case the PPCW can collect the data itself. Second, many suppliers understand the importance of PPCW and pro-actively provide data. The suppliers acknowledge the importance of a listing, since PPCW serve as impartial parties for suppliers to prove their competitiveness towards consumers. As long as the PPCW work properly and provide full transparency with accurate data about supply-offers, there is no legal possibility for an energy supplier to force the PPCW to remove its offer from the platform. This increases pressure on low-performing energy suppliers.

[15] http://www.verivox.de/company/datenpflege.aspx, http://www.verivox.de/company/tarifrechnergrundlage.aspx

The German PPCW compete with each other on how complete and accurate their price data is. Tests from Stiftung Warentest, Ökotest, TÜV (consumer organisations) make this quality visible. Winning such a test is of mayor economic importance for the PPCW because such labels translate into consumer trust to the platform.

5.5 Independence from energy industry

All German PPCW are independent from the energy industry on the shareholder level. They have reselling cooperation agreements with many energy suppliers in order to enable switching to the relevant products over their websites and to gain a commission payment. Nevertheless this economic relationship does not influence the independence of the PPCW, because the PPCW have such agreements with many competing energy suppliers that spot each other jealously every day and therefore leave no space for any kind of manipulation.

5.6 Generation of Revenues

PPCW have different revenue streams. All PPCW earn commission payments from energy suppliers for successfully switching end consumers. Moreover, all of them sell banner advertising on their platform like any other commercial platform in the internet does. A third revenue stream is selling the price data and market studies to energy suppliers, media as well as research and consulting companies with regards to data protection and data privacy regulation.

5.7 Legal framework & guidelines of good practice

The existing legal framework laid down in the competition law (UWG) and the civil legislation (BGB) is sufficient in order to guarantee the independence of the PPCW. Nevertheless, Guidelines of Good Practice on PCW are being worked on since a round table with representatives of the national and local government, consumer watchdogs, energy suppliers and other stakeholders on the in February 2010.

5.8 Special topic: display of special offers (e.g. social tariffs)

Offers for specific groups such as so called “social tariffs” are not compared by German PPCW. This is due to two reasons: (1) those offers are usually not published by the suppliers and hence not known to the PPCW, and (2) those offers require the energy consumer to fulfill certain criteria. Those criteria are not standardised, but may vary by supplier. To depict such prices would thus contradict the PPCW policy to display only those offers unconditionally available to end consumers wanting to switch their energy supplier.

6 Italy

6.1 Independence

In 2009, following the Italian request, the Austrian Regulator made available to the Italian NRA the software of the Austrian price-comparison tool (Tarifkalkulator). Then the software has been adapted to the Italian retail market.

The “TrovaOfferte” (offer-finder) is now run and financed by the NRA (AEEG).
The rules of the price comparison service were set after a public consultation. Two options were submitted to consultation: an independent service provider or a system of private providers certified by the NRA. The provision of a price comparison service run by the Regulator followed the consultation process results.

In Italy there are also private price comparison services, but there is neither a kind of approval /certification process by the NRA nor any specific requirement.
Suppliers take part in the tool on a voluntary basis. When a supplier decides to take part in the Trovaofferte, it is obliged to provide the data of its offers under its responsibility. AEEG monitors the process and takes action in case of problems.

6.2 Exhaustiveness

The comparison service covers electricity offers, gas and dual fuel offers for household customers.
By now, 23 suppliers have their offers included in the tool (several offers per supplier): all biggest companies at national level, main “regional” companies and some small local suppliers. A significant share of the retail market is then covered.
It is compulsory for the suppliers to input the data of **all** their offers to households. They have to indicate whether the offer is at national or at local level, through the choice of the postal codes of the areas where the offer itself is sold. When they are not compliant with these rules, they can be expelled and, in case of an infringement procedure, they can be charged a fine. However, this is the last instance, because when problems have occurred, they have better been solved through negotiations.

6.3 Transparency

When starting the research, the customer can choose what his/her preferences are in terms of payment methods, duration of contract, billing frequency. For electricity, the customer can choose if he/she wants to include ‘time-of-day based offers’ and/or ‘non time-of-day based offers’ in the research criteria..

The source of comparison is the annual total charge for electricity, gas or both, based on current prices. The result of the comparison is a list of offers available in the customer area and responding to his/her characteristics and preferences, starting from the cheapest offer in terms of annual total charge.
The tool also displays the regulated prices set by AEEG (the NRA itself inputs the relevant data).
Starting from the list, the tool displays several details of the offers: a breakdown of the annual total charge, the unit prices for energy, the main contractual terms and conditions, detailed information of the supplier selling the offer (given by the supplier).

In the Italian retail market, there are three main categories of offers, depending on how often prices can change: fixed price offers (the energy price cannot change for at least one year), discount on regulated price offers (the regulated price changes every three months) and other indexed offers (different from the other two categories).
There was a strong debate about the possibility to compare fixed prices and indexed offers. Finally, the debate led to the choice of highlighting which category the offer belongs to and, moreover, when searching, the customer can choose which categories have to be shown.

Offer category highlighting

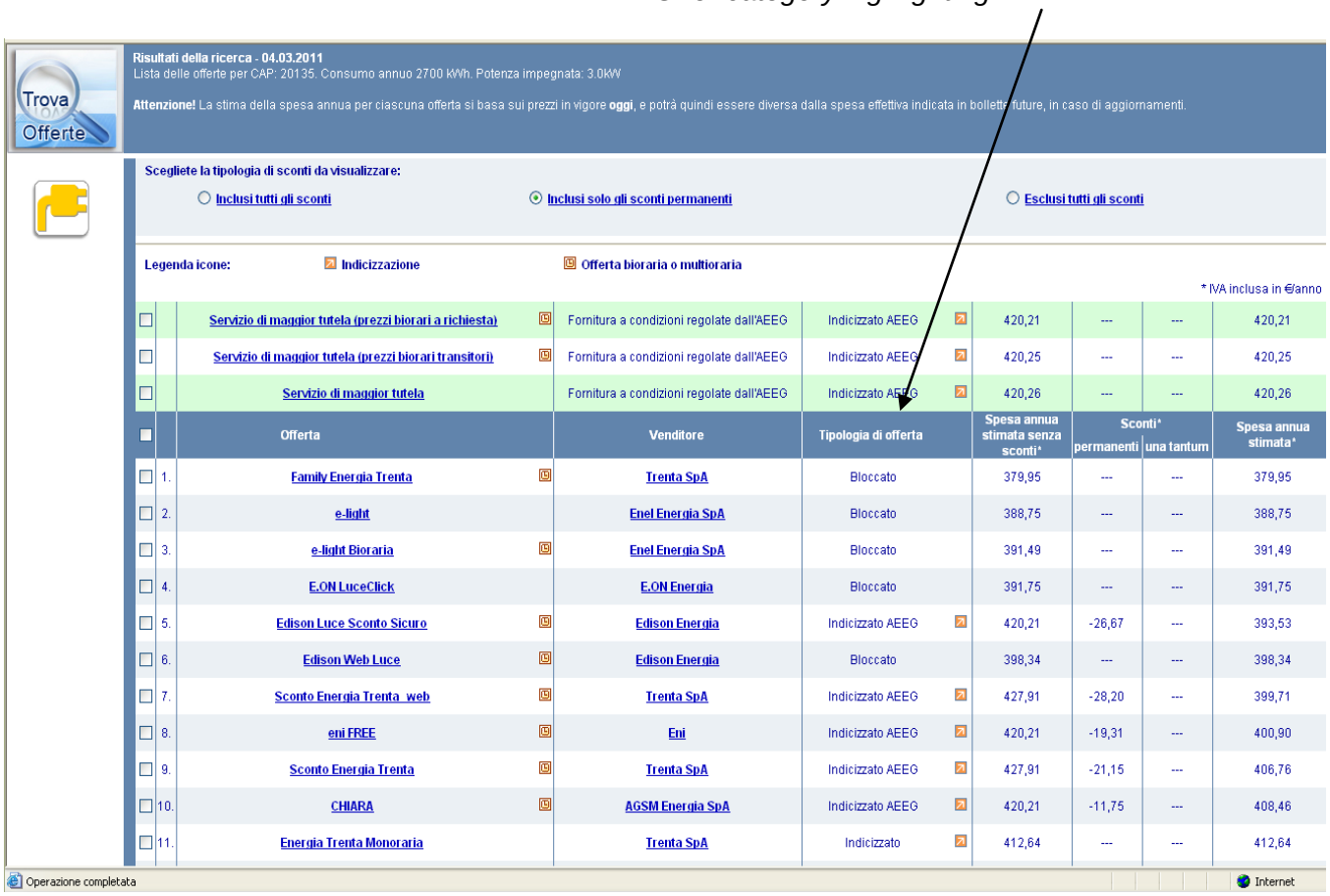


Figure 13: Price comparison tool in Italy - List of offers

6.4 Correctness & Accuracy

Suppliers are responsible for entering and updating data related to energy prices, discounts, contractual terms, while AEEG is responsible for the input of network tariffs and taxes.
The published data relate to current prices (prices applicable at the moment of the research), but suppliers can include future prices, that will be displayed when they will be applicable. Suppliers are responsible for data accuracy and security.

Consumption data are entered by the customer. He can check his/her annual consumption in the bill, but, if the bill is not available, the TrovaOfferte gives the chance to calculate the estimated annual consumption through information such as number of family members, number of electric devices used by the customer and so on.

For each offer the TrovaOfferte shows some detailed pages, giving information on the price components (network tariffs, energy, taxes), on the price per kWh or per cubic metre, on past price fluctuations.

Discounts are shown separately, in a detailed section. Discount can be “permanent” or depending from a particular behaviour of the customer (for example: a discount given to the customer whose consumption will not be more than a certain amount of kWh or cubic metre, or fidelity discounts, or welcome discounts).

By now, no customer satisfaction surveys have been conducted, but they have been programmed starting in 2011. The tool has been developed taking into account the comments of consumers associations.

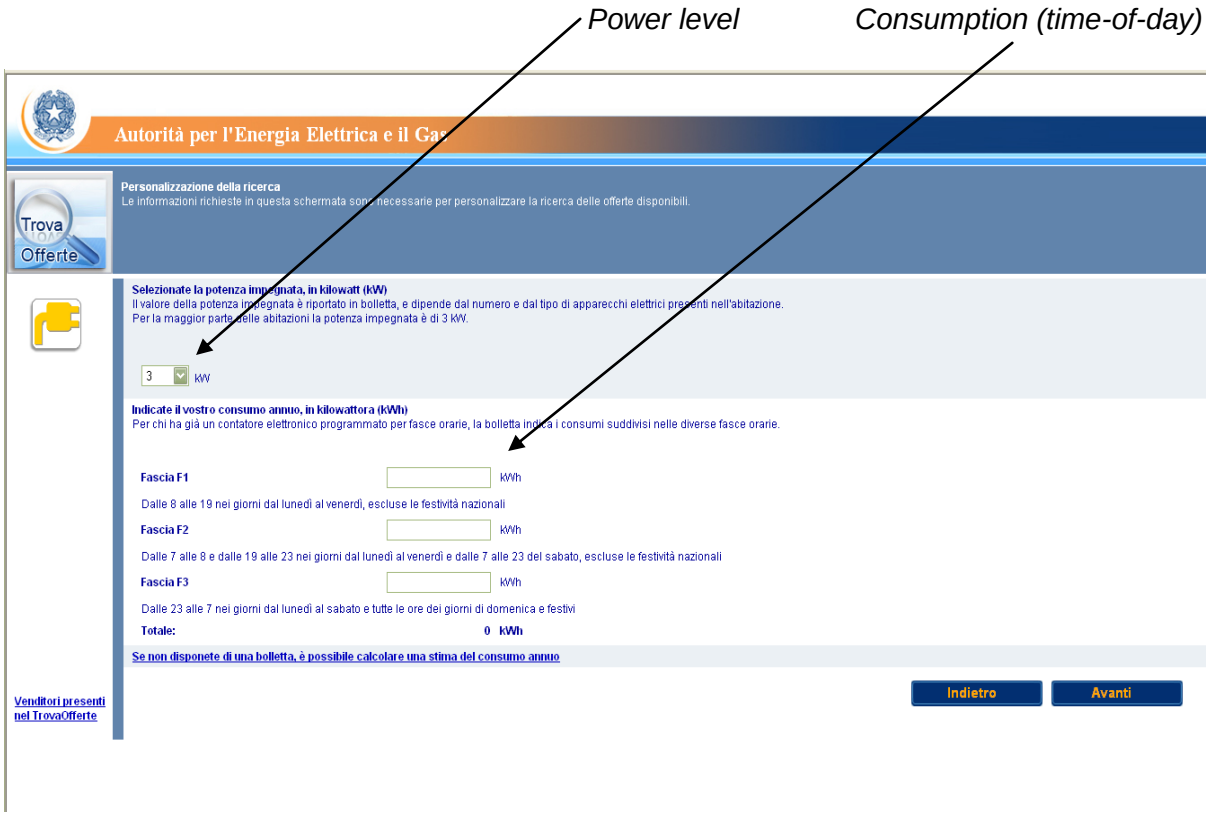


Figure 14: Price comparison tool in Italy - Customer data input

Offer details (total annual charge composition)

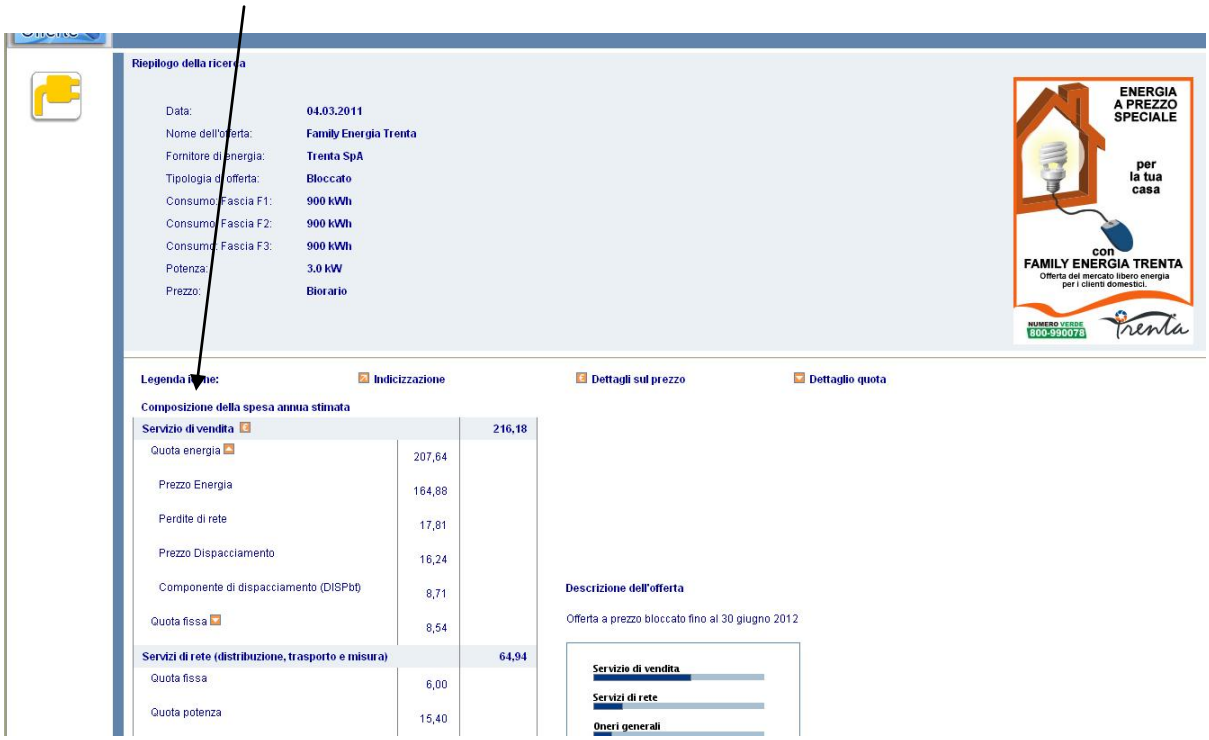


Figure 15: Price comparison tool in Italy - Offer details

6.5 User-friendliness

The TrovaOfferte is based on the design of the Austrian tool, adapted to the characteristics of the Italian context. To start the research, the customer is requested to input some very basic data.

The customer is supported by instructions and explanations, there is a special assistance for calculating the estimated consumption. The level of transparency is the same fixed for billing. The tool is available on the AEEG web site and it has the same design and navigation approach. The levels of accessibility and usability are in line with the standards and requirements fixed by the law.

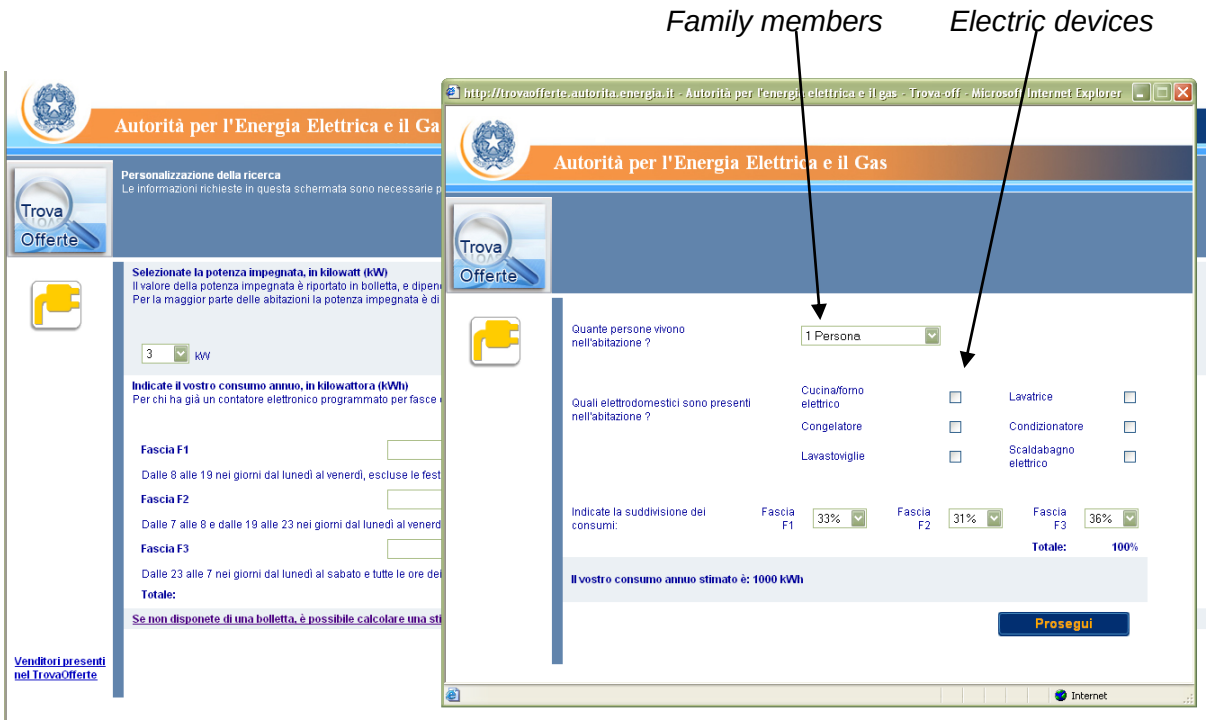


Figure 16: Price comparison tool in Italy - Estimated consumption calculation "assistance"

6.6 Accessibility

The single point of contact (Sportello per il consumatore) gives information on how to use the price comparison service.

When offering a contract to a potential new customer (household) the supplier is obliged to give him a “comparison leaflet”, displaying the total annual price of his offer (taxes not included), for fixed consumption levels compared to the total annual price of the regulated offer.

The tool is accessible from the AEEG homepage. The NRA “advertises” the Trovaofferte through various channels (press releases, interviews, TV programmes), but no specific information campaigns have been carried on.

AEEG monitors the number of people using the tool per day. In 2010 the average was about 1.400 end-users per day. Each end-user entering the tool usually makes more than one search.

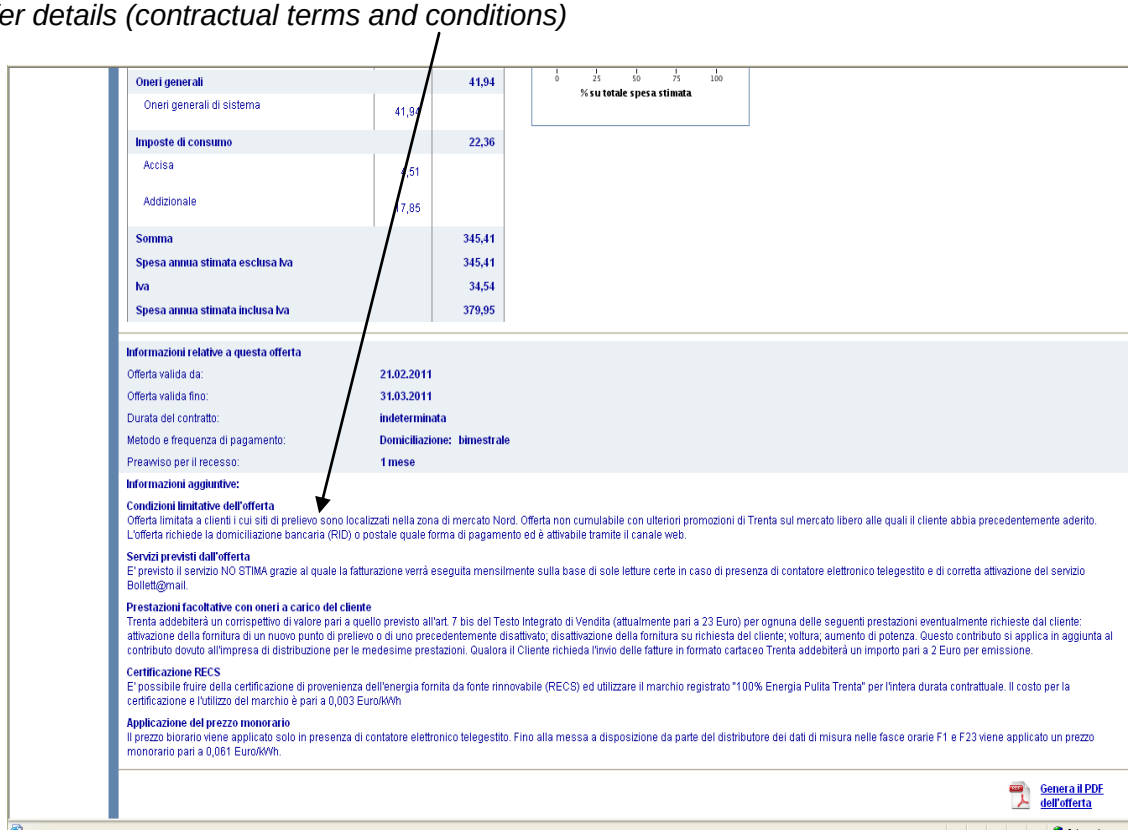
6.7 Additional information

The TrovaOfferte does not show the social bonus provided to people in bad economic or physical conditions, because in Italy the “social bonus” is a discount (fixed amount), depending neither on the offer (market price-based or regulated price-based) nor on the customer consumption.

Beside the total annual price, the main contractual clauses (such as the duration of the contract, payment methods) and additional information about discounts or the cost of additional services are provided. Suppliers are allowed to upload pdf documents about their offers that can be downloaded by customers.

No specific information on service quality or green energy offers is provided, while there will be soon information about the fuel mix of electricity supply.

Offer details (contractual terms and conditions)



Oneri generali		**41,94**
Oneri generali di sistema	41,94	
Imposte di consumo		**22,36**
Accisa	4,51	
Addizionale	17,85	
Somma		**345,41**
Spesa annua stimata esclusa Iva		**345,41**
Iva		**34,54**
Spesa annua stimata inclusa Iva		**379,95**

0 25 50 75 100
% su totale spesa stimata

Informazioni relative a questa offerta

Offerta valida da:	**21.02.2011**
Offerta valida fino:	**31.03.2011**
Durata del contratto:	**indeterminata**
Metodo e frequenza di pagamento:	**Domiciliazione: bimestrale**
Preavviso per il recesso:	**1 mese**

Informazioni aggiuntive:

Condizioni limitative dell'offerta
Offerta limitata a clienti i cui siti di prelievo sono localizzati nella zona di mercato Nord. Offerta non cumulabile con ulteriori promozioni di Trenta sul mercato libero alle quali il cliente abbia precedentemente aderito. L'offerta richiede la domiciliazione bancaria (RID) o postale quale forma di pagamento ed è attivabile tramite il canale web.

Servizi previsti dall'offerta
E' previsto il servizio NO STIMA grazie al quale la fatturazione verrà eseguita mensilmente sulla base di sole letture certe in caso di presenza di contatore elettronico telegestito e di corretta attivazione del servizio Bollett@mail.

Prestazioni facoltative con oneri a carico del cliente
Trenta addebiterà un corrispettivo di valore pari a quello previsto all'art. 7 bis del Testo Integrato di Vendita (attualmente pari a 23 Euro) per ognuna delle seguenti prestazioni eventualmente richieste dal cliente: attivazione della fornitura di un nuovo punto di prelievo o di uno precedentemente disattivato; disattivazione della fornitura su richiesta del cliente; voltura; aumento di potenza. Questo contributo si applica in aggiunta al contributo dovuto all'Impresa di distribuzione per le medesime prestazioni. Qualora il Cliente richieda l'invio delle fatture in formato cartaceo Trenta addebiterà un importo pari a 2 Euro per emissione.

Certificazione RECS
E' possibile fruire della certificazione di provenienza dell'energia fornita da fonte rinnovabile (RECS) ed utilizzare il marchio registrato "100% Energia Pulita Trenta" per l'intera durata contrattuale. Il costo per la certificazione e l'utilizzo del marchio è pari a 0,003 Euro/kWh

Applicazione del prezzo monorario
Il prezzo biorario viene applicato solo in presenza di contatore elettronico telegestito. Fino alla messa a disposizione da parte del distributore dei dati di misura nelle fasce orarie F1 e F23 viene applicato un prezzo monorario pari a 0,061 Euro/kWh.

Genera il PDF dell'offerta

Figure 17: Price comparison tool in Italy - Offer details

7 The Netherlands

7.1 Independence

Within its study on the quality of price comparison websites the Dutch NRA (NMa) defines the criterion independence as follows:
"A price comparison website is not independent if it discriminates between energy companies. Every energy company should have access to a certain price comparison website under the same conditions. Also a price comparison website is not independent if there is an ownership relation between a certain energy company and a price comparison website".

The NMa considers an energy company responsible for all information published on price comparison websites. However, at the same time it acknowledges that there are price comparison websites that do not have a contractual agreement with energy suppliers. This makes it difficult for an energy company to control the information published on those websites.

Also, whenever a certain comparison website publishes misleading information the Consumer authority can intervene directly.

7.2 Exhaustiveness

On a whole, most price comparison websites publish most of the offers available (at least 90%).

There is no legal obligation for companies to insert data.

There is no legal consequence for non-cooperation by companies. While price comparison websites become increasingly popular, the incentive for energy companies to have their products published on price comparison websites is high.

7.3 Transparency

All price comparison websites on the market compare yearly costs in Euro. Through filtering options, you can also compare different types of product: single fuel, dual fuel, renewable/non-renewable sources, type of contract (fixed/floating prices, determined/ undetermined).

The default output of the price comparison tool is a list of all available offers. However, most comparison websites also allow the customer to compare his/her current contract with these offers.

Prices are calculated on the basis of 1 year consumption

Dual fuel offers are included in the tool. However, in order to avoid a comparison between heterogeneous products, filtering options are used to exclude single fuel offers from comparison with dual fuel offers.

7.4 Correctness & Accuracy

Price comparison websites check data themselves. The NMa considers correctness to be the responsibility of the price comparison website. However, the NMa also recognises that websites usually receive the data from energy companies, which makes correctness a shared responsibility.

Most price comparison websites update the data daily, weekends excluded.

All comparison websites give the customer the possibility to enter his/her consumption values, which are used as basis for the price comparison. If no consumption value is entered, an average household consumption in the Netherlands is used[16].

Yes, most price comparison websites split up the results into all tariff components (i.e. energy, network, taxes, etc.).

All price comparison websites include bonuses and rebates in the calculation of the yearly costs, on which the comparison is based.

7.5 User-friendliness

The market of price comparison websites in the Netherlands is thriving (at the moment there are about 20 price comparison tools on the Internet), so there is a natural incentive for the individual websites to provide a tool that attracts customers. User-friendliness can be considered as one of the features used to attract customers.

7.6 Accessibility

There are no other communication channels available to consumers who cannot use the internet to compare offers. However, there are price comparison websites that provide a hotline in order to help customers through the comparison procedure. Furthermore, while the penetration and usage of internet in the Netherlands is very high (90%)[17], this issue is less prevalent than in other countries in the EU.

7.7 Additional information

Contract terms, payment methods and relevant additional information are available through filtering options. Most price comparison websites can compare different types of product (single fuel, dual fuel, renewable/non-renewable sources, type of contract (fixed/floating prices, determined/undetermined) and quality of service.

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[16] 1800 m^3 gas; 3500 kWh electricity

[17] Commission Staff Working Paper, Digital Scoreboard, European Commission, 31-05-2011: http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/digital-agenda/scoreboard/docs/scoreboard.pdf

Most price comparison websites include general information on how to switch supplier, which suppliers can be chosen, who regulates the energy market and how in general the energy market for household customers works.

Information on green energy and energy mix is included

Some price comparison websites provide information on the quality of service, or include a forum for customers to share their opinion.

8 Portugal

8.1 Price comparison tool run by ERSE (Portuguese NRA)

8.1.1 Independence

The price comparison tool is provided, financed and maintained by the NRA.
The funds for the tool development and maintenance are a part of the NRA budget.
The commercial data required to operate the simulation tool is provided by suppliers. Commercial data includes the prices of each offer, time duration of the prices, restrictions to the type of consumers they apply to (for example, minimum consumption thresholds), value-added services, etc.
Suppliers are obliged under the law and the regulations to provide the NRA with their low voltage segment commercial proposals.

8.1.2 Exhaustiveness

The price comparison tool targets all low voltage consumers up to a rated power of 41,4 kVA. This includes households and small businesses.

All suppliers are covered by the tool, including last resort suppliers and market suppliers. In theory, whenever a supplier has a standard commercial price offer, it must communicate it to the NRA. If one given supplier does not inform the NRA about certain tariff options, it is violating both the law and the regulations. In this case, the general consequences for not complying with the codes are applicable.

Local offers are not included in the tool. All commercial proposals are available for any consumer located in Portuguese continental territory.

All available offers are shown if it is possible to calculate them. If the consumer does not know its consumption distribution for each and every time-of-use period, multiple time-of-use tariffs are not shown since no extrapolation of load profile is made.
For consumers with no information on their particular consumption, standard cases are offered as an alternative for trying out the tool.

Only standard price offers are included in the tool. Hence, any special pricing policy put in practice by market suppliers (for example, applying discounts to large consumers) are not included.

Prices and other commercial data are collected through direct contact with suppliers (a calendar for regular communication is defined).

In some cases, supplier's price information is also available on its website. In other cases, information is only communicated to the regulator.

8.1.3 Transparency

The comparison tool always presents the total annual bill in Euro (€) as the final result. The available (if applicable) commercial offers are sorted according to this total annual bill. Non applicable offers are not presented. In some cases (for example, green tariffs), offers are presented with comments or observations describing the special characteristics of the tariff.

Each tariff is described in detail in the complementary information section. The tool itself only analyses annual bills.

Consumption data can be provided for any period desired by the user, with a special emphasis on yearly, monthly and bimonthly periods (a common billing time period in Portugal). No matter what period of time the input data refers to, the simulator extrapolates the available data and applies the known tariff prices to the relevant period of time.

Currently the tool includes only electricity price offers.

8.1.4 Correctness & Accuracy

Consumption data is provided by the tool user. He/she can use whatever data he/she finds relevant. In case the user is not able to provide consumption data, the tool provides some predefined profiles based on known average consumer data. These profiles are based on the information available to the NRA as the entity responsible by setting the last resort end user tariffs.
This consumption data is not stored by the tool and is used only during the simulation.
The results of the simulation are checked by the NRA staff while maintaining the tool. The data used (besides user inputs) is managed and accessed by NRA staff only.

Data concerning commercial conditions of the offers (such as prices) is responsibility of the suppliers and it can usually be checked at each supplier's website. Whenever a supplier informs the NRA of a new (or changed) tariff offer, the NRA staff update the simulation tool as soon as possible. Usually prices change at least in the beginning of each year.
When updating is delayed (for any reason), the tool can be put offline. Also, if a supplier fails to confirm its tariff offers to the NRA (and if they are not publicly available), these offers are removed from the simulation tool until up to date data is available.

Simulation results consist on the total annual bill excluding taxes or VAT. The tool can calculate final cost for consumer, including some kind of simple discounts, but not sophisticated schemes of bonuses and rebates.
Users' feedback about the simulation tool has never identified a problem of accuracy. Furthermore, suppliers never complained about simulation results.

8.1.5 User-friendliness

The tool includes some FAQ about its use and about what it does. An e-mail address is also available for questions on the tool. The latter is designed as part of the NRA web page and uses typical internet navigation controls.

The consumption data (user information) is provided by the user through combo boxes and text boxes to insert the energy consumption. The number of these boxes has been reduced as much as possible. If the user is not able to provide any data, he can choose typical average consumption profiles based on the number of people in the household.

There are several links to the simulation tool across the NRA web page (particularly on the front page) and where appropriate (like an energy consumer portal that is available concerning matters relevant to household consumers).

A prerequisite for the tool was that the calculation module must be an Excel file totally controlled by the NRA staff. Then, the user interface on the website was outsourced to an IT services provider. This way, the NRA staff can easily control, manage and trust the results of the tool without outside intervention or costs.

8.1.6 Accessibility

The simulation tool is available only for those who have internet access. The NRA provides a telephone line for general consumer help and support that is used to obtain help regarding energy offers.

ERSE electricity price comparison tool is available under the following link:
http://www.erse.pt/pt/electricidade/simuladores/simuladoresdecomparacaodeprecosnomercado/Paginas/simuladordecomparacaodeprecosembtnparaportugalcontinental.aspx

The needs of disabled users are managed according to NRA site general accessibility policies.

The simulation tool is placed on the main NRA website and can be accessed from this website and from the website dedicated specially to household consumers.

The simulation tool is shown at workshops and special information programmes carried out by the NRA. It is also promoted through links and news on both the main and household consumer webpages.

When the liberalisation process was concluded and the tool was built, a special marketing effort was conducted through interviews and direct contacts with journals and media.
The tool is used around 4.000 times each trimester.

8.1.7 Additional information

The tool includes only offers for general customer groups. Social tariffs, tariffs for temporary delivery points, public lighting tariffs are not available.

The simulation tool only compares and sorts the offers based on annual bill. Nevertheless, it includes information about particular terms like payment methods or energy sources. Furthermore, it provides additional information about supplier switching (pointing to contents available on the NRA web page), commercial offers based on green energy, energy mix of each offer. As from March 2011, there will be another simulation tool available dedicated to energy mix and labelling for all known price offers in the market.

No information regarding quality of service is provided by the tool.

No satisfaction inquiry has been conducted on the simulation tool. However, there is some consumer feed-back through an email account for the simulator and through general purposes telephone line of the NRA for helping consumers. For example, in the past, through these means customers signalled some technical difficulties they had encountered in using the previous version of the tool, which was Excel based with macros.

The simulation tool is operated as a part of the NRA website. With dropdown boxes consumers should indicate their installation features like rated contracted power level, number of time-of-use periods, consumption values for each times of use (TOU) period in a chosen time window.

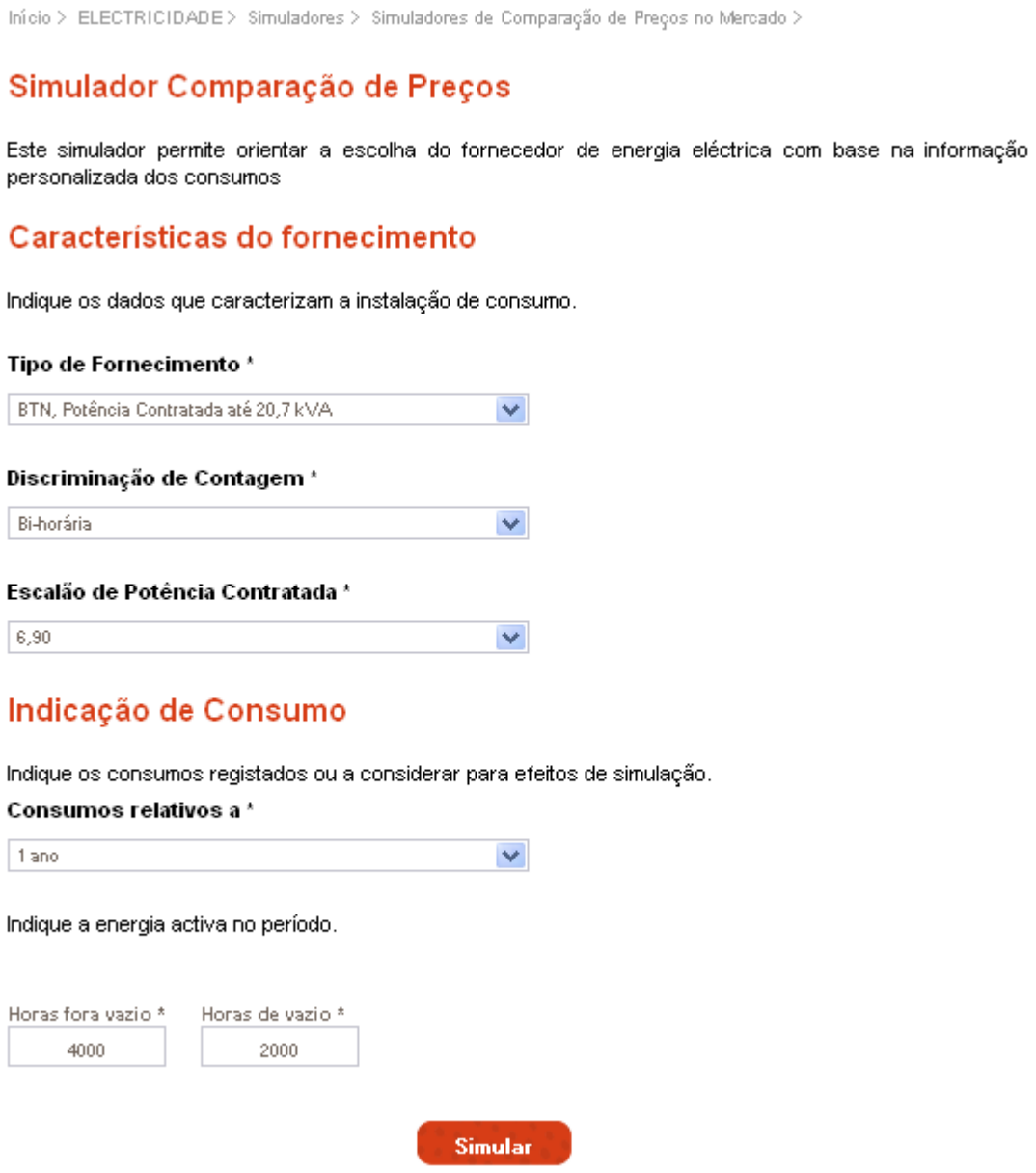


Figure 18: Price comparison tool in Portugal by ERSE - Simulation tool interface page for data input

Início > ELECTRICIDADE > Simuladores > Simuladores de Comparação de Preços no Mercado >

Resultado de simulação

Data da simulação: 16-02-2011

Características do consumo

Tipo de Fornecimento:	BTN, Potência Contratada até 20,7 kVA
Discriminação de Contagem:	Bi-horária
Escalão de Potência Contratada:	6,90 kVA
Consumo Anual:	6.000 kWh (Horas fora vazio): 4.000 kWh (Horas de vazio): 2.000 kWh

Características de c

Comparação de Preços

Comercializador	Ofertas Tarifárias	Factura Anual [€]	Observações
edp serviço universal	BTN<=20,7kVA (tarifa bi-horária)	860,08	Preços válidos até 31/Dez/2011.
endesa energía	BTN<=20,7kVA (tarifa simples)	881,10	Preços válidos para clientes com domiciliação do pagamento.
edp5D	EDP 5D Casa (tarifa simples)	902,22	-
edp5D	EDP 5D Negócios (tarifa simples)	902,22	Tarifa mais adaptada às necessidades dos pequenos negócios com potência contratada igual ou superior a 6,9 KVA.

Figure 19: Price comparison tool in Portugal by ERSE - Simulation tool results page

8.2 Price comparison tool run by DECO (Portuguese Consumer Association)

DECO[18] is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) acting in the field of consumer rights protection.

8.2.1 Independence

DECO is a private association and is only supported by its members fee. Participation of manufacturers/providers (industry, commercial or services), political or any other kind of pressure is not foreseen, in order to maintain full Independence as a key value. All activities – including the price comparison tool - are developed, financed and maintained by the Association.

Information on supplier commercial offers included in the tool is provided mainly by the suppliers or gathered by the association directly on the (e-) market if no (satisfactory) answers are obtained. The association checks regularly real market situation (mystery shopping and/or members feedback for members or competitors).

8.2.2 Exhaustiveness

The simulation tool targets all low voltage consumers up to a rated power of 20,7 kVA for mainland territory and Islands (17,25 kVA for Açores).

All market active suppliers are covered by the tool, including last resort tariffs suppliers.
Local offers are residual: some small cooperatives on North Portuguese continental territory and practicing last resort tariffs. Prices and other commercial data are collected by direct contact with suppliers, their websites or anonymous market consultation.

There is no legal obligation for companies to provide data to DECO and, therefore, no legal consequences. Anyway, as DECO is well-known and has a huge impact on media, companies kindly provide the relevant information, in order to avoid negative appreciation on their transparency.

8.2.3 Transparency

The final output provided by the tool is an annual bill in Euro (€), all taxes included, with or without VAT. The tool also shows - for each selected supplier/tariff plan – a breakdown of total rated contracted power cost, energy consumption cost and administrative taxes. Non relevant offers such as seasonal tariffs plans, special consumers or public lighting tariffs are presented.

[18] DECO was founded in 1974. Through its six regional offices and its head office in Lisbon, DECO gathers 420.000 members (situation as of December 2010) – around 10% as family penetration rate. Its mission is providing consumer information, training and consumer education, representation and lobby affairs. Its activity is based on its own technical studies and investigations. Web site: www.deco.proteste.pt

Mainland territory, Açores and Madeira (Portuguese islands) are separated for all calculations and results presentation.

The tool only deals with electricity prices, accordingly to current market offer.

8.2.4 Correctness & Accuracy

Commercial offers from suppliers are usually public and communicated on a transparent way to DECO. Regular market mystery shopping complaints from consumers or competitors, NRA information, media information, etc. are basic and powerful tools to detect possible incorrectness.

Whenever a supplier informs DECO of a new (or changed) tariff offer, DECO staff updates the simulation tool as soon as possible. If needed, the tool is put off-line for the time needed to update the data. Updating is usually done at the beginning of each year, in parallel with new last resort tariffs implementation.

Discounts, bonuses or rebates are considered on the commercial offer (upstream data) and showed as a tariff plan with accessible conditions.

Input provided by users is automatically checked[19] or can only be introduced on pre-defined combo, fixed drop-down or simple check box.

It is important to mention that the tool is built in line with two kinds of consumer needs:

(i) For those who know their consumption data (kWh) and rated contracted power level (kVA), data can be provided on a yearly, half-yearly, monthly and bimonthly basis.

(ii) For those who do not know neither their consumption data (kWh) nor their rated contracted power level (kVA), the tool allows to estimate their bill according to a common standard equipment level and average use. The tool also offers the possibility to perform an even more accurate and personalised estimation.

Furthermore, the tool asks consumers whether they are available to change their current timeline electricity consumption distribution (with possible answers varying from “Yes, the most I can” to “No, not at all”). The idea is to show that different time-of-use period or multiple time-of-use tariffs can offer significant savings on electricity bills, in order to enhance the (economic) interest of customers to change habits. As a final result, the tool presents all possible and reasonable alternatives tariff plans for the customer profile. On Portuguese islands, Açores and Madeira, since there is no liberalised market (and therefore, no supplier choice, only different tariffs plans), this initiative presents an even more real added value.

Reference period for price collection is always indicated, next to final result presentation.

A more technical description is listed at the end of the simulation with most important market and technical assumptions.

[19] For example, it is not possible to introduce more than 24 hours per day, numbers must be positive integers, etc.

Consumer consumption data or results are not stored.

User feedback on the tool has never identified a problem of accuracy. Suppliers also never complained about simulation results.

8.2.5 User-friendliness

Throughout the tool, question mark symbols [?] are displayed to highlight (and provide) the meaning of required data or information.

An ad-hoc box is available for comments (max 3500 characters).

The user is guided trough a step by step procedure. For example, depending on the geographical localisation of the customer (mainland or islands), only all related information is presented.

The number of input (to fill in) has been reduced as much as possible, even for deep personalised calculation.

Using the tool does not require any download or any special kind of software.

There are several links to the simulation tool across DECO web page.

The calculation module of the tool is an Excel file totally controlled by DECO staff. Only DECO staff can have access to the tool programme and work on it for improvements.

8.2.6 Accessibility

The simulation tool is only made available to DECO members. However it is open to everyone on a regular basis (especially coupled with some promotional actions).

DECO provides a telephone line (local call) for members who do not have an internet access.

The simulation tool is shown whenever it is a worthwhile option, through DECO magazine, seminars, workshops, media programs, Newsletters, etc.

The tool was used around 14000 times in 2010 (DECO has more than 50 different simulators working from financial, taxation, telecommunications, environment, health, food, cars, housing and household appliances, etc.).

DECO electricity price comparison tool can be found under the following link:
http://www.deco.proteste.pt/casa/eletricidade-qual-a-melhor-tarifa-para-o-meu-perfil-s564171.htm

8.2.7 Additional information

The tool only takes into account current and public available offers for domestic households. The social tariff in Portugal is considered as a special plan but, due to the high potential involved (more than 650.000 families from 1 January 2011), it was decided to include it. Contract terms, methods of payment, information on energy mix, quality of services are not included in the tool, although these improvements are foreseen in the near future[20].

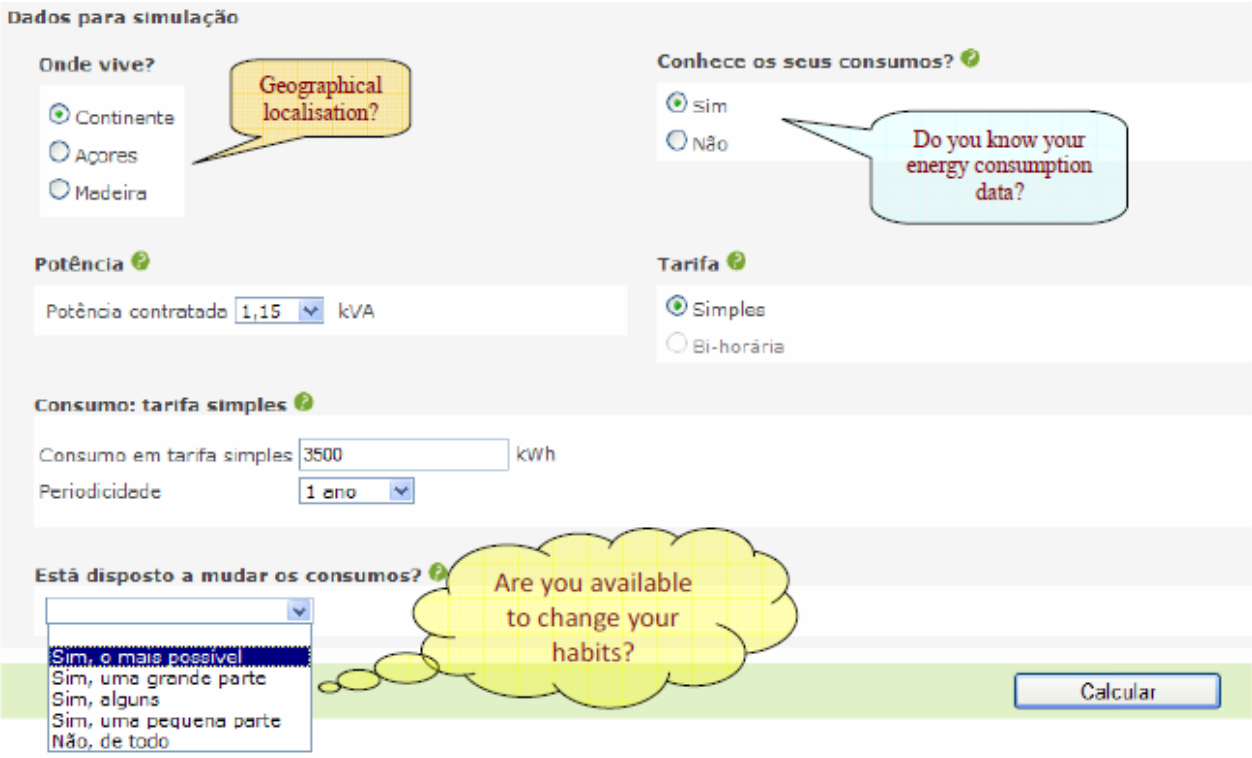


Figure 20: Price comparison tool in Portugal by DECO - Interface page for first data input

[20] Being DECO a consumer association, this information - although not included in the tool - is prvoded through other channels (DECO magazines, leaflets, special guides or personalised information service). In particular, following the energy markets liberalization, the information on supplier switching has become a key issue for DECO.

Figure 21: Price comparison tool in Portugal by DECO - Result page presentation

9 Slovenia

9.1 Independence

The web application as well as back-office e-services are developed, administered and maintained by the regulator. The web application is provided by NRA together with other market monitoring e-services (automatic monthly report on prices). The data security is assured by the application's design and the authentication/authorisation hierarchy set by the regulator. Also, the data provided by the users via back-office system is monitored/approved by the regulator. The results of the comparison or any other calculation/analysis always consider all attributes that may influence customer's choice.

The regulator is responsible for the data on network tariffs, levies and taxes, while suppliers and DSOs (only for "suppliers of last resort" and "public lightning" offers) are responsible for data defining electricity and gas supply offers and company details. All mentioned users are responsible for their own data sets that are presented in a one common Graphical User Interface (GUI).

The tool is financed through dedicated NRA investment funds.

9.2 Exhaustiveness

At the moment almost all suppliers in the Slovenian retail markets for households are included in the tool[21], providing information on all their available offers.

With reference to gas, offers are included in the application and shown only to those users who selected certain area.

The regulator provides the data on network tariffs, levies and taxes; data regarding electricity and gas supply offers and company details are provided by suppliers and DSOs. The data is provided through the back-office administration GUI (web application).

So far there is no explicit obligation to provide data into the tool's database. However, the NRA has legal rights, according to the Energy Act, to request and collect all needed data from energy utilities and market participants to assure its own operation, and the transparency in the market.

Penalties can be applied indirectly (through the energy inspectorate), if the data is not provided on NRA request.

[21] 99,91% (electricity); 94,44% (gas)

9.3 Transparency

The final amount for energy (electricity or gas) consumption is compared in Euro.
With reference to electricity, a user is able to compare also the tariff network charges of different customer groups. The *validation module* for checking the correctness of bills is also offered.

All available business models on pricing (pricing structures, tariffs) are supported by the web application and all results of the comparison are visualised in GUI, using a common textual and graphical presentation. This is crucial for transparency and comparability. The comparison refers to most common attributes of energy supply offers that need user attention, including conditional discounts (following a supplier switch) and other (material) benefits. Using special filter features, user can adjust the scope of comparison.

The comparison is performed on the basis of yearly prices (some features allow also monthly prices), based on yearly (monthly) consumption. The yearly consumption is calculated using the prices set in tariffs (network, energy, etc.) and considering the period of calculation (month, year).

Electricity and gas prices are covered by two separate and dedicated web-application GUIs.

9.4 Correctness & Accuracy

The Regulator is validating the data according to applied validation strategy (daily, weekly, monthly, on-request) or per data input within the approval process, depending on data type.

Each user is responsible for accuracy of its own set of data, while the NRA is responsible for data security.

So far there is no legal obligation assuring that the data entered into the application is fully up-to-date. However, the data validation performed by the NRA and the interest/motivation of suppliers to have all the necessary data in place on time assures high reliability of the data (in this respect, it has to be remarked that electricity data are more reliable than gas data)

There are several possibilities for defining the consumption data:

- customer data provided by the user himself/herself;
- estimated data by consumption wizard;
- usage of predefined data according to standardised consumption groups (in particular features).

A breakdown of the price results is also available: energy (electricity or gas), network charge, levies, taxes and total amount.

Bonuses and rebates are included in the tool. The results can be shown using different filters (bonuses, etc.).

Data are updated as soon as the change occurs (change in price list or network charge, change of levies, tax).

With reference to correctness and accuracy perceived by customers, the NRA has not detected any special problems. However, in case of a fault-report on the quality of data, the regulator offers help (on-line, e-mail, telephone and etc.) and validates/corrects the data, if needed.

9.5 User-friendliness

There is a help icon on each dialog/each step of a wizard in order help the user understand the tool.

With reference to measures taken to make the tool user-friendly, it has to be mentioned that the application is mature, but rather old. Due to the upgrades, some features have become complicated for an average use. A development of the application will follow soon to increase the usability.

All features of the tool are designed and specified by the NRA, according to internal requirements, feedback from users and the long term strategy on the evolution of application functionalities.

9.6 Accessibility

The price comparison can also be requested by phone, fax, e-mail.

The application itself has not been designed for disabled users. To such users the regulator offers the service on request and provides the results of comparison directly on the phone, by fax, email or post. The Regulator also offers daily “on-line” help within the dedicated time period.

A link to the comparison tool is available on the regulator website.

Advertising of the tool is done by the NRA (reports, articles in the magazines, newspapers, presentations on the conferences, etc.). However, many other web sites (DSOs, TSO, Ministry of economy, Competition regulatory authority, etc.) refer to the URL of the tool. Furthermore, many articles containing the information on NRA’s comparison tool have been published by the third parties since its introduction in June 2007.

9.7 Additional information

Tariffs for supply of last resort and public lighting are included. Vulnerable customers are served for free with limited capacity, so no special tariff exists.

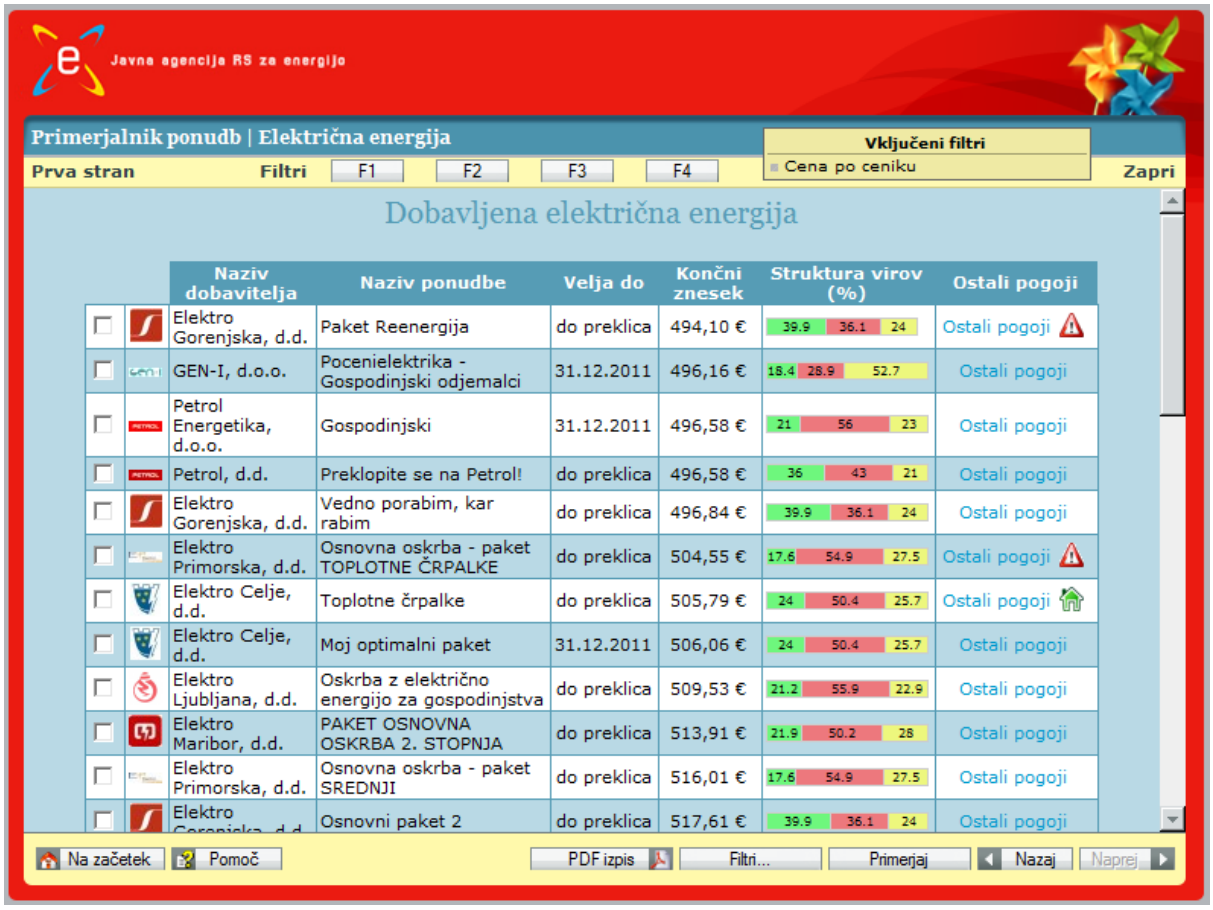
Information on contract terms and payment methods is shown within the comparison results, and some mentioned attributes can be also used as filter criteria (for electricity). The comparison tool offers information about structure of production resources (bar chart/pie graph). A feature named “watchdog” is also available.

Information on green energy and energy is included through a bar/pie graph, showing the structure of production resources (for electricity).

Information on quality of service is not included.

The tool has become recognised as de-facto standard. By monitoring the media, the NRA has noted positive reactions only.

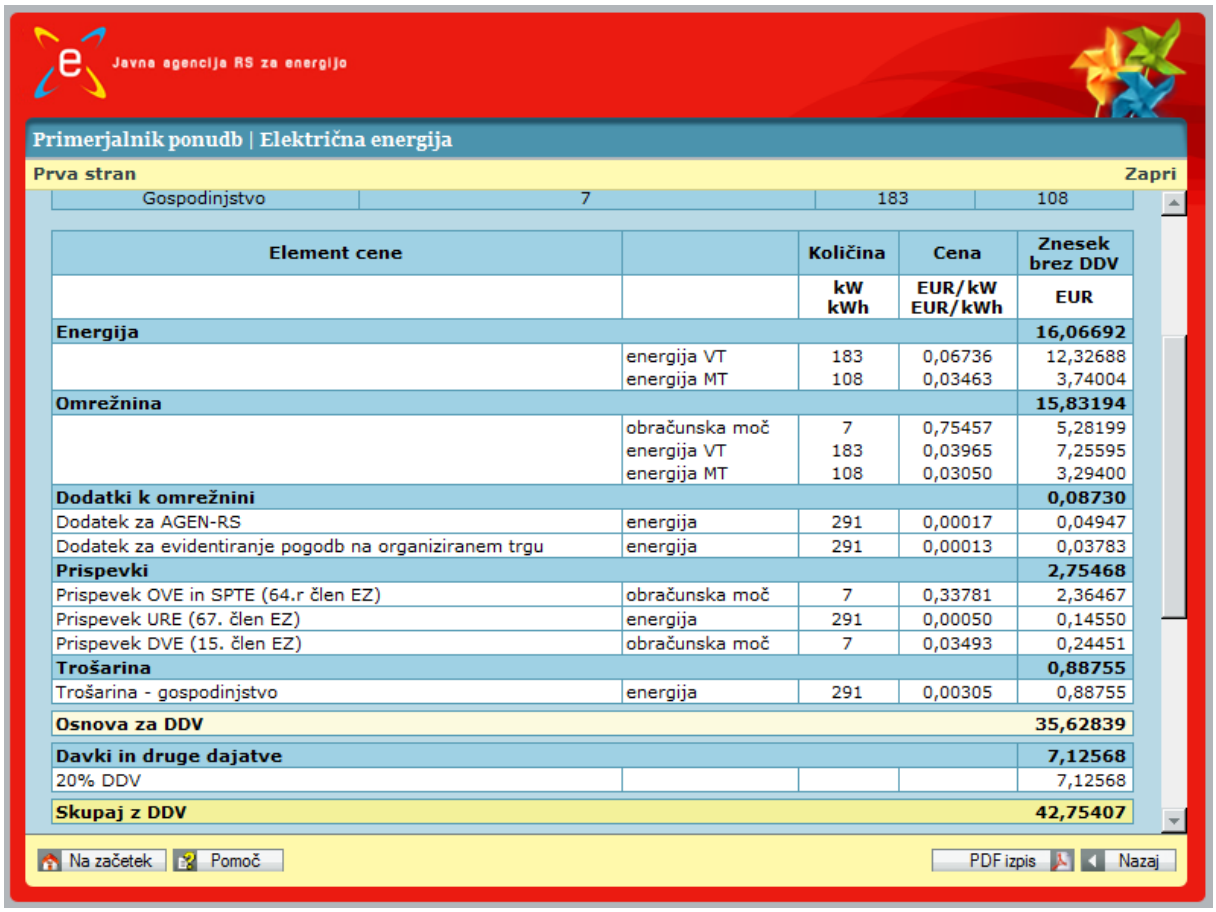
The comparison tool is accessible online in a “24/7” regime.



Naziv dobavitelja	Naziv ponudbe	Velja do	Končni znesek	Struktura virov (%)	Ostali pogoji
Elektro Gorenjska, d.d.	Paket Reenergija	do preklica	494,10 €	39.9 36.1 24	Ostali pogoji
GEN-I, d.o.o.	Pocenielektrika - Gospodinjski odjemalci	31.12.2011	496,16 €	18.4 28.9 52.7	Ostali pogoji
Petrol Energetika, d.o.o.	Gospodinjski	31.12.2011	496,58 €	21 56 23	Ostali pogoji
Petrol, d.d.	Preklopite se na Petrol!	do preklica	496,58 €	36 43 21	Ostali pogoji
Elektro Gorenjska, d.d.	Vedno porabim, kar rabim	do preklica	496,84 €	39.9 36.1 24	Ostali pogoji
Elektro Primorska, d.d.	Osnovna oskrba - paket TOPLOTNE ČRPALKE	do preklica	504,55 €	17.6 54.9 27.5	Ostali pogoji
Elektro Celje, d.d.	Toplotne črpalke	do preklica	505,79 €	24 50.4 25.7	Ostali pogoji
Elektro Celje, d.d.	Moj optimalni paket	31.12.2011	506,06 €	24 50.4 25.7	Ostali pogoji
Elektro Ljubljana, d.d.	Oskrba z električno energijo za gospodinjstva	do preklica	509,53 €	21.2 55.9 22.9	Ostali pogoji
Elektro Maribor, d.d.	PAKET OSNOVNA OSKRBA 2. STOPNJA	do preklica	513,91 €	21.9 50.2 28	Ostali pogoji
Elektro Primorska, d.d.	Osnovna oskrba - paket SREDNJI	do preklica	516,01 €	17.6 54.9 27.5	Ostali pogoji
Elektro Gorenjska, d.d.	Osnovni paket 2	do preklica	517,61 €	39.9 36.1 24	Ostali pogoji

Figure 22: Price comparison tool in Slovenia - A window of comparison result

Figure 22 represents a window of comparison result (total yearly amount) for electricity offers, based on input values for a standard household customer (yearly consumption at 3.500 kWh, 7 kW installed power).



Javna agencija RS za energijo

Primerjalnik ponudb | Električna energija

Prva stran Zapri

Gospodinjstvo	7	183	108

Element cene		Količina	Cena	Znesek brez DDV
		kW kWh	EUR/kW EUR/kWh	EUR
Energija				**16,06692**
	energija VT	183	0,06736	12,32688
	energija MT	108	0,03463	3,74004
Omrežnina				**15,83194**
	obračunska moč	7	0,75457	5,28199
	energija VT	183	0,03965	7,25595
	energija MT	108	0,03050	3,29400
Dodatki k omrežnini				**0,08730**
Dodatek za AGEN-RS	energija	291	0,00017	0,04947
Dodatek za evidentiranje pogodb na organiziranem trgu	energija	291	0,00013	0,03783
Prispevki				**2,75468**
Prispevek OVE in SPTE (64.r člen EZ)	obračunska moč	7	0,33781	2,36467
Prispevek URE (67. člen EZ)	energija	291	0,00050	0,14550
Prispevek DVE (15. člen EZ)	obračunska moč	7	0,03493	0,24451
Trošarina				**0,88755**
Trošarina - gospodinjstvo	energija	291	0,00305	0,88755
Osnova za DDV				**35,62839**
Davki in druge dajatve				**7,12568**
20% DDV				7,12568
Skupaj z DDV				**42,75407**

Na začetek Pomoč PDF izpis Nazaj

Figure 23: Price comparison tool in Slovenia - A window of monthly bill for electricity consumption for standard household customer

Figure 23 represents a window of monthly bill for electricity consumption for standard household customer. All details of the bill, are transparently visible: energy, network tariffs, levies, tax and total amount.

Figure 24 shows the icons available on the top-right corner of the NRA web page, redirecting to the comparison tool (electricity or gas)

http://www.agen-rs.si

Figure 24: Price comparison tool in Slovenia - Icon of electricity and gas

10 Spain

The Spanish regulator (CNE) launched the new Web Price Comparison Tool for gas and electricity on 26 April of 2011.

The tool is available under the following link: www.comparador.cne.es

A tutorial video for consumers is also available under the following link:
http://www.youtube.com/user/videoscne?feature=mhum

10.1 Independence

The independence of the tool is guaranteed by the CNE, which is managing it..

Suppliers are responsible for the data presented, as they have to send updated information to the CNE.

10.2 Exhaustiveness

The price comparison tool includes all residential tariffs on the market, up to the following limits:

- In the case of natural gas, all offers up to 4 bar of pressure (about 99% of gas consumers in Spain)
- In the case of electricity, all offers in low voltage, up to 50 kW of power

Furthermore, it includes:

- Dual offers (gas/ electricity)
- Energy Packages (offers of gas or electricity combined with other services)

As of May 2011, the comparison tool includes 400 active offers of gas, electricity or dual supply from 23 companies

There is an obligation for the suppliers to communicate to the CNE all public offers of gas or electricity included in the limits mentioned, including any change in tariffs.

The CNE can impose sanctions to companies if they do not communicate their offers.

10.3 Transparency

The consumer has to introduce the annual energy consumption (kWh), the power (kW, only for electricity) and the postal code.

Then, the comparison presents a list of all available offers that meet the criteria introduced by the consumer, sorted by price.

The comparison tool present the total annual cost for the energy supply in Euro, including additional services linked to the offer and taxes (VAT).

The consumer can also select the offers by different characteristics: green offers, offers including additional services (like heating maintenance), offers that are available to contract by internet, offers that are available to contract by phone, offers with electronic bill, etc.

By clicking on one offer, the consumer can have access to all the details of the offer, including a link to the complete contract of the offer, when available. All contact data of the supplier are also included (mail, phone, web and e-mail).

10.4 Correctness & Accuracy

The data are provided by the suppliers. The offers are checked by the CNE before activation in the comparison tool.

Suppliers should send the offers before the starting date of offer validity. The tool only presents the offers that are valid at the current day.

The comparison uses the data of consumption introduced by the consumer. If the consumer does not know his/her annual energy consumption (or other requested information), he/she can go to a help page and choose one of the profiles suggested.

Clicking on one offer, the consumer can access to a detailed bill, split the amount in energy, power, complementary services and taxes.

Bonuses and rebates are included, as the tool presents the annual amount for the first year and annual amount for the second year of the offer.

10.5 User-friendliness

The tool was designed by the CNE to be simple and easy to be used by consumers, including help to calculate the annual energy consumption.

A tutorial video[22] for consumers is also available at the front page of the tool

The list of offers and offer details can be printed or stored in a PDF file.

10.6 Accessibility

The web has AA accessibility level [23]:

[22] http://www.youtube.com/user/videoscne?feature=mhum

10.7 Additional information

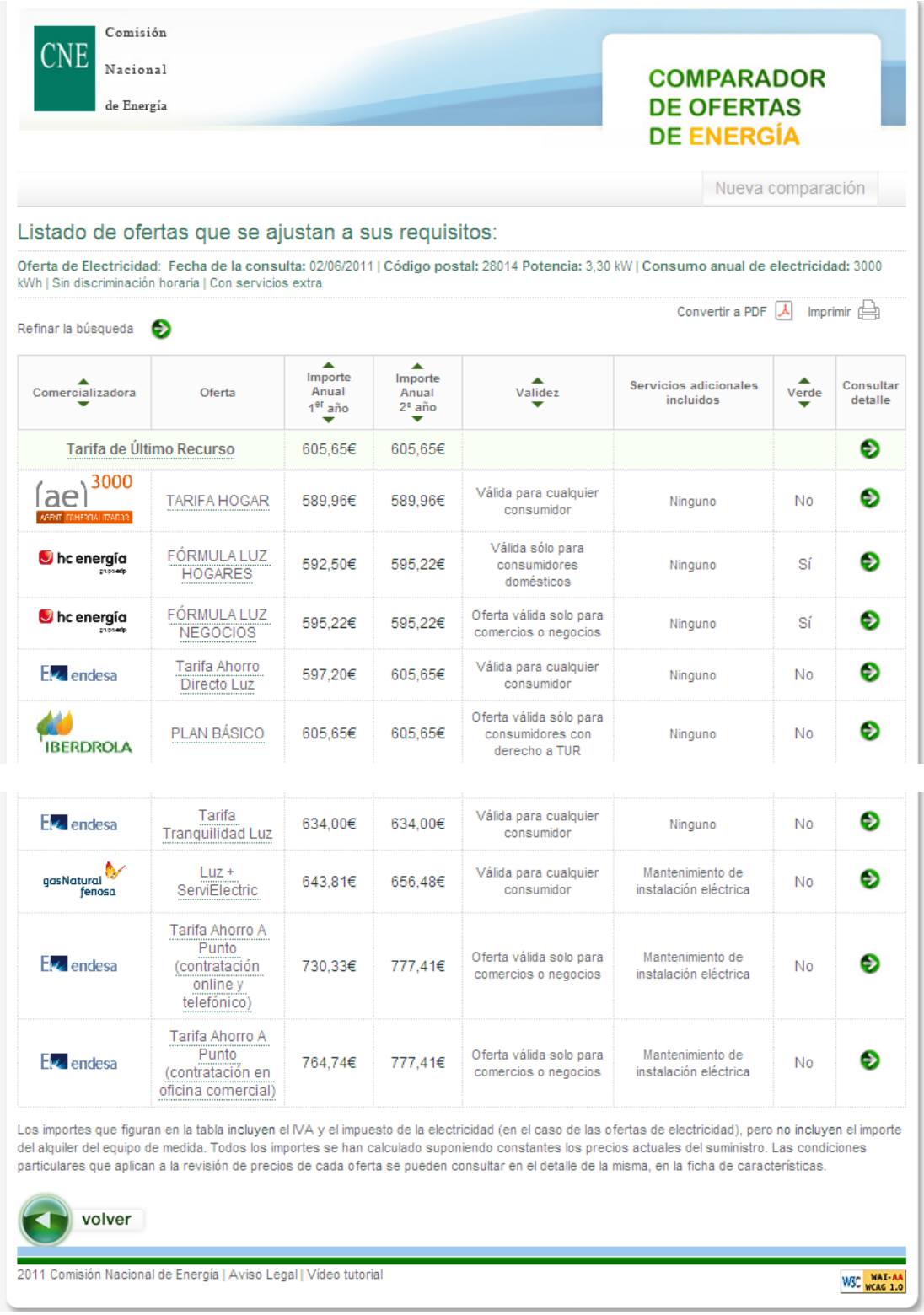
Offers include all main characteristics: green offers, offers including additional services (like heating maintenance), offers that are available to contract by Internet, offers that are available to contract by phone, offers with electronic bill, etc.

Suppliers have several “open boxes” in the offer index-card to include any additional information of the energy offers.

Figure 25: Price comparison tool in Spain - Front page

[23] See guidelines of accessibility here: http://www.w3.org/TR/1999/WAI-WEBCONTENT-19990505/ These guidelines explain how to make Web content accessible to people with disabilities. The guidelines are intended for all Web content developers (page authors and site designers) and for developers of authoring tools. The primary goal of these guidelines is to promote accessibility. However, following them will also make Web content more available to *all* users, whatever user agent they are using (e.g., desktop browser, voice browser, mobile phone, automobile-based personal computer, etc.) or constraints they may be operating under (e.g. noisy surroundings, under- or over-illuminated rooms, in a hands-free environment, etc.). Following these guidelines will also help people find information on the Web more quickly. These guidelines do not discourage content developers from using images, video, etc., but rather explain how to make multimedia content more accessible to a wide audience.

Figure 26: Price comparison tool in Spain - Page 2. Introduction of data of consumption



CNE Comisión Nacional de Energía

COMPARADOR DE OFERTAS DE ENERGÍA

Nueva comparación

Listado de ofertas que se ajustan a sus requisitos:

Oferta de Electricidad: Fecha de la consulta: 02/06/2011 | **Código postal:** 28014 **Potencia:** 3,30 kW | **Consumo anual de electricidad:** 3000 kWh | Sin discriminación horaria | Con servicios extra

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Refinar la búsqueda

Comercializadora	Oferta	Importe Anual 1er año	Importe Anual 2º año	Validez	Servicios adicionales incluidos	Verde	Consultar detalle
Tarifa de Último Recurso		605,65€	605,65€				
(ae) 3000	TARIFA HOGAR	589,96€	589,96€	Válida para cualquier consumidor	Ninguno	No	
hc energía	FÓRMULA LUZ HOGARES	592,50€	595,22€	Válida sólo para consumidores domésticos	Ninguno	Sí	
hc energía	FÓRMULA LUZ NEGOCIOS	595,22€	595,22€	Oferta válida solo para comercios o negocios	Ninguno	Sí	
endesa	Tarifa Ahorro Directo Luz	597,20€	605,65€	Válida para cualquier consumidor	Ninguno	No	
IBERDROLA	PLAN BÁSICO	605,65€	605,65€	Oferta válida sólo para consumidores con derecho a TUR	Ninguno	No	
endesa	Tarifa Tranquilidad Luz	634,00€	634,00€	Válida para cualquier consumidor	Ninguno	No	
gasNatural fenosa	Luz + ServiElectric	643,81€	656,48€	Válida para cualquier consumidor	Mantenimiento de instalación eléctrica	No	
endesa	Tarifa Ahorro A Punto (contratación online y telefónico)	730,33€	777,41€	Oferta válida solo para comercios o negocios	Mantenimiento de instalación eléctrica	No	
endesa	Tarifa Ahorro A Punto (contratación en oficina comercial)	764,74€	777,41€	Oferta válida solo para comercios o negocios	Mantenimiento de instalación eléctrica	No	

Los importes que figuran en la tabla incluyen el IVA y el impuesto de la electricidad (en el caso de las ofertas de electricidad), pero no incluyen el importe del alquiler del equipo de medida. Todos los importes se han calculado suponiendo constantes los precios actuales del suministro. Las condiciones particulares que aplican a la revisión de precios de cada oferta se pueden consultar en el detalle de la misma, en la ficha de características.

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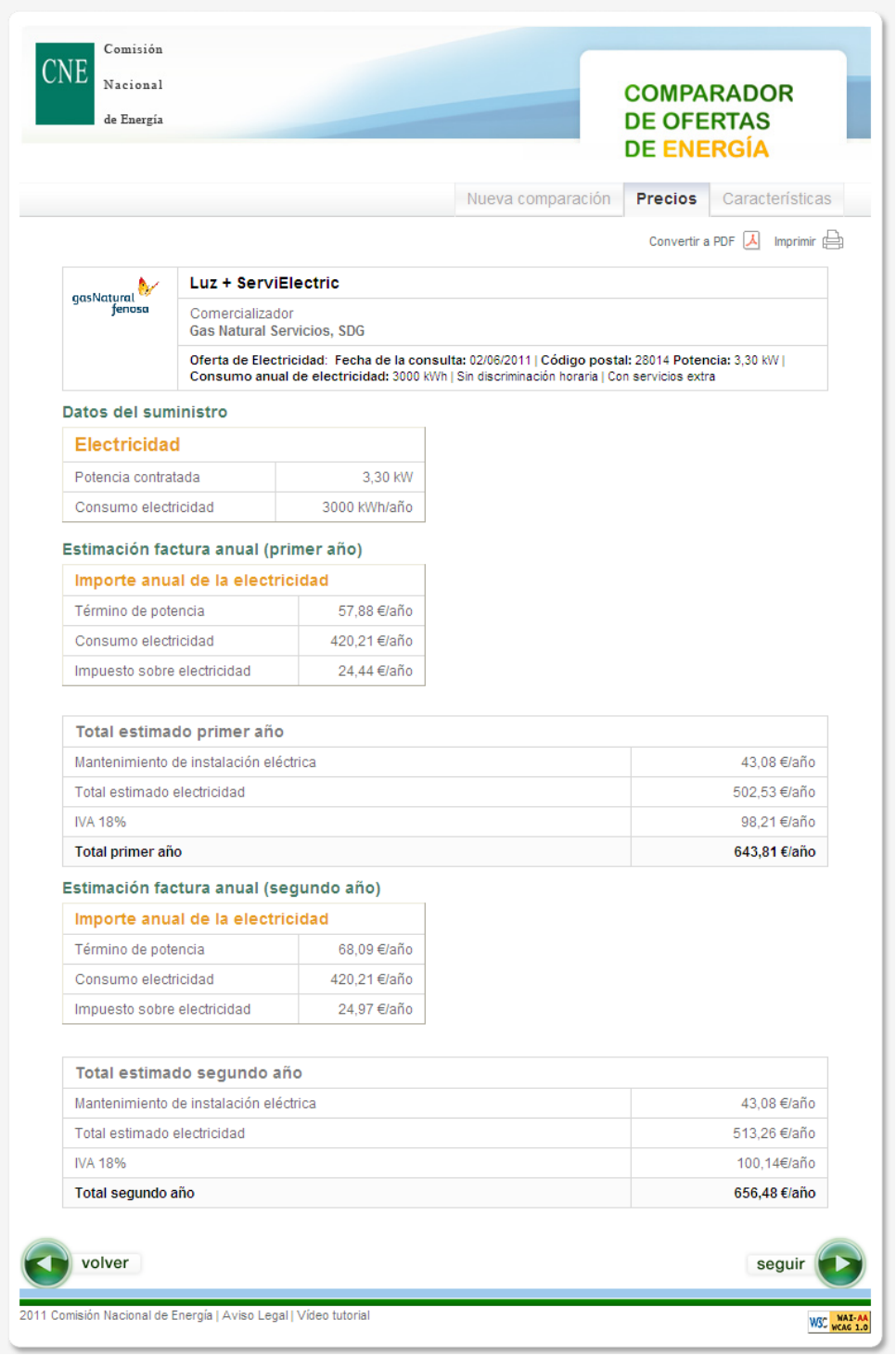
Figure 27: Price comparison tool in Spain - Page 3. Results. List of offers and annual price comparison



CNE Comisión Nacional de Energía

COMPARADOR DE OFERTAS DE ENERGÍA

Nueva comparación | Precios | Características

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gasNatural fenosa

Luz + ServiElectric

Comercializador
Gas Natural Servicios, SDG

Oferta de Electricidad: Fecha de la consulta: 02/06/2011 | **Código postal:** 28014 **Potencia:** 3,30 kW | **Consumo anual de electricidad:** 3000 kWh | Sin discriminación horaria | Con servicios extra

Datos del suministro

Electricidad	
Potencia contratada	3,30 kW
Consumo electricidad	3000 kWh/año

Estimación factura anual (primer año)

Importe anual de la electricidad	
Término de potencia	57,88 €/año
Consumo electricidad	420,21 €/año
Impuesto sobre electricidad	24,44 €/año

Total estimado primer año	
Mantenimiento de instalación eléctrica	43,08 €/año
Total estimado electricidad	502,53 €/año
IVA 18%	98,21 €/año
Total primer año	**643,81 €/año**

Estimación factura anual (segundo año)

Importe anual de la electricidad	
Término de potencia	68,09 €/año
Consumo electricidad	420,21 €/año
Impuesto sobre electricidad	24,97 €/año

Total estimado segundo año	
Mantenimiento de instalación eléctrica	43,08 €/año
Total estimado electricidad	513,26 €/año
IVA 18%	100,14€/año
Total segundo año	**656,48 €/año**

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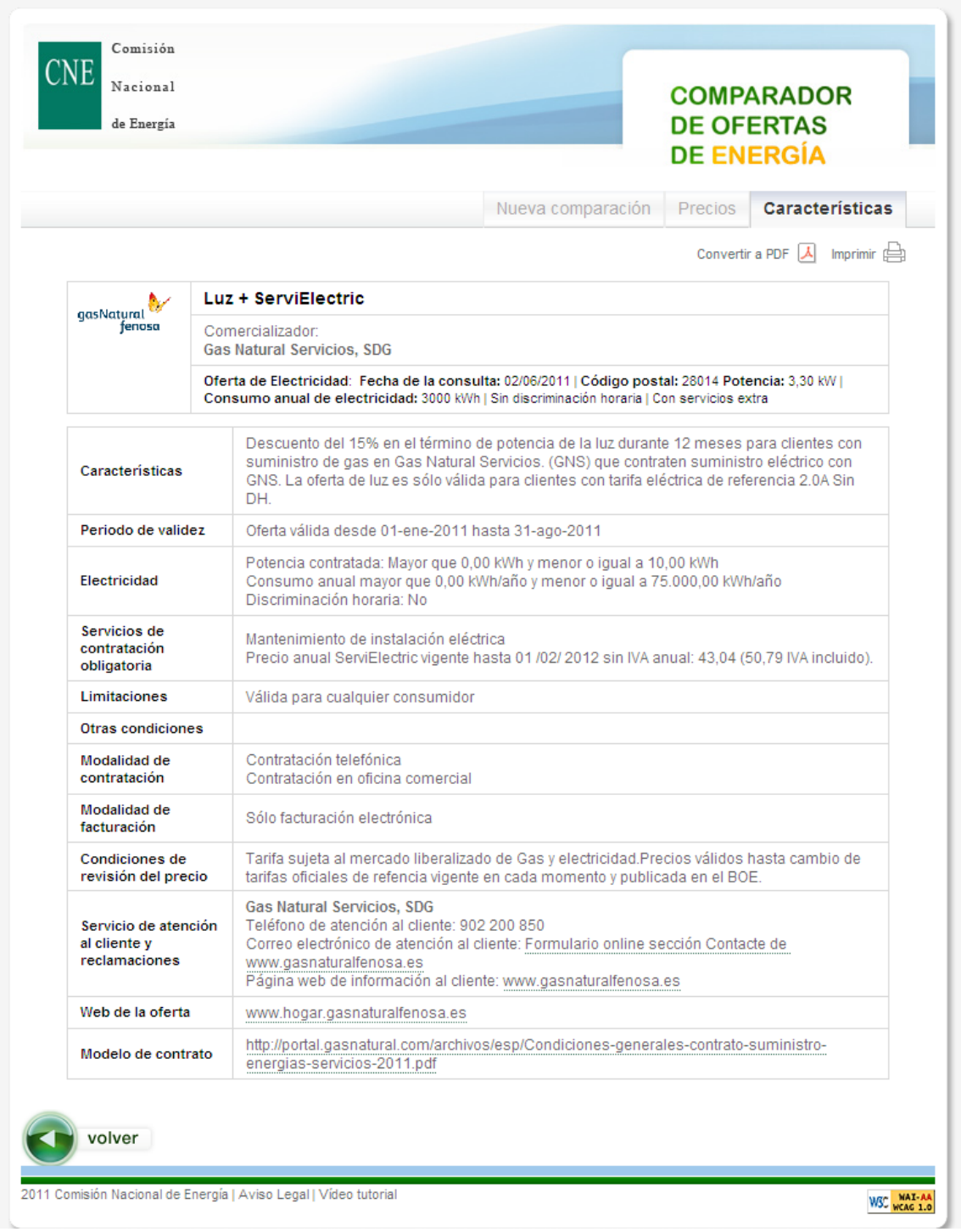
Figure 28: Price comparison tool in Spain - Page 4. Detail of one offer (1). Estimated annual billing



CNE Comisión Nacional de Energía

COMPARADOR DE OFERTAS DE ENERGÍA

Nueva comparación | Precios | Características

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gasNatural fenosa

Luz + ServiElectric

Comercializador:
Gas Natural Servicios, SDG

Oferta de Electricidad: Fecha de la consulta: 02/06/2011 | **Código postal:** 28014 **Potencia:** 3,30 kW | **Consumo anual de electricidad:** 3000 kWh | Sin discriminación horaria | Con servicios extra

Características	Descuento del 15% en el término de potencia de la luz durante 12 meses para clientes con suministro de gas en Gas Natural Servicios. (GNS) que contraten suministro eléctrico con GNS. La oferta de luz es sólo válida para clientes con tarifa eléctrica de referencia 2.0A Sin DH.
Periodo de validez	Oferta válida desde 01-ene-2011 hasta 31-ago-2011
Electricidad	Potencia contratada: Mayor que 0,00 kWh y menor o igual a 10,00 kWh Consumo anual mayor que 0,00 kWh/año y menor o igual a 75.000,00 kWh/año Discriminación horaria: No
Servicios de contratación obligatoria	Mantenimiento de instalación eléctrica Precio anual ServiElectric vigente hasta 01 /02/ 2012 sin IVA anual: 43,04 (50,79 IVA incluido).
Limitaciones	Válida para cualquier consumidor
Otras condiciones	
Modalidad de contratación	Contratación telefónica Contratación en oficina comercial
Modalidad de facturación	Sólo facturación electrónica
Condiciones de revisión del precio	Tarifa sujeta al mercado liberalizado de Gas y electricidad.Precios válidos hasta cambio de tarifas oficiales de refencia vigente en cada momento y publicada en el BOE.
Servicio de atención al cliente y reclamaciones	Gas Natural Servicios, SDG Teléfono de atención al cliente: 902 200 850 Correo electrónico de atención al cliente: Formulario online sección Contacte de www.gasnaturalfenosa.es Página web de información al cliente: www.gasnaturalfenosa.es
Web de la oferta	www.hogar.gasnaturalfenosa.es
Modelo de contrato	http://portal.gasnatural.com/archivos/esp/Condiciones-generales-contrato-suministro-energias-servicios-2011.pdf

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Figure 29: Price comparison tool in Spain - Page 5. Detail of one offer (2).General Conditions of the offer

Figure 30: Price comparison tool in Spain - Help page example

11 Sweden

In 2007 the Swedish Electricity Act was amended, introducing the obligation for all suppliers to report prices and terms of agreement for electricity contracts to the NRA (EI). The objective was to make it easier for customers to compare prices and thus increase customer activity in the energy markets. In January 2008, EI launched its price comparison tool (available under the following link: www.elpriskollen.se).

The day to day work with the Swedish price comparison tool is based on three main objectives:

- EI should maintain consumer reliability in the prices shown at www.elpriskollen.se;
- EI should increase the number of customers visiting the web site; and
- EI should improve both the website and the reporting system.

11.1 Independence

The independence of www.elpriskollen.se is guaranteed through state ownership and by tax money financing. All suppliers are treated equally.

In addition to www.elpriskollen.se, there exist a handful of commercial web-based price comparators in Sweden. Those commercial alternatives are in most cases financed by the electricity industry.

11.2 Exhaustiveness

All suppliers in the Swedish retail electricity market have a statutory obligation to report prices and terms of agreement to EI. In total, there are around 120 suppliers active in the Swedish market.

In order to further describe the details of supplier obligations to report prices and terms of agreement, EI has drafted regulations that electricity suppliers are obligated to follow. The aforementioned obligations refer to:

- Contracts for fixed price (6 months, 1 year, 2 year, 3 year, 4 year and 5 year), flexible price and default electricity price. This includes more than 95% of all contracts on the Swedish market.

- Environmental contracts, which exclusively deliver electricity produced from renewable energy sources.

- Local offers (geographically limited)

The obligation to report prices and terms of agreement to the NRA does not include contracts directed at specific customer groups (for example contracts only available for existing customers). The reason for this exclusion is that contracts directed at specific customer groups may complicate the comparison. The suppliers are responsible for keeping the data updated on a daily basis.

To ensure that these obligations are followed, EI has procedures in place to verify that all reported prices and terms of agreement are correct. When incorrect data is discovered, EI

contacts the specific supplier and calls for immediate correction of the data. EI has the ability to remove incorrectly reported data from the tool.

11.3 Transparency

All contracts are shown with price and terms of agreement. In addition to prices and terms of agreement, each supplier can inform customers of additional services not covered by the obligation to report, e.g. advice on energy savings.

Prices are shown in öre/kWh[24] and include all variable and fixed components, cost for green certificates, energy tax and VAT. This price is also known as the "comparison price". According to Swedish consumer legislation, all commercial companies are obliged to use a "comparison price" when marketing their products and services.

The "comparison price" is shown for three different consumption levels, 2.000 kWh/year, 5.000 kWh/year and 20.000 kWh/year. Network tariffs are not included.

11.4 Correctness and Accuracy

Suppliers are responsible for data reporting and the correctness of the data. They have an obligation to update the reported data as soon as they change their prices or terms of agreement. All suppliers must apply for permission to the reporting system. This application is done by the suppliers' Executive Director.

EI controls the data on a daily basis. Failure to comply with the reporting obligation may result in a fine.

While suppliers are responsible for reporting all data, EI is responsible for presenting the data at www.elpriskollen.se. There have been over 1.4 million visits on the website since it was launched in 2008. EI's view is that customers perceive www.elpriskolle.se as correct and accurate.

11.5 Usability

Usability is a cornerstone in EI's work to develop its price comparison tool.

All work with developing www.elpriskollen.se begins with user interviews and user testing to catch the user preferences. This ensures that the price comparison is built on as few steps as possible with accessible comprehensive texts.

The site is based on Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0[25]. Following these guidelines makes content accessible to a wider range of people with disabilities, including blindness and low vision, deafness and hearing loss, learning disabilities, cognitive limitations, limited movement, speech disabilities, photosensitivity and combinations of these. Following these guidelines also often makes the Web content more usable to users in general.

[24] 1 öre = 0,01 SEK

[25] http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/

Both design and the functionality of the website are developed according to the visitor preferences, based on user interviews. The content of the website is supplemented by additional information (for example, information on the.functioning of the market or historical price statistics).

The visitor has the possibility to contact EI with questions either over phone or via e-mail.

11.6 Accessibility

Since the launch of www.elpriskollen.se, the website has been visited by more than 1.4 million Swedish customers (in total there are 4.4 million Swedish households that use electricity for heating and house holding). One of the objectives of the work with www.elpriskollen.se is to increase the number of visitors. This is done through different marketing channels, mostly web based activities such as the use of social media (Facebook and Twitter). Other activities outside the web include monthly press releases on price developments, partnerships with customer representatives and participation in various public happenings.

EI also helps customers without access to Internet. This can be arranged over the phone or via written letters. EI also reaches such customer through cooperation and communication with different types of customer representatives.

11.7 Additional information

As a vital part of the day-to-day work with www.elpriskollen.se, EI cooperates with branch organisations, customer representatives and other authorities to constantly improve the web site. Twice a year EI invites a number of relevant organisations to a reference group meeting where current topics are discussed. The purpose of these meetings is to get feedback that can improve the price comparison tool.

EI collects and stores all the reported prices and terms of agreement. This gives EI an opportunity to monitor the development of the electricity price, both for each supplier and for average prices from all suppliers. The statistics are used for internal reports, monthly press releases and for external inquiries.

Figure 31 shows the home page of www.elpriskollen.se. Below the blue field news about the electricity market are presented and icons that link to social media are also shown. The orange field in the bottom right is a supplier search engine. In the blue field the user can click through a four step contract search. In the first step the user fills out its postal code. This is important to pinpoint geographically limited contract offers. In the second step, the user fills in/chooses the annual consumption for the household. At the third step, the user chooses electricity supply contract which also includes the possibility to choose contracts exclusively produced by renewable energy resources (so called environmental contracts). In the fourth step, the user chooses between invoice alternatives. After these steps the website generates a contract hit list. The contracts are sorted by price.

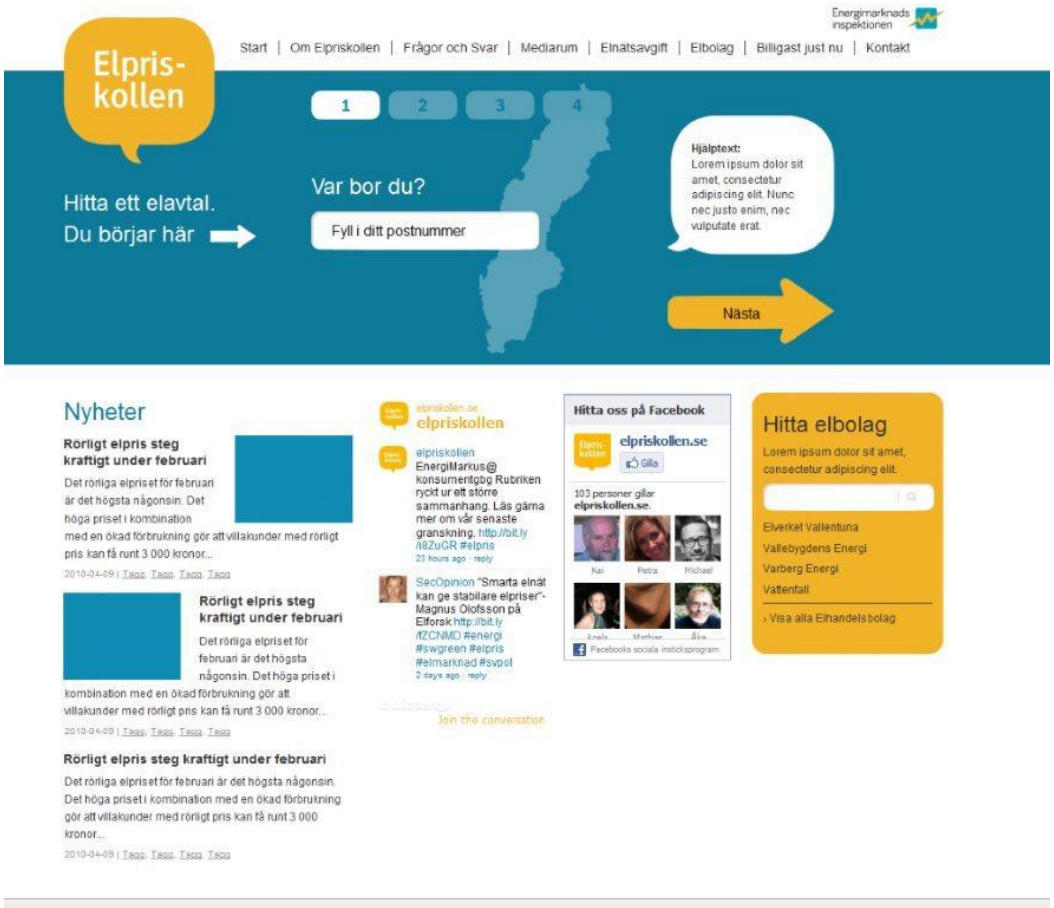


Figure 31: Price comparison tool in Sweden - Homepage

Figure 32 shows the result of a search for a specific supplier. In this page, the user can find all contracts of the specific supplier. It includes contact details and each supplier has the ability to inform users of additional services not covered by the obligation to report.

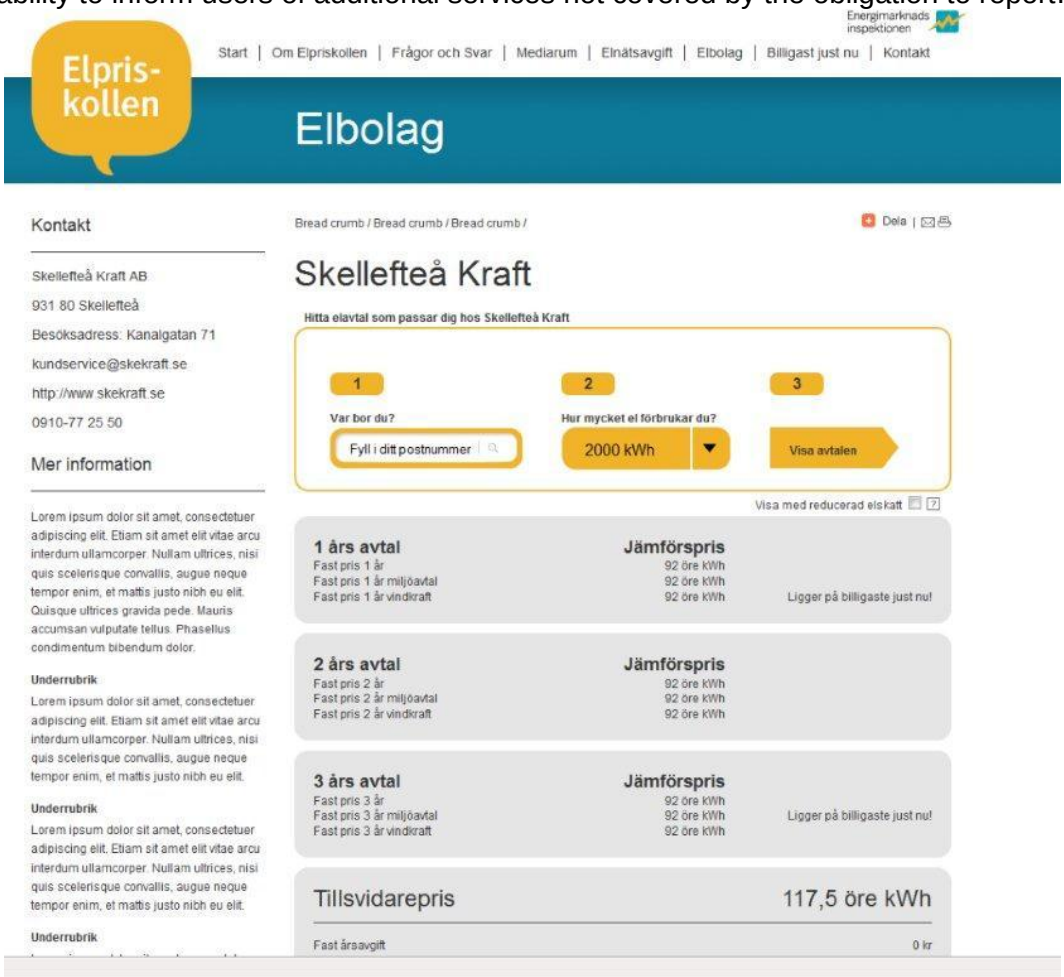


Figure 32: Price comparison tool in Sweden - Specific supplier page

Figure 33 shows the “News room” page, where visitors can read about other subjects, important for understanding the electricity market (news in the electricity market, information about the functioning of the market, supplier switching, historical price statistics). It is quite similar to a blog.

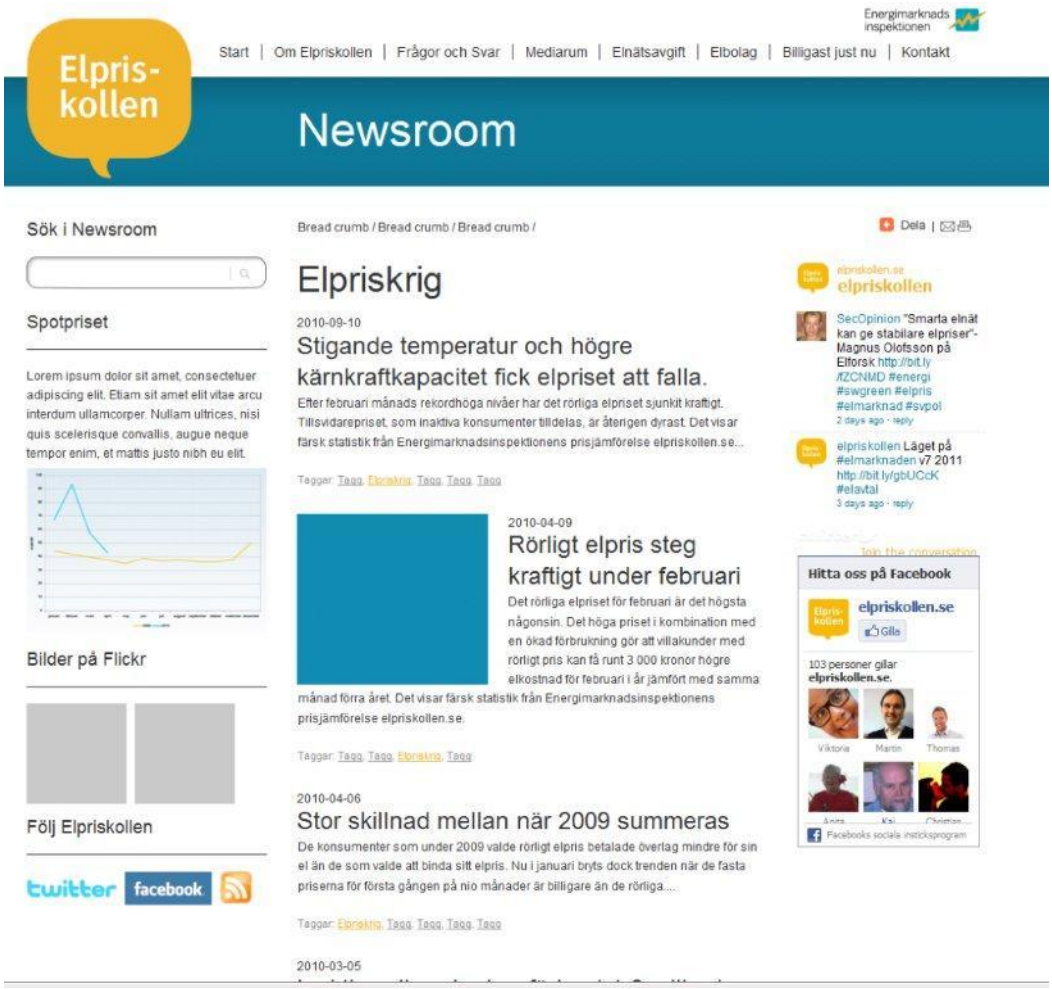


Figure 33: Price comparison tool in Sweden - News room page

12 The United Kingdom (Great Britain)

Ofgem does not provide a price comparison service but, through its website, signposts consumers to Consumer Focus (the statutory consumer body in GB) which operates an online price comparison service (with tariff information provided by a commercial site), and also publishes basic price comparison factsheets on its website.

Independent online price comparison services also operate in the market. These are covered by a voluntary Code of Practice with an accreditation scheme, 'The Confidence Code', also provided by Consumer Focus.

The Consumer Focus price comparison factsheets cover the main six energy companies in GB. The factsheets are provided on a regional basis, by payment type, using high, medium and low energy consumption ranges (set by Ofgem) for comparison purposes. Prices are shown, by payment type for gas, electricity and dual fuel, covering standard, 'economy 7' (off peak) and online tariffs. The sheets are updated on a monthly basis. An example factsheet is shown at the annex.
This service also signposts consumers to the accredited online price comparison services 'switching sites' operating in the market. These sites allow for price comparison but also provide the ability for consumer to undertake a switch.
The Confidence Code[26] provides independent accreditation of the sites against a set of nine minimum requirements.

There are currently 13 switching sites accredited by the Confidence Code. This covers the majority of established switching sites offering price comparisons in the domestic energy market. The accredited sites currently are:

- BeatthatQuote.com
- Confused.com
- Energy Helpline
- Energylinx
- Fuelswitch
- Moneysupermarket.com
- Simply switch
- TheEnergyShop.com
- UK Power
- Unravelit
- Uswitch
- Which? Switch

[26] http://www.consumerfocus.org.uk/files/2010/12/New-Confidence-Code.pdf

12.1 Independence

Requirement 1 of the Confidence Code states that sites must be independent of any gas or electricity supplier. While a site can take commission from suppliers this must not influence the consistency of the provision of the information or data. Sites must clearly identify each supplier from whom it receives a commission/payment.

Ongoing compliance by the switching sites with the Confidence Code is monitored through quarterly and annual audits.

An example of a page from accredited site, displaying the Confidence Code logo is shown at the figure 34.

12.2 Exhaustiveness

Requirement 2 of the Confidence Code ('tariffs and price comparisons') requires the sites to use all reasonable endeavours to include price comparisons in respect of all available domestic tariffs (for all payments types).

The sites are not required to show the tariffs available to consumers in a specified region to consumers not living in that region. The sites are not required to show social tariffs (tariffs where eligibility is based on financial or social circumstances) or a tariff which a supplier has asked not be shown (a site must inform Consumer Focus before removing a current tariff).

There is no requirement for companies to provide data to switching sites, but it is in their interests to do so, as they provide a significant route to the market. Recent research showed that of those who had switched (16%, for both gas and electricity) had done so online through a switching site (with a further 2% by phoning the price comparison service directly)[27].

Under requirement 5 ('results and filters'), the switching sites must show no less than 10 of the cheapest offers available in the customer's region.

12.3 Transparency

For comparison purposes, sites should display details of the consumer's current tariff alongside results. Fields which the site should make available for consumer to enter details include and estimated current spend (£) per year and an estimated current usage in kwh. Some sites prompt the use of the 'annual statement' which suppliers are required to send to their customers, showing an estimate of annual consumption and spend based on the previous year.

Sites show an overall price, defaulting to a 12 month comparison period, based on consumption levels inputted by the customers for gas, electricity or dual fuel, although searches can be undertaken using other choices.

[27] Ofgem Customer engagement tracking survey, Ipsos MORI 2011

The accompanying guidance to the relevant requirement in the Confidence Code, covering the treatment of bundled tariffs (e.g. with telephone), states that the energy prices should be shown separately with details provided of the additional components of the tariff. Details of non-cash offers (such as supermarket loyalty points) should also be listed separately.

Calculations should not include sign up introductory offers, one-off discounts or other discounts that last less than the duration of the tariff.

There are minimum requirements in the Confidence Code around how fixed term offers are displayed. In particular, where the end date of a tariff is less than the length of the comparison period the tariff should not be included and also where a tariff is within two months of its end date a 'warning message' alerting the customer to this should be displayed on the results page.

12.4 Correctness & Accuracy

It is the responsibility of the switching sites to obtain, update and ensure the accuracy of the data it presents, using its own database and tariff calculator.

The sites must state when prices were last updated. Details of tariffs should be included as soon as possible and no later than 2 working days of the tariff being available.

12.5 Accessibility and User-friendliness

Nine of the accredited switching sites provide consumers with the ability to apply to by phone as well as online. The Confidence Code does not place any specific accessibility requirements on them. A number of the accredited sites do, however, operate an accessibility policy.

To meet Confidence Code requirements, sites must operate a complaint and enquiry service to respond to a complaint or enquiry within 7 working days of receipt.

12.6 Additional Issues

The Confidence Code covers the treatment of green tariffs. It states that green tariffs should be shown. Green tariffs are defined as tariffs which are certified under the Green Energy Supply Certification scheme. Where these tariffs are shown the sites must display the Green Energy Supply Certification logo alongside the tariff. For these tariffs the Confidence Code recommends that tariffs should be displayed in order by fuel mix, and then by price.

The Confidence Code states that a switching site may assign a rating on a suppliers' performance and invite consumers to consider these ratings.
The switching sites are required to signpost consumers to organisations which provide energy efficiency information or programmes.

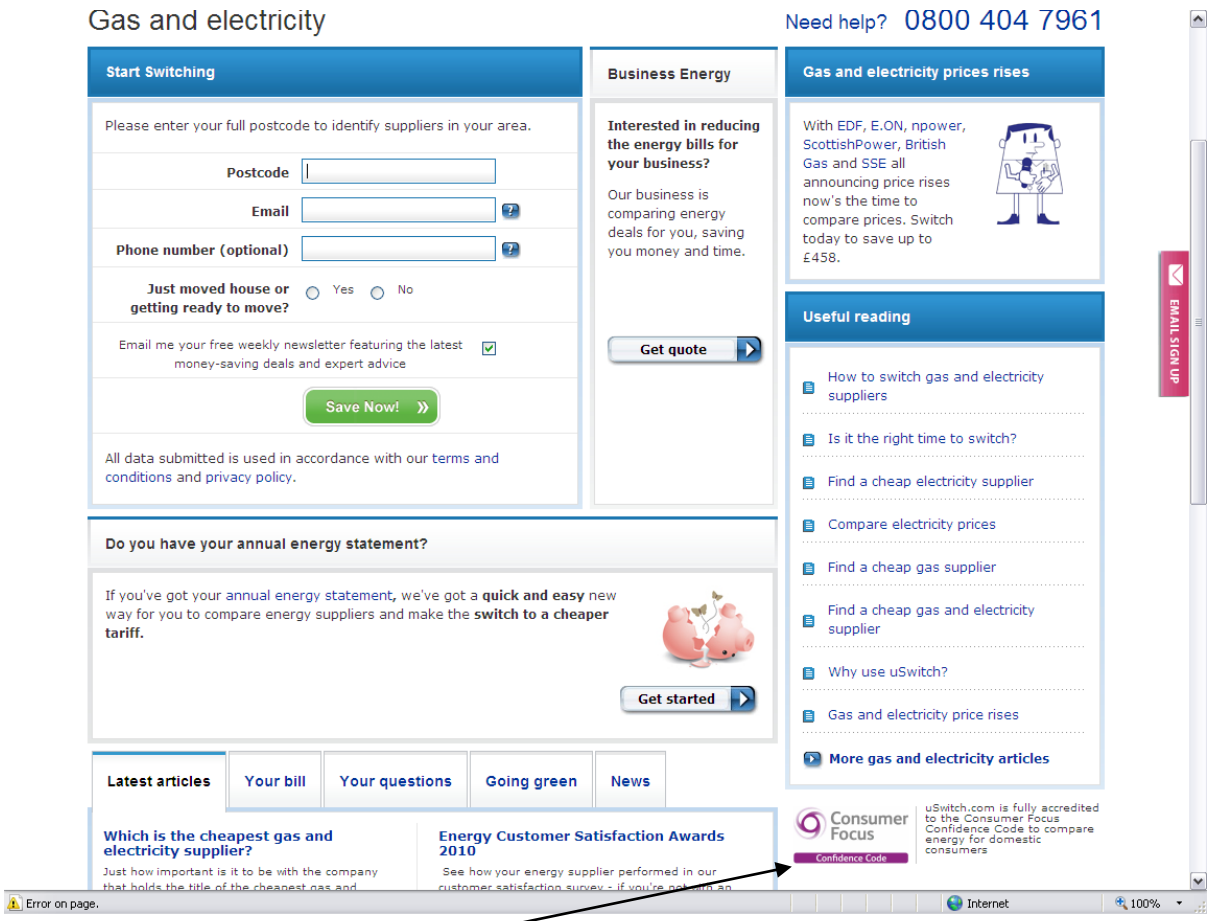
12.7 Latest Developments

Ofgem's Retail Market Review, published in March 2011 consulted on a range of proposals. These included the potential for enhanced obligations on suppliers when dealing with switching sites and how switching site accreditations can best be used to ensure consumers

have trust in the tools they use to search alternatives tariffs and suppliers, and switch if desired.

The UK Government is consulting on changes to the national landscape for consumer representation. Proposals include the abolition of Consumer Focus and transfer of its functions, including the Confidence Code, to other bodies.

Figure 34 shows an example of independent switching site page, accredited by Consumer Focus Confidence Code:



'Confidence Code' accreditation logo

Figure 34: Price comparison tool in the United Kingdom - Example of independent switching site page

London Electricity Region

23 February 2011

Consumer Focus

	Standard Rate						Economy 7 Rate						Online Tariff					
	British Gas	Edf Energy	npower	E.ON Energy	Scottish Power	Scottish and Southern Energy	British Gas	Edf Energy	npower	E.ON Energy	Scottish Power	Scottish and Southern Energy	British Gas	Edf Energy	npower	E.ON Energy	Scottish Power	Scottish and Southern Energy
Low User																		
Gas																		
Direct Debit	£474	N/A	£486	£429	£439	£452	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	£455	N/A	£456	£413	£398	£463
Standard Credit	£491	N/A	£539	£457	£515	£471	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	£483	N/A	N/A
Prepayment	£482	£462	£491	£457	£458	£465	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Electricity																		
Direct Debit	£290	£300	£265	£338	£295	£289	£302	£327	£307	£350	£310	£323	£266	£274	£215	£277	£285	£259
Standard Credit	£316	£319	£307	£360	N/A	£301	£342	£347	£349	£372	N/A	£337	N/A	£291	N/A	£294	N/A	£274
Prepayment	£317	£319	£307	£360	£326	£284	£342	£347	£349	£372	£338	£302	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Dual Fuel																		
Direct Debit	£755	£726	£741	£752	£717	£734	£762	£753	£783	£763	£733	£768	£681	£623	£661	£663	£672	£659
Standard Credit	£798	£773	£836	£817	£849	£772	£818	£802	£877	£829	£851	£808	N/A	£663	N/A	£777	N/A	£697
Prepayment	£784	£773	£799	£817	£774	£755	£809	£802	£840	£829	£787	£773	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Medium User																		
Gas																		
Direct Debit	£656	N/A	£639	£593	£611	£625	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	£628	N/A	£618	£577	£574	£642
Standard Credit	£683	N/A	£692	£631	£717	£653	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	£678	N/A	N/A

Figure 35: Price comparison tool in the United Kingdom - Example of Consumer Focus price comparison factsheet

Annex 1 – CEER

The Council of European Energy Regulators (CEER) is the voice of Europe's national regulators of electricity and gas at EU and international level. Through CEER, a not-for-profit association, the national regulators cooperate and exchange best practice. A key objective of CEER is to facilitate the creation of a single, competitive, efficient and sustainable EU internal energy market that works in the public interest.

CEER works closely with (and supports) the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER). ACER, which has its seat in Ljubljana, is an EU Agency with its own staff and resources. CEER, based in Brussels, deals with many complementary (and not overlapping) issues to ACER's work such as international issues, smart grids, sustainability and customer issues.

The work of CEER is structured according to a number of working groups and task forces, composed of staff members of the national energy regulatory authorities, and supported by the CEER Secretariat.

This report was prepared by the Customer Empowerment Task Force of CEER Retail Market and Customer Working.

Annex 2 – List of abbreviations

Term	Definition
ACER	Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators
AEEG	Autorità per l'Energia Elettrica e il Gas / The Regulatory Authority for Electricity and Gas in Italy
BEUC	European Consumer Organisation
CEER	Council of European Energy Regulators
CNE	La Comisión Nacional de Energía / Spanish National Energy Commission
CI	Consumers International
DECO	Portuguese Consumer Association
DGO	Distribution Grid Operator
EI	Energy Market Inspectorate in Sweden
EC	European Commission
ERGEG	European Regulators' Group for Electricity and Gas
ERSE	Entidade Reguladora dos Serviços Energéticos / Portuguese Energy Services Regulatory Authority
EU	European Union
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
GB	Great Britain
GGP	Guidelines of Good Practice
GUI	Graphical User Interface
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NMa	Nederlandse Mededingingsautoriteit / Dutch Office of Energy Regulation
NRA	National Regulatory Authority
PCT	Price Comparison Tools
PPCW	Private Price Comparison Websites
PCW	Price Comparison Websites
SEM	Search Engine Marketing
UK	The United Kingdom
VAT	Value Added Tax
VREG	Vlaamse Regulator van de Elektriciteits- en Gasmarkt / Flemish Regulator of the Electricity and Gas market
WCAG	Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
WG	Working Group