

Europe prepares for a hard winter

It is no secret that Europe is heading for a severe energy crisis. Energy prices have already skyrocketed but companies and households will only be confronted with higher energy bills in the coming months. While rising bills are inevitable, the other big risk for Europe is supply disruption



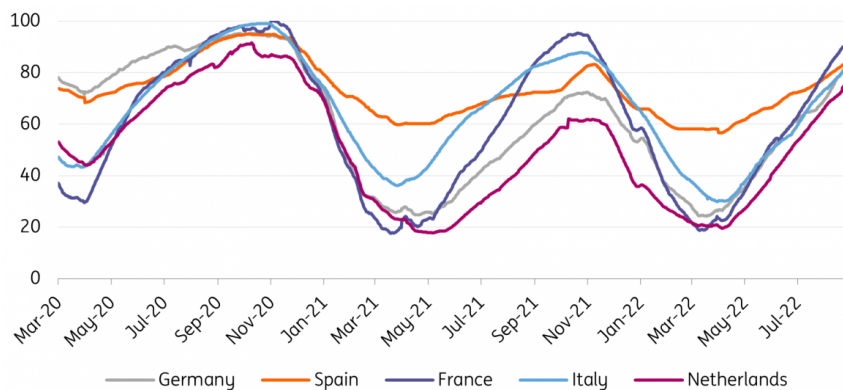
The resumption of Russian gas flows last week was only an ephemeral piece of good news

Europe's gas storage tanks are 80% full

Amid all the doom and gloom, there is at least some positive news in that European countries have been able to fill gas storage ahead of schedule. The European Commission has asked member states to fill reserves up to at least 80% by 1 November. Most countries have already reached that level well ahead of time. Overall, Europe is currently at 80.2%, which is about two months ahead of time.

European gas storage has been filling up

Natural gas, stock level, country total, fill level (%)



Source: Gas Infrastructure Europe (GIE), Macrobond

Governments are stepping in

This means that the EU has chosen to pay a high price to achieve sufficient gas supply ahead of the winter. At the same time, it is no guarantee that shortages will not happen. As Europe still relies on further imports in the winter months, there is a chance that a cold winter still results in shortages. If these shortages occur, it will be at the end of the winter. However, it currently also looks as if energy supply issues could go beyond this winter into next.

While countries are filling their national gas reserves, governments are looking into ways to tackle or at least mitigate the impact of higher energy prices on consumers and corporates. Measures differ between countries, both in terms of magnitude and nature. We provide an overview of the current state of play below and expect more measures to be announced in the coming weeks.

National policies introduced to help consumers with rising energy prices

	VAT/price reductions	Price caps	One-off payments	Other measures
US	/	/	/	Consumer rebates/tax credits enable the installation of energy efficient heating at home (part of the Inflation Reduction Act 2022)
UK	Discount on energy bills from October	/	One-off payments in different amounts for those receiving means-tested benefits, for pensioners and for the disabled	Increase and extension of Household Support Fund
Germany	June to August 2022: reduction of energy tax on fuels to the European minimum & €9 ticket on public transport	/	One-off payments in different amounts for employed, self-employed and business people, for adults receiving benefits from social security system and for recipients of unemployment benefits, child bonus	/
France	Discount on fuel prices	Freezing of gas price until end-2022 Cap on electricity price increase	Tax free bonus for workers Back to school bonus for lower-income households	Inflation indexation of minimum wage Increase of pensions, civil servant salaries & family benefits and social minima
Italy	Reduction of general system charges (2022) Reduction of VAT on nat. gas Temporary reduction of VAT and excises on fuels	/	To salary earners and pensioners with income <€35,000	Enlargement of beneficiaries and extension until end-2022 of social bonuses meant to reduce electricity and gas expenditure for poor households

Western Europe

	VAT/price reductions	Price caps	One-off payments	Other measures
Austria	Green electricity subsidy and green electricity flat rate set to zero Compensation for rising energy costs in public transport to prevent price increases (eg.: free rides for schoolchildren)	/	Energy cost compensation One-off payments in different amounts, Cost-of-living bonus, child bonus	50% increase in the commuter allowance and quadrupling of the 'commuter euro' until 30 June 2023 Advance increase of Family Bonus Plus Inflation indexation of social benefits from 2023 Abolition of cold progression
Spain	Many public transport services will offer free or discounted prices Reduction of VAT on energy and of tax on electricity	€40/MWh (until December, with an increase of €5 per month from January; to be in place until 31 May 2023)	Social Electricity voucher (includes all Minimum-Living-Income beneficiaries)	Excess profits tax for energy companies, money to be used to help citizens pay energy bill
Netherlands	Reduction of excise duty on fuel, reduction of VAT on energy and increase of the 'energy bill refund'	/	For lower-income households	Subsidy for vouchers for advice and the purchase of products aimed at saving energy
Belgium	VAT reduction for electricity Reduction of excise duties on diesel and petrol	/	Cheques in different amounts (income dependent) deducted from energy bill Cheque for households heating their house with oil	Baseline of consumer protection remains the inflation indexation of wages, pensions and social benefits Extension of the social energy tariff (introduced during the pandemic)
Ireland	Reduction of VAT on gas and electricity Reduction of excise duty on petrol, diesel and green diesel	/	For Fuel Allowance recipients and electricity credit payment to all households	/
Greece	Subsidies on the electricity bill (higher amount for households included in the Social Housing Tariff (CTO)) Subsidy on natural gas	Cap on wholesale electricity prices and refund up to 60% of all surcharges paid by consumers with annual incomes of <€45k	For all low-income pensioners	/
Portugal	/	€40/MWh (until December with an increase of €5 per month from January in place until 31 May 2023)	To households benefitting from the social energy tariff	/

Eastern Europe

	VAT/price reductions	Price caps	One-off payments	Other measures
Hungary	/	On electricity and gas up to average household consumption On fuel For selected foods the price cannot be higher than the gross retail selling price on 15 October 2021	/	/
Czech Republic	Energy-saving-tariff Renewable energy fee exemption	Price cap on housing (incl. energy) of 30% of income (35% of income in capital Prague)	One-off payment of per child for families with annual income of <€40,000 crowns (c.€1,600)	/
Poland	Reduction of the VAT on fuels, heating and electricity, VAT exemption on gas, basic foods and fertilizers Excise duty exemption on electricity sold to households, reductions on selected motor fuels and light fuel oil Temporary exemption from retail sales tax on fuel sales	Poland's energy regulator (URE) sets tariffs for retail consumers until the end of 2027 (tariff protection)	One-off payment based on income, type of heating and number of people in household	Subsidies for purchase and installation of heat pumps in new homes with a higher energy standard (subsidies account for 30-45%)
Romania	/	Electricity and natural gas price caps and subsidies differentiated by beneficiaries	For low-income seniors	Vouchers for scholars, low-income families and seniors, higher meal tickets value

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