

The role of natural gas in reducing the greenhouse gas emissions from transportation

It is widely accepted that transport is a major source of greenhouse gas emissions. According to the European Commission, transport is responsible for around a quarter of EU greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions making it the second biggest greenhouse gas emitting sector after energy. In particular road transport alone contributes about one-fifth of the EU's total emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂). Transport also contributes significantly to reduced air quality through emissions of particulate matter, NO_x, HC and CO, particularly in urban areas. In its 2020 climate and energy package the EU committed to reducing GHG emissions by 20% by 2020, which for the transport sector translates into a 10% reduction in emissions. Whilst the EU managed to reduce overall emissions of greenhouse gases by almost 5% between 1990 and 2004, CO₂ emissions from road transport rose by 26%.

One of the tools considered for achieving the EU's emissions target and reducing the environmental impact of transport is the development and deployment of clean and energy efficient vehicles. The EU considers that reducing car emissions will contribute to fighting climate change, reduce its reliance on imported fuel and improve air quality and thus the health of European citizens. In addition, promotion of clean and efficient vehicles is also a matter of competitiveness of the European automotive industry as currently both the US and the Asian markets have been making strides in the field of clean vehicles and the related infrastructure. Using natural gas in the transport sector is part of the Commission's 'European strategy on clean and energy efficient vehicles for promoting clean and energy efficient vehicles based on conventional internal combustion engines.