

PRESS RELEASE

The CNMC publishes a study on the barriers to opening automatic petrol stations

- The opening of automatic petrol stations leads to lower prices at other petrol stations, benefiting consumers and companies.
- The resulting pro-competitive impact saved consumers in the Autonomous Community of Madrid between 15 and 24 million euros from 2012 to 2016.
- There continue to be significant barriers in national and regional regulations to the opening of automatic petrol stations.
- Spain is one of the European Union countries with the lowest penetration of this type of service station.

Madrid, 19 July 2019 - The CNMC has published a study on the competitive effect of the entry of automatic petrol stations in the retail fuel distribution market ([E/CNMC/005/19](#)).

Automatic service stations have the potential to introduce more competition in the fuel distribution market, benefiting consumers and users alike. By not having personnel to carry out refueling and payment activities, they have lower costs. In addition, they require less physical space than traditional petrol stations, which contributes to their lower costs and allows them to be installed in areas that are less appealing to traditional stations.

The study finds that automatic petrol stations tend to be cheaper than traditional petrol stations. For example, in the Autonomous Community of Madrid, the average price difference between the automatic petrol stations of independent operators and the petrol stations served by vertically integrated operators reached a maximum of 16.9% for automotive diesel and 12.3% for petrol 95 during the period studied (2012-2016).

In addition, the study notes that automatic petrol stations increase the competitive pressure on other petrol stations, also benefiting consumers who continue to go to traditional petrol stations. During the period studied, the opening of automatic petrol stations in the Community of Madrid caused the prices in nearby stations to drop by around 0.5% for automotive diesel and by 0.21% for petrol 95. This resulted in savings of between 15 and 24 million euros for consumers of traditional petrol stations.

However, the national regulation, and some regional regulations, are highly restrictive toward automatic service stations. Spain is one of the European Union countries with the lowest penetration of this type of service station.

The CNMC study reviews the regulatory situation compared to 2016, when the CNMC published a report on the regulation of the distribution of automotive fuels *Unofficial document intended for the media. Not binding on the CNMC. The full text of the report approved by the Board is published on the website of the CNMC once any confidential elements are redacted, and is available at the link in the press release. Reproduction authorised only if the source is cited.*

a "unmanned" service stations ([PRO/CNMC/002/16](#)). The new study shows that, although some of the most direct restrictions on the opening of automatic service stations that the CNMC identified in 2016 have disappeared, new restrictions have appeared that continue to make them more difficult to open.

Therefore, the CNMC recommends reviewing the national and regional regulations in order to eliminate all the unnecessary requirements or limitations on automatic petrol stations, as well as to achieve greater standardisation in the regulations. It also recommends greater transparency on this type of facility.

The CNMC is the independent regulatory body of the markets that guarantees and promotes the existence of effective competition for the benefit of consumers and users. This Study was carried out in exercise of the powers stipulated in Article 5.1.h) of Law 3/2013 of 4 June, which created the CNMC.

Unofficial document intended for the media. Not binding on the CNMC. The full text of the report approved by the Board is published on the website of the CNMC once any confidential elements are redacted, and is available at the link in the press release. Reproduction authorised only if the source is cited.