

Air pollution is seen as the leading cause of premature deaths this century, killing 9 million people because of pollution-related illnesses, a similar number of deaths to those caused by cigarettes.

The per-capita death rate from air pollution in Hungary has been estimated as the second highest in the world after China. Between 8,000 and 10,000 premature deaths in Hungary each year have been blamed on diseases linked to air pollution by the National Public Health Centre, based on its own data and World Health Organisation statistics.

Last year, environmental organisations took legal action against the Budapest municipal authorities over illegal and harmful levels of air pollution in the capital.

But domestic chimneys cause acrid smoke in the smallest Hungarian villages.

The public health centre released a notice of poor air quality due to high particulate matter concentrations for northern Hungary, specifically Miskolc, Kazincbarcika, Sajószentpéter and Putnok.

Pollution from heating increased the level of ultra-fine particles in the air to dangerous levels, said environmentalist Peter Lenkei.

“Unlike bigger particles, which come to a halt in our respiratory tracts, the smallest particles of dust in polluted air can easily get into our bloodstream and cause cardiovascular illnesses which can lead to strokes or heart attacks,” he said.

In May last year, the European Commission took Germany, Britain, France, Italy, Romania and Hungary to the European Court of Justice for failing to comply with European Union air quality standards.

Energy prices

Hungarian retail energy prices are among the lowest in Europe, according to the daily newspaper Világgazdaság. A survey of 29 European countries was carried out by the Hungarian Energy and Public Utility Regulatory Authority (MEKH).

According to the study, Hungary had the lowest retail gas prices and the fourth lowest electricity prices among the 29 countries at the end of 2018.

Household gas prices in Budapest averaged 3 cents per kWh, while the average retail price for electricity was less than 12 cents per kWh.

Gas prices were highest in Stockholm at 24 cents, while Copenhagen had the highest electricity prices at 32 cents per kWh. Electricity was cheapest in Belgrade at 7 cents.

Gas storage

Hungarian gas storage centres reportedly held 2.7 billion cubic metres of gas reserves this month, the MEKH told the Hungarian MTI news agency.

MEKH said gas usage in October and November was lower than in the same periods in previous years because of the mild weather.

In December gas usage rose as temperatures fell and daily average usage was around 7 per cent higher than in December 2017.

MEKH said current import levels, domestic production and reserves would cover this winter's consumption.

Source: energy-reporters.com