



# Intergas Netbeheer achieves maximum flexibility and substantial cuts in management costs



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Intergas Energie BV, trading under the name Intergas Netbeheer, wanted to streamline its administrative business activities to be fully prepared in the recently deregulated energy market. Now, more than ever, costs, efficiency and innovation play an important role. The gas company implemented Microsoft Dynamics AX in collaboration with IT partner Itineris. The IT support of the front-office, back-office and metering service, which were previously incorporated in different software packages, are now contained in a single integrated application.

Not only does this have a particularly beneficial effect on management costs, which are now substantially lower than before, but the software itself is also two to three times cheaper than other packages. Open communication with other software applications, the specific utility modules from Itineris on top of Microsoft Dynamics AX and the fact that all the data come under one IT roof, improved the efficiency and customer services of Intergas Netbeheer. Moreover, the package is innovative and flexible enough to keep up to date with the fast-changing regulations in the utilities sector and incorporate new software developments.

Flexibility is vital in the newly deregulated market. So Intergas Energie BV is all geared up to optimally carry out its network management function in this new liberalized market.

## Summary

**Country:** the Netherlands

**Sector:** Energy sector (natural gas)

### Profile

Intergas Energie BV, trading under the name Intergas Netbeheer, manages the natural gas network of some 3150 km of pipelines and the connections of 143,500 consumers. The service area of Intergas Energie's network stretches from West to Mid-Brabant. The aim of Intergas Energie is to maintain and develop the natural gas transport network in an economic way. A way, moreover, that guarantees the safety, efficiency and reliability of gas transport and takes into account the environment.

### Challenge

After the deregulation of the energy market Intergas Energie found itself in a new business situation with outdated software. So it had to look for a suitable automation package to make its operational management more efficient and to further improve services for its customers.

### Solution

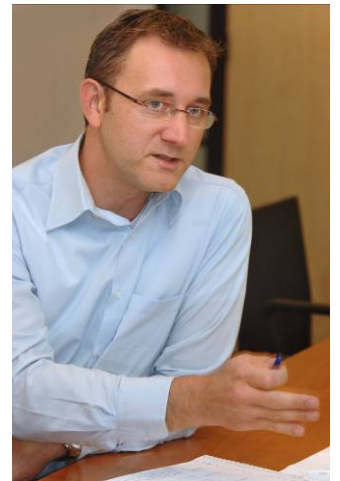
With Microsoft Dynamics AX and the utility modules of Itineris, Intergas Netbeheer now has one application, instead of several, to keep track of its operational management digitally.

### Advantages

- Optimal flexibility
- Drastic reduction in cost-to-serve
- Better performance for far fewer costs
- User-friendly because integrated with other familiar Microsoft products
- Complex manipulations can now be done very easily
- Intergas Netbeheer now has all useful information in a single application: there is an overview of the processes from beginning to end
- The application has already proven its value at various energy companies and so is reliable
- Limited customization needed
- Short turnaround time for invoices
- Seamless connection to other IT systems thanks to open standard
- Easily modified to take in numerous amendments in the law and government regulations

In a deregulated energy market, where costs, efficiency and innovation play an important role, Intergas Netbeheer recently implemented Microsoft Dynamics AX. The Dutch utility company wants to use it to further streamline its administrative business activities. The IT support of the front-office, back-office and metering service, which were previously incorporated in different software packages, are now contained in a single application. After a comprehensive information gathering and selection procedure, Intergas Netbeheer called in Itineris, which specializes in automation software for utility companies and businesses in the distribution and fashion sector. "With our IT partner, we were mainly looking for stability, product knowledge and experience with the energy market," says Robert van Mourik, general manager of Intergas Netbeheer, about his search in both the Dutch and Belgian markets.

Intergas Energie BV was created at the end of 2004 from the integrated regional utility company Intergas NV. Since then the main activity of the company has been managing the natural gas network, which has 143,500 connections. A good service, innovation and an efficient method of working are the core values. However, achieving all this turned out to be difficult with the existing software, including the existing EBIS application for managing the data. Although the package had been specifically designed for the energy market, it became outdated in the first years after the millennium and updates proved not to be simple. Moreover, other applications for invoicing or customer management were like islands alongside it. "Our software ran like an old diesel engine – good



**"We wanted as complete a standard package as possible with as little customization as possible. Microsoft Dynamics AX and the utility modules of Xellent and Itineris have shown to have already won their spurs in the energy market. It is user-friendly, extremely flexible, innovative and offers plenty of integration possibilities."**

**Martin Gordens, ICT manager Intergas**

but slow and expensive to maintain,” says Robert van Mourik, general manager of Intergas Energie BV.

Better performance for fewer costs  
The core values of the company -- good service, efficiency and healthy cost management -- led ICT manager Martin Gordens of Intergas to Microsoft Dynamics AX, supplemented with the specific utility modules of Itineris. Despite the fact that larger packages such as SAP are favoured in the sector, Intergas was totally convinced of the wide-ranging added value that its solution was bringing in house.

### Flexible tracking of changing circumstances

MS Dynamics AX, supplemented with the utility module of Itineris, completely fulfils the conditions set by Intergas. It offers the support needed in a deregulated market where time-to-market is a factor. Moreover, it easily keeps track of different kinds of processes, such as relationship management and customer contacts or the registration of all activities linked to incoming telephone calls from customers. On top of this the solution also controls the management of connections and measurement details and it includes an accounting module. Especially important is the fact that the package can be flexibly adapted to the numerous amendments in the law and regulations in the sector. As a partner, Itineris focuses on the utility sector and anticipates these changes in the law.

### Fully integrated message traffic in Dutch market

Additionally the message traffic of Energy Clearing House (ECH) is controlled by the Transaction Management module from Itineris based on Microsoft Dynamics AX. So the solution is certified to perform ECH message traffic. Also, the Transaction Management module is uniquely equipped to ensure that the data are of a high quality.

### Standard package with many possibilities

“We particularly wanted as complete a standard package as possible with as little customization as possible. Moreover, Itineris has already shown to have won its spurs in the energy market with Microsoft Dynamics as the platform. The application is flexible, user-friendly, innovative and offers plenty of integration possibilities. We got quite far with the standard version and it was only the specific functions and screens for Intergas that required additional customization,” explains ICT manager Martin Gordens. Intergas had to take into account the specific Dutch functional



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**Maurice Roovers, ICT Manager Intergas**

requirements from the viewpoint of Dutch regulations and specific adjustments for the energy business. Here Itineris could take advantage of Xellent, an invoicing module for utility companies on top of Microsoft Dynamics AX. “It’s particularly important to have good invoicing and debiting management because otherwise you’ll be facing an unhealthy bank account in no time at all,” says Robert van Mourik. “A short turnaround time for the majority of invoices is very important for Intergas. Our customers, over 140,000 of them, receive 200,000 invoices each year. Also, the management of a third-party service organization for the piping network happens through Microsoft Dynamics.”

### Overview of processes from beginning to end

In the future Intergas will also use the reporting and business intelligence possibilities of the package. But first there is yet another optimization scheduled for the program. Currently Itineris is working on limiting the number of mouse clicks as much as possible so that Intergas employees are where they want to be in the application as quickly as possible. “We are also working on summary screens to present images from various parts of the software package on a single screen. After all, a customer’s question about invoicing involves accounting data, meter readings as well as conversion data,” explains Maurice Roovers, manager of customer services. “Now the staff can answer a customer’s question much faster because all the information is contained in a single application that is fast and accurate.” So for an efficient service for the customers, it is important for customer services to have fast access to a summary and details of every customer.

### Cost-to-serve falls substantially

An improved service provision is already a concrete realization thanks to new automation software. Martin Gordens adds: “On the whole, our IT landscape has now become a lot simpler. This means that our operational costs have fallen considerably. After all, a low cost-to-serve is very important in the competitive energy market. Moreover, this package is flexible enough to be extended smoothly and able to quickly anticipate changes in the market.”

### An exceptional economic package

The falling costs also have a lot to do with the structure of the Microsoft Dynamics AX software package. It only needs one manager, while the management costs are already

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automatically lower thanks to the simple way in which parameters and templates can be adjusted. Whereas modifications in other packages take two to three weeks, in MS Dynamics AX this can all be done in two to three days. Upgrades can also be performed much faster thanks to the layered technology of Microsoft. Moreover, the application itself is cheaper than the conventional large package. All this means that we can keep the cost-to-serve low for every customer. An increase in flexibility ensures a shorter time-to-market and reduced cost-to-serve. The time and complexity of transactions is substantially decreased. This means, for example, that the switch traffic can be handled much faster so that the cost-to-serve per customer is sharply reduced.

## Strict project management keeps project on track

“It was Intergas’s express wish to build up a good partnership with its supplier. Indeed we can prove how important this was during the final months of the project when the deadline came under pressure. Thanks to strong project management, supported by both ourselves and the customer, we were still able to migrate a week earlier than originally expected,” states Luc De Keyser, operations manager of Itineris. Itineris opted for an iterative project strategy in which a well-defined project component is crammed each time into a cycle of six weeks. This iterative approach ensures that all the members of the project become sufficiently experienced in a specific domain before switching over to the next phase of the project.

In this way Itineris was able to complete this project for Intergas successfully.