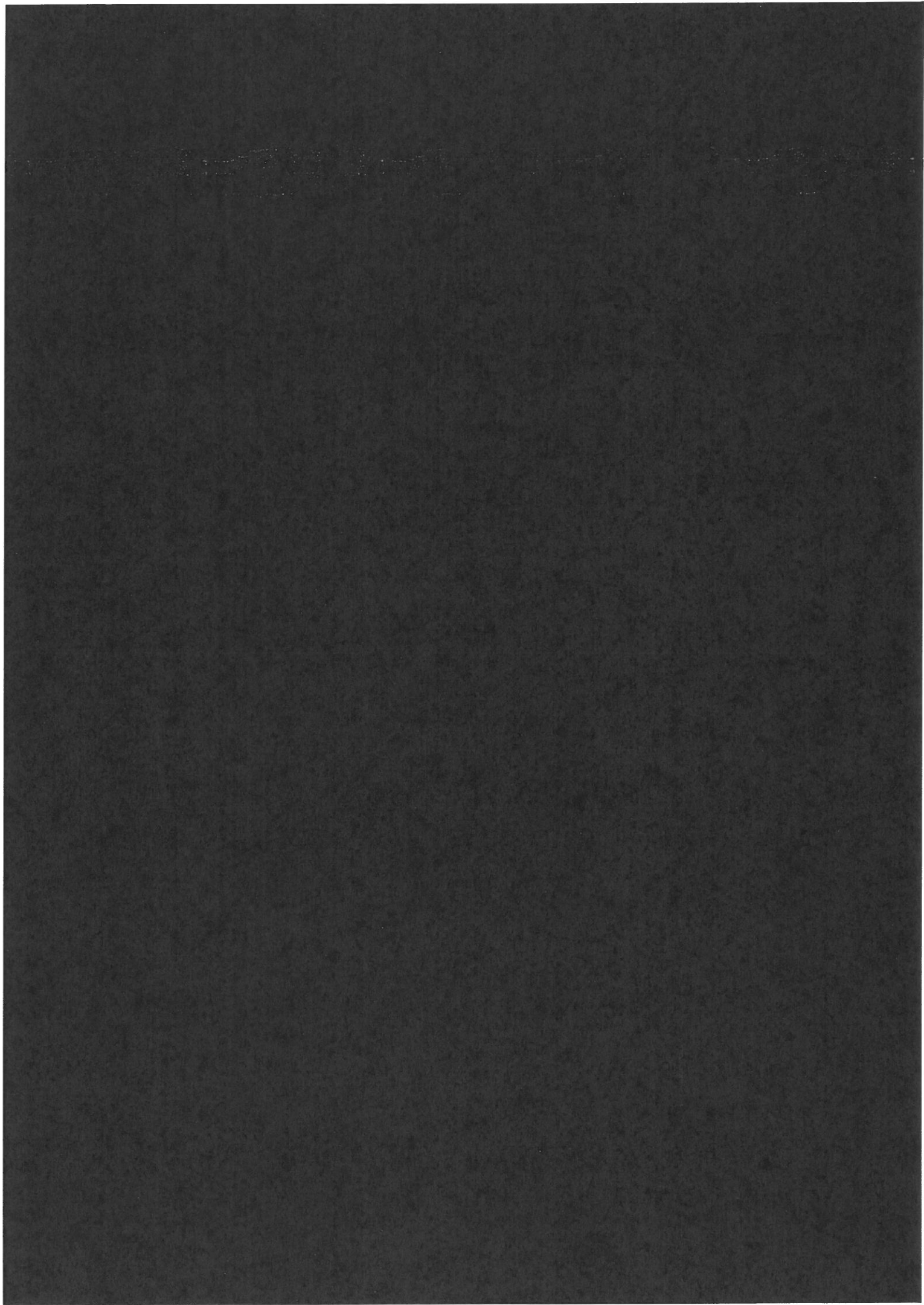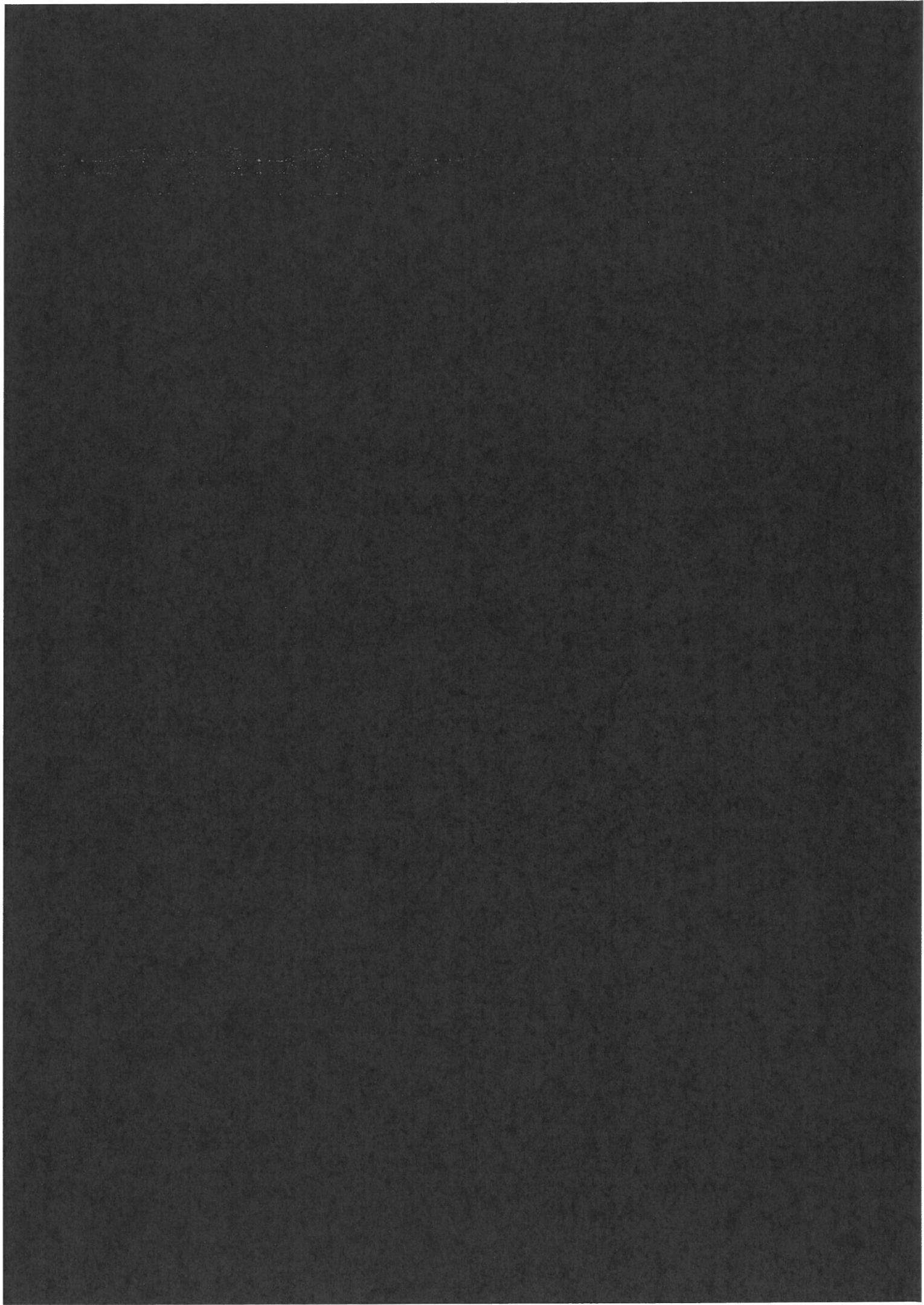**Fuel Retailer Agreements matter - consideration of German model – issues and options**

Purpose

The purpose of this note is to consider issues regarding the merit, feasibility and potential implementation options of a petrol price consumer information model of the type recently implemented in Germany by the Bundeskartellamt's Market Transparency Unit for Fuel. Under this model, consumers have access to timely and high frequency petrol price information but the petrol retailers do not have access to the underlying dataset.

Consumer Information Service Providers

In August 2013 the Bundeskartellamt in Germany established the Market Transparency Unit (MTU) for Fuel and by regulation required petrol retailers to report price changes to the MTU within five minutes of a price change taking place. There are approximately 14,000 petrol retailers that are required to inform the MTU of price changes of the three most popular fuels: Super E5, Super E10 and diesel. These prices are transmitted to Consumer Information Service Providers (CISPs) who then provide price data to consumers.

This note provides some details of the service that CISPs provide to consumers, following our examination of their websites.

Consumer Information Service Providers

According to the Bundeskartellamt, there are currently 13 registered CISPs. Of these:

- eight provide pricing information via a website,
- three provide pricing information via an app, and
- two had websites that were not functioning.

We were not able to access any of the apps due to licensing restrictions, however we were able to see screenshots that showed what each app offers. It appears that consumers are not charged for the basic version of these apps, though there may be other charges associated with the apps.

In most cases, each CISP asks the user to enter either a city/town name or a post (zip) code, and then select a radius such as 1km, 5km or 10km.

Of the 8 CISP websites that we were able to access, the following minimum information was provided by all CISPs (see Attachment A, figure 1 for an example screen shot):

- prices of Super E5, Super E10 and diesel for sites in the selected radius,
- a timestamp of when the price update was received (except for one example where just the date is displayed),
    - It is unclear whether the timestamp refers to the time of the latest price change, or the time that the data was last received from the MTU, regardless of price changes. It is more likely that it is the latter, as most timestamps were no more than a couple of minutes old,
- the distance to each site, and
- addresses and opening hours of each site.

In addition, some of the websites offered extra features and information, including:

- Prices for other fuels, such as Superplus, Premium Diesel and Autogas.
    - It is not clear where these prices come from, as the petrol retailers are only required to provide data on Super E5, Super E10 and diesel.
- Graphs showing movements in fuel prices in recent days for the selected area as well as specific sites within the area (see Attachment A, figure 2 for a screen shot). One site also displays recent

price movements in some of Germany's main cities, such as Berlin, Cologne and Munich (see Attachment A, figures 3, 4 and 5 for screen shots).

- o [Note the unusual, Bowie knife-shaped price cycles in Munich.]
- The ability for consumers to report inconsistencies between the prices reported by the CISPs and those that are currently being displayed at the petrol sites.
- An SMS service that alerts consumers of price increases or decreases. One app also allows consumers to set a pre-determined price point whereby they receive a price alert whenever the price falls below that point.
- One site displays a list of the towns/cities where it is currently cheapest to purchase fuel in Germany.
- One site includes the ability to filter searches not just by location and distance, but also by brand.

The three registered CISPs that provide price data via an app also had extra features, according to screen shots. These include:

- maps showing the location of nearby sites and the prices at those sites (see Attachment A, figure 6 for a screen shot),
- navigational instructions to nearby sites, and
- the ability for users to construct a journey planner for long drives that displays on a map the cheapest sites along the way (see Attachment A, figure 7 for a screen shot).

We did not encounter any examples where the price for a particular fuel at a specific retail site on one CISP's website was different to the price for the same site on another CISP's website.

However we did notice that even if you entered the same search details, the number of sites returned in the results might vary from website to website.

Fuel Prices and Market Analysis
10 February 2014

Figure 1:

1.0 km	Diesel	Super E5	Super E10
	1,31⁹	1,50⁹	1,46⁹

Frei · Öffnungszeiten

Südstr. 50-54 · Mo-So · durchgehend
74072 Heilbronn · Feiertag: · durchgehend

GPS: 49.134687,9.215796

Stand: 10.02.14 16:42 Uhr
Quelle: MTS-K des Bundeskartellamts

3.4 km — 1,31⁹

Kaufland

Roetelstrasse 35
74172 Neckarsulm

1.7 km — 1,38⁹

Freie Tankstellen Spathelf

Stuttgarter Str. 22
74074 Heilbronn

Figure 2:

Tagespreisentwicklung
Diesel und Super E10
vom 08.02.2014
1.5
1.45
1.4
1.35
18:00   09Feb   06:00

Figure 3:

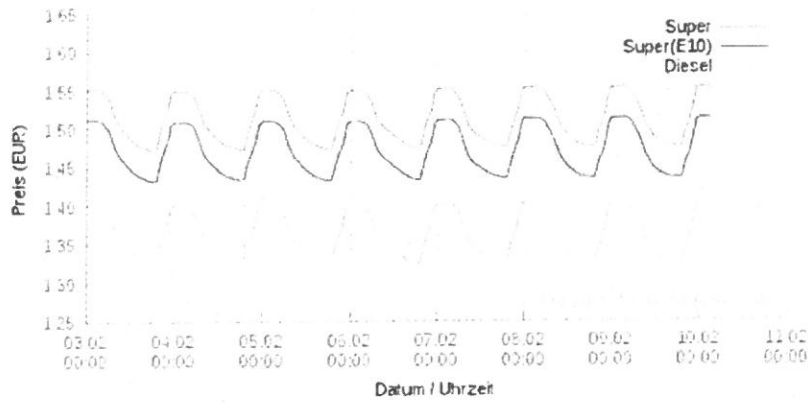Spritpreisentwicklung in Berlin - letzte 7 Tage

Figure 4:

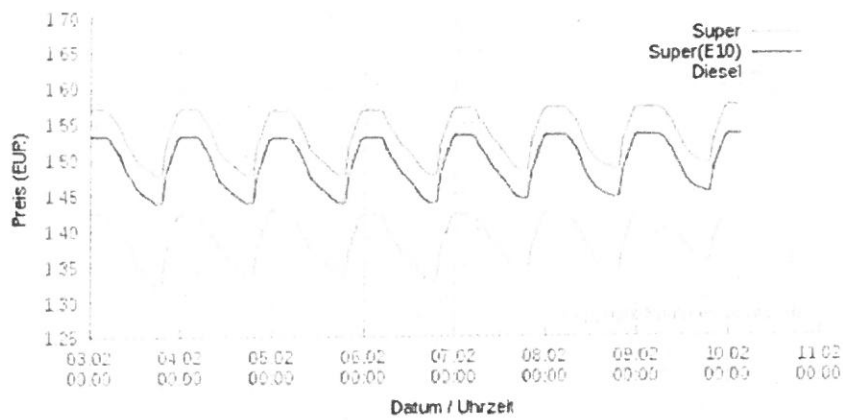Spritpreisentwicklung in Köln - letzte 7 Tage

Figure 5:

Spritpreisentwicklung in München - letzte 7 Tage

Figure 6:

Figure 7: