



SPECIAL REPORT

Matters of Municipal Water Supply and Sewerage Enterprises and Water Supply and Sewerage Services of municipalities

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(The Report relies on the work and contribution of many senior investigators)*

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SUMMARY

The Ombudsman reflects in this special report the problems arising during the transaction of citizens-consumers with the Municipal Water Supply and Sewerage Enterprises (DEYA) and the Water Supply Services of the municipalities. The report also includes proposals aiming at the improvement of the competent regulatory framework and the standardization and simplification of procedures and practices applied aspiring to achieve further improvement of water supply and sewerage services provided for consumers.

The problems recorded in the services provided show the diversity of the applied rules, based on which the water and sewerage services are provided in various regions. The report also records the differentiation in the treatment of similar matters, which do not derive only from the special conditions prevailing in the areas of DEYA operation but from the defective supervision and coordination of their operation by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

A common component of the detected problems is the absence of a framework laying down water supply rules allowing at the same time a flexibility degree to DEYA and the Water Supply Services of the municipalities, to take into account possible local or other special characteristics.

The Ombudsman believes that the detected malfunctions need to be solved immediately. Intervention in the weaknesses of the competent regulatory framework and administrative procedures and practices applied is necessary in order to improve the water supply bodies and the water supply and sewerage services provided for the citizens.

In order to deal with the detected problems, the Ombudsman proposes the:

- 1 institution of a Model Water Supply Regulation, for the rationalization and standardization of the procedures related to water supply so as to avoid extreme differentiations in the way similar matters are dealt with. This framework, under the

form of a Model Regulation, is proposed to be drafted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs in cooperation with the involved parties.

- 2 addition of an explicit provision to L. 3852/2010 ("*Kallikrates Program*") stipulating that the legal persons of the Local Authorities Organizations are required to answer the citizens' requests and issue all requested documents within a set time limit.
- 3 drafting of a table prepared by DEYA with the applications – objections to be examined by the Resolution Committee of Tax Differences and Challenges so as to guarantee the anonymity of the objectors.
- 4 abolishment of the compulsory or minimum consumption imposed in the water supply bills aiming at the prudent use of water.
- 5 immediate abolishment of the 80% fee in the interim estimated bill or in the case of compulsory-minimum consumption. Also, imposition of said fee only in the final bills, if indeed water had been consumed.
- 6 re-examination of the differentiation criterion of the tariff policy for non-permanent residents.
- 7 written update of the consumers in case of delay in the issuance of the water supply bills.
- 8 regular check and confirmation of the consumers' data so as to avoid wrong entries in the debt lists and the subsequent imposition of surcharges.
- 9 immediate information of the consumer if the water supply body detects unjustified increase in the water consumption, utilizing the applications of the Information and Communication Technologies.
- 10 institution of the possibility for cancellation of the debt, when it is proven that the water supply bodies do not take effective measures to avoid expansion of the debt when they detect non-payment of the bills.
- 11 timely written updating of the consumers in cases of re-adjustment of the current tariff policy.
- 12 billing related to the quality of the provided water.
- 13 modification of the calculation method of the sewerage fees to take into account the special characteristics of each case.
- 14 rationalization of the water supply scales based on which the charges are imposed to avoid extreme differentiations in the applied tariff policies.
- 15 rationalization of the measurement periodicity of water supply consumption and standardization of the relevant terms used in the printed forms.
- 16 establishment of writing the expected date of the next measurement on the water supply bill form.
- 17 abolishment of all charges not corresponding to the expenses made by the water supply bodies.

The Ombudsman acknowledges that there are special characteristics regarding the water potential and special conditions of water supply in the various regions of the country. It believes, though, that the characteristics of the water, as a critical public good, impose the rationalization and standardization of the water supply terms and conditions to the benefit of the consumers and local societies.