Implementation of the experimentation of social pricing of water and key conclusions of the report to the National Water Committee

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Protocol on Water and Health
The experimentation of social pricing

- Launched by law “Brottes” in 2013 for 5 years:
  - More freedom for water pricing
  - Use of municipal budget jointly with interdiction of disconnection and water flow reduction;

- Voluntary participation of municipalities: 50 candidates (metropolitan and overseas) = **Bottom-up approach**

- Annual reporting by the ministry of Ecology and Solidarity transition in front of the National Water Committee
Collectivités organisatrices autorisées à expérimenter une tarification sociale de l'eau

Nombre d'habitants de la collectivité organisatrice
- de 2.000.000 à 4.350.000
- de 500.000 à 1.999.999
- de 250.000 à 499.999
- de 100.000 à 249.999
- de 50.000 à 99.999
- de 25.000 à 49.999
- de 4.000 à 24.999

Source : DGALN (Juin 2015)
Réalisation cartographique : DGALN/SAGP/SDP/BCSI
Water and sanitation supply in France
Context

- Water authority: municipal level;
- "Water funds water";
- Average price water and sanitation: 4,04€/m³ (2,66€ to 5,65€/m³)
- Average consumption: 120 m³/household;
- Water bill: 1% household income;
How did they implement the experimentation?

* Staring point: narrow/large steering committee (elected representatives, technical water and sanitation services, social services,...)

* **Why?**: Helping low income households to pay their water bill, reduce water debts, achieve a simple and efficient social water pricing system,...
The experimentation of social pricing in France

- **Who?**: “those who need it the most”
  - Based on existing social support (health insurance, guaranteed income,...);
  - Income/Household composition;
  - Individual analysis by social services;
- Choice of criteria: depend on goals, data availability, existing partnerships between services;
- One or several criteria, combined or not.
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HOW?

- Water and/or sanitation;
- Social pricing: free/cheaper “essential water”, free/cheaper subscription, specific pricing;
- Discount if the bill overcomes 3% (or less) of the household income;
- Allowance dedicated to water bill payment (check, wire transfer), data based or individually fitted;
- Erasing of water debts;
- Use of existing Housing Solidarity fund.
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**HOW?**

Difficulties and challenges

- Cross referencing: discrepancy between address databases of water billing and social criteria => 20 to 40% missed;
- Access to social information: local reluctance;
- Collective housing: no individual water meter, water bill included in rental charges;
- Lack of information;
- Low level of the bill: low incentive if an application is needed to obtain financial aid.
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Additional measures: reducing water consumption

* Communication, campaigns;
* Individual assessment (especially for “big consumers”);
* Help for leakage research and repair;
* Distribution of frothers and other equipments to reduce water consumption;
* NB: Usually poor households don’t use too much water.
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Helping the poorest

* How to reach people outside usual social circuits (homeless, travelling communities, refugees,..?)
* Maps of existing free water and sanitation access points;
* Creations of new public fountains, free public baths and toilets;
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Key conclusions

- One option doesn’t fit all situations: weighs in favor of letting each community free to design its specific social water pricing system;
- Efficiency of specific approach versus national system;
- Local knowledge ensures help for those who need it the most;
- Individual situation assessment by social workers: often chosen.
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Key conclusions

- Positive side effects:
  - Improvement of collaboration between state services;
  - Better knowledge of water consumption and vulnerable populations;
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Further prospects

- More time needed to complete the experimentation (planning on 3 more years):
  - Cost analysis;
  - Efficiency;
  - Impact on water consumption;
  - Impact on outstanding payments;
- Sharing practices among the municipalities taking part into the experimentation;
- Reaching the poorest populations (water access for all).