



VLAAMSE MILIEUMAATSCHAPPIJ

NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

Good practices to ensure equitable access to water and sanitation
3 July 2012, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

Social measures in Flanders to ensure affordability

Ingeborg Limbourg
Water Regulation Unit
Flemish Environment Agency Belgium

Policy measures adopted

- **Context – Flanders (northern region of Belgium)**
 - Inhabitants: 6.306.638 residential persons
 - Surface: 13.522 km² - Strongly urbanized (no real rural area)
 - Connection level to tap water (public distribution network): 98%
 - Calculated average use per year (2011) for an average family (2,37 persons): 88 m³ or 101 L / per day / member of the family
 - Calculated average price per m³ (2011) for an average family (2,37 persons): €3,6 (45% water - 55% sanitation)
 - Increasing costs → Increasing invoice (mainly due to sanitation efforts)
- **Challenges in Flanders**
 - Keep the water invoice affordable for all while respecting high standards imposed by law in terms of quality, supply and sustainable use
 - Identify and monitor the vulnerable groups
 - Raise awareness about sustainable water use
 - Raise awareness about real water price

Policy measures adopted

- 1. Basic water consumption - 15m³ - free of charge for all** (connected to a public network)
 - This 15m³ is the first block of a progressive tariff system at €0 (legally obliged)
 - Free 15m³ is granted per person registered on the delivery address
→ family of 4 persons = 4 * 15 m³ free of charge

Complemented with

- 2. Exemptions for sanitation charges for the vulnerable ones**
 - Clear identification of the eligible 'vulnerable' groups
→ criteria embedded in the law

Consolidated on

- 3. One integrated water invoice produced and sent by the water supplier**
 - Water suppliers are also responsible for sanitation of the supplied water
→ one contact point for the people

All necessary information exchange happens under the coordination and supervision of the government respecting the privacy legislation

Assessment of results achieved

- **Nearly the entire population (98% connected) receives 15m³ water (= basic needs) 'free of charge' and of a (standard) high quality**
- **A direct link between financial health and social measures is established**
- **A clear and automatic identification of eligible / vulnerable groups is embedded in the law**
 - ➔ no interference of recipients necessary to claim their rights
 - ➔ pro-active approach (handling) of 'problems'
(In 2011, more than 200.000 families received 'help' for the water invoice)
- **Awareness of sustainable use is increasing**
- **Awareness of real water price is increasing**

Success Factors, Lessons learned, Remaining challenges Issues to be taken into account

- **Success factors**
 - 15m³ free of charge excellent combination of a social and ecological measure
 - A high degree of automation is reached for the application of the measures
- **Lessons learned**
 - An important % of distributed water is delivered free of charge
 - Social measures have implications for all ‘paying’ consumers
- **Remaining challenges**
 - Monitor the existing measures and find / keep the correct balance
- **Issues to be taken into account**
 - Be aware of the % of the water delivered free of charge
 - Complete the free water with other ‘extra’ measures to favour the poor
 - Define clear criteria to identification the vulnerable (poor) groups
 - A system / procedure with a high level of ‘automation’ is strongly recommended

Thank you for your attention

For supplementary information please contact

e.wailly@vmm.be or i.limbourg@vmm.be

WaterRegulator
A. Van de Maelestraat 96
9320 Erembodegem
Belgium
www.vmm.be