Protocol on Water and Health
Expert Group on equitable access to water and sanitation

Oliver Loebel – EurEau Secretary General
24 March 2021
EurEau - Who we are

~ European Federation of Water Services

~ 34 national organisations of drinking and waste water operators from 29 European countries

~ Public and private sector
The five dimensions of the Right to Water ...

... all of which are supported by the water sector
Starting points

1. Sustainable financing of water services through full cost recovery (WFD, art. 9)
   • Tariffs
   • Taxes
   • Transfers
   • Current and new assets
   • Regulatory compliance
   • Resilience

2. EU Drinking Water Directive addresses governments
   • Social policy. Water operators may be involved.

3. High accessibility levels in the EU
   • 96% connected to public drinking water supply
   • 87% connected to waste water treatment plant
Equitable access and water service providers

**Affordability - Accessibility**

- Calling for control-at-source measures for pollutants to avoid costly treatment
- Calling for polluter-pays schemes if pollution cannot be avoided
- Connecting more users and installing public drinking water fountains - Issue of demography
- Most support schemes tax-financed (state, municipality)
- Water operators involved in some social schemes
Examples

**Belgium (Wallonia):**
Social fund to which all households contribute with € 0.0250/m³. (beneficiaries as identified by municipal welfare services).

**France:**
Social fund for Housing, set up by regions, co-financed by them & water operators. Extensive use of water vouchers for households in need. Social tariffs are practiced by ca. 50 utilities.

**Italy:**
Reduced tariff for "essential domestic needs" from 90 to 100 m³ a year/household. Vouchers for vulnerable groups to support bill payment.

**Spain:**
Social Action Mechanisms (tariff discount/solidarity funds) applied by 93% of operators (access criteria defined by regional/local authorities; application by operators – 72% cases).
Temporary Covid-19 measures
(‘First wave’)

No household disconnections:
• Voluntary action by water utilities:
  NL, HU, FIN, ES, IE, DK, GR
• Compulsory measures:
  RO, ES (vulnerable households), GR

Bill payment measures:
• Voluntary by water utilities:
  ES: Tariff discounts / bonuses, deferrals + payment by instalments, no surcharges or default interest etc.
• Compulsory measures:
  DE: Consumers/micro-enterprises could suspend bills for 3 months.
  IT: Regulator compensates operators for unpaid bills in the most affected municipalities.
Conclusions

• Water operators support human right to adequate water and sanitation services.

• Balance needed between cost recovery (3Ts) and affordability:
  => protect most vulnerable users
  => mainly social policy

• Water operators contribute according to national rules:
  => Connecting more people
  => Install drinking water fountains
  => where foreseen: contribute to support measures for vulnerable groups
Thank you very much

Oliver Loebel
Secretary General