

21/01/2021

Good practice “Utilities based detection”

CEPS seminar 21/01/2021



Water, electricity, gas: contract or public service?

Economic activity

Right to a humane living: includes access to clean water and energy

Client: user, connection, supply on address - Obligations:

- when connected to supply
when meter recorded
- when signed a contract

Suppliers:

- water: local or intercommunal public authorities - No choice
- gas and electricity: commercial suppliers - Choice
- when no payment: drop user, supply by network operator

Regulatory relationship

Price transparency: information on invoice

Continuous supply - quality control - safety

Protection users in case of debt

Public suppliers: social public service obligations

When client doesn't pay:

- interest
- fixed cost
- cutting off supply: regulated

Cutting off

Only if user refuses:

- to come to an arrangement for payment of the debt
- to pay what is agreed in an arrangement for payment of the debt
- entrance to the house and meter
- to take over the contract after moving in

Always decision by LAC (Local Advice Commission)

LAC (Local Advice Commission)

Advice and finding solutions in case of debts for utilities

Prevention cutting off water, gas, electricity

Requests to cut off or to reconnect

Balance: economic purpose - social public service obligations

Participants:

1. User: right to be heard and informed
+ legal counsel, trustperson or debt mediator
2. OCMW (public centre for social welfare): (head) social service + member committee
3. Network operator

OCMW - Energy Fund

Important work social worker before and besides meeting LAC:

- Contact user: letter, visit, call, mail
- Work together with user
- Analyse complete social and financial situation: social report
- Viable solution for user, budget supervision
- Budget meter, flow limiter
- Financial support if not possible to find other viable solution

Not always positive reaction user!

Lack of financial or personal capacity, not knowing social services, not understanding consequences, anger, ...

Essential: continuous efforts to make contact en stimulate viable steps to solution

Decision LAC

Unanimity

Cut off water, gas, electricity, or not

Conditions to prevent cutting off

Reconnect water, gas, electricity, or not

Postpone

Letter to user - clearly states time before cutting off

Keep making contact

Keep searching solution and reconnection

Reopening supply

User:

- comes to an arrangement for payment of the debt
- pays what is agreed in an arrangement for payment of the debt
- gives entrance to the house and meter
- takes over the contract after moving in

Reconnecting within 5 days after payment or sending proof

Protected customers

Users specific low income categories

No costs invoices and reminders

No costs arrangement for payment of the debt

No costs “scan”: analysing situation at home, advice how to use less

Warning when consumption increases +25%

Numbers

Network supplier electricity: 80.000

Network supplier gas: 58.000

Budget meters electricity: 39.000 (= 1,5% of total)

Budget meters gas: 26.000

LAC cases: 28.000

900 households cut off from electricity

800 households cut off from gas

920 households cut off from water

Regulations

- Decreet van 18 juli mei 2003 betreffende het integraal waterbeleid Decreet van 8 mei 2009 houdende algemene bepalingen betreffende het energiebeleid
- Decreet van 20 december 1996 tot regeling van de rol van de lokale adviescommissie in het kader van het recht op minimumlevering van elektriciteit, gas en water (B.S. 8 februari 1997)
- Besluit van de Vlaamse Regering van 12 september 1997 betreffende de samenstelling en de werking van de lokale adviescommissie omtrent de minimale levering van elektriciteit, gas en water (B.S. 15 november 1997)
- Wet van 4/9/2002 houdende de toewijzing van een opdracht aan de OCMW's inzake de begeleiding en de financiële maatschappelijke steunverlening aan de meest hulpbehoevenden voor wat betreft de energielevering.

More information

www.vlaanderen.be/advies-van-de-lokale-adviescommissie-lac-over-afsluiting-of-heraansluiting-van-elektriciteit-aardgas-of-water

www.vreg.be/nl/consumentenbescherming-en-sociaal-energiebeleid

www.statistiekvlaanderen.be/nl/energiearmoede-0

www.vmm.be/nieuws/archief/steeds-minder-afsluitingen-van-drinkwater

General advice concerning prevention overindebtedness and debt advice services: 12 WERKEN VOOR DE AANPAK VAN SCHULDEN

www.samvzw.be/twaalf-werken-schulden

Thank you!

Sara Waelbers

The logo for 'sam' consists of the lowercase letters 'sam' in a white, sans-serif font, enclosed within a white rectangular border. A white triangle points to the left from the bottom-left corner of the rectangle.

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en samenleving