



Accessibility and affordability challenges related to water and sanitation in Bulgaria

Experiences in Women's Participation in Sustainable Water Management in EECCA region

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Equitable access - 1

- **Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria (1991):** Art. 6. (1) All persons are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Art. 55. Citizens shall have the right to a healthy and favourable environment corresponding to established standards and norms.



Equitable access - 2

- **Directive 2000/60/EC** establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy;
- **Directive (EU) 2020/2184** on the quality of water intended for human consumption;
- **Directive 91/271/EEC** concerning urban waste-water treatment;
- **Directive 91/676/EEC** concerning the protection of waters against pollution caused by nitrates from agricultural sources.



Equitable access - 3

- **Water Act** (SG 67/27.07.1999 г.) and the regulation for its implementation;
- **Water supply and sewerage services regulation act** and the secondary legislation for its implementation and the regulation for its implementation;
- **Health Act and Ordinance № 9 from 16.03.2001** for the quality of water intended for drinking and household use, etc.;
- **Strategy for development and management of water supply and sewerage in the Republic of Bulgaria 2014-2023.** Action plan for the Strategy of development and management of water supply and sewerage in the Republic of Bulgaria 2014-2023.



Directive (EU) 2020/2184 on the quality of water intended for human consumption

- EU Commission is committed to continue to improve access to safe drinking water for the whole population through environmental policies in line with SDG 6 and the associated target to achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all.
- It is appropriate to ensure that Member States' continued commitment to the right to water making use of the guidance documents developed under the Protocol on Water and Health on access to water and to define the actions necessary to improve equitable access for all to water intended for human consumption.



How about drinking water and sanitation sector in Bulgaria?

“Top-down” efforts – enormous investments since 2007 (about 3 billion EUR + more than 2,5 billion more in the pipeline) – poor outcome





The Environmental Implementation Review 2019, Country report – Bulgaria, European Commission

“... The Accession Treaty with Bulgaria set the final deadline for reaching compliance with the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive as **the end of 2014**. Despite ongoing investment in building necessary infrastructure, mainly supported by the EU Funds, Bulgaria is still... (only) **close to 26 % of waste water is collected, and 20.4 % of the load collected is subject to secondary treatment. 6.7 % of the waste water load collected undergoes more stringent treatment.**

The Commission **started infringement proceedings against Bulgaria in 2017** to address these issues.

According to the latest information provided by Bulgaria, final projects should be finished by 2023, far beyond the 2015 final deadline.”



Equitable access challenges 1

- **EU Directive for urban waste water, Water Act** and their adjacent secondary legislation sets very high targets for the quality of services in the agglomerations larger than 2000 P.E. and without specific requirements as far as smaller agglomerations.
- As far as drinking water supply, the enormous part of small operators have not invested anything or have only made some insignificant investment for the recent 10 years.
- Integrated water projects are implemented in the larger cities and towns, incl. in their ghettos; and very rarely in villages that are also municipal centres.



Equitable access challenges 2

- The villages get chance to develop adequately only if they happen to be a municipal center or a part of small municipality. Due to negligence, the villages located in large municipalities remained without access to EU funding after 2007 and this fact doomed them to dying out.
- In 2009, the Ministry of agriculture, food and forests commissioned a Survey on sanitation facilities in Bulgaria and offering of standard solutions. The survey was implemented by SHER Ingénieurs-Conseils s a Conseils s.a., Belgium and justified 5 types of sanitation technologies appropriate for the villages of Bulgaria. The results of the survey were totally ignored by the sector decision-makers.
- Very often, the villages are supplied by gravity from a small water source located in close proximity. Water towers were built wherever it was considered necessary.





Equitable access challenges 3

- **Water act** and its complementary laws and regulations do not allow application of any other sanitation technologies rather than septic tank and centralized sewerage and conventional waste water treatment plant. These requirements are broadly violated.



Affordable access - 1

- Affordability of water and sanitation services is reflected in the Water Supply and Sewerage Services Regulation Act. The value of these services is determined on the basis of a minimum monthly consumption of drinking water for households of 2.8 cubic meters per person and does not exceed 2.5 per cent of the average monthly household income in the designated territory of the operator of services..



Affordable access - 2

- **Strategy for development and management of drinking water and sewerage in Bulgaria 2014-2023**

Action plan under the Strategy for development and management of drinking water and sanitation in Bulgaria 2014-2023

- **Law on regulation of drinking water and sewerage services** regulates price, affordability and quality of water supply and sewerage services conducted by water supply and sewerage operators of services, called W&S operators.
- Water for drinking and household is of fundamental need for the sustaining of life in the context of **Social support act** and W&S services are activity in public interest. Unfortunately the **Social support act** and the **Regulation** under it do not contain a specific reference to water and sanitation.

Affordable access challenges

- With the introduction of the uniform price for the water and sanitation service in each separate designated territory, cross-subsidization of the cities and towns from the villages in the same designated territory was realized, as the cities and towns continue to receive significantly higher quality of the service in comparison with the villages serviced by one and same operator.
- There is no mechanism of cross-subsidizing in the sector among various operators of separate designated territories – of areas with higher cost and areas of lower cost of the service.
- Socially acceptable price of the service established by the Water Supply and Sewerage Services Regulation Act is violated by Ordinance 4 under the same Act allowing WS companies to cover their loss by disseminating these among the consumers.



Tariff measures

- Tariff development provides several opportunities to address affordability issues such as social tariffs or a carefully developed system of progressive tariffs. Preferential tariffs are mostly funded through higher tariffs for other users.
- There are no measures introduced in the legislation in force permitting the payment of a different price for consumed thresholds of water.
- An option for improved affordability of services is being discussed in the new Sustainable Development of the Water and Sanitation sector where the introduction of different tariffs (possibly two) for the threshold consumption of water quantities and / or the level of affordability under which free access to water will be provided.





Social protection measures

- The **Strategy for Funding of Water and Sanitation Sector** under development surveys various mechanisms to address the issues of affordability of the service. In the draft of **Water supply and sanitation act**, under development, it is planned to have a section on Protection of vulnerable and marginalized consumers/users of water supply and sanitation services.
- It is expected that the new **Act for sustainable development and management of water supply and sanitation sector** will provide for opportunity for solidarity fee – this will be equal to 0,10 BGN per cub.m of supplied water; it will be paid by every consumer and will be invested in regions where there are difficulties.





Situational analysis on equitable access to water and sanitation in Bulgaria



Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes



Assessing Equitable Access to Water and Sanitation in Bulgaria

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Ситуационен анализ за равноправен достъп до вода и санитария в България



в подкрепа на политическия процес за реализиране на човешкото право на достъп до вода и санитария

Протокол за вода и здраве под Конвенцията за Опазване и използване на трансграничните водни течения и международните езера



Оценка на равноправния достъп до вода и санитария в България

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д-р Кателина Вълкова
Зорница Димитрова
Павлина Делчева



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Assessing Equitable Access to Water and Sanitation in Bulgaria



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