

DOES THE OPEN DATA MOVEMENT PERMEATE WATER UTILITIES?

TWO EUROPEAN CASE STUDIES IN FRANCE & GREECE

OPEN DATA: an ethical obligation + a powerful tool for Spreading Knowledge

1) AN ETHICAL OBLIGATION

- *How can a public entity honestly use the confidentiality argument in matters of public service data & statistics?*
- *The public administration in charge of the service is the sole responsible for the Open Data policy and practice, not the public or private service provider*

1) A KEY TOOL FOR SPREADING KNOWLEDGE & IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

- *A requirement for allowing individual service providers to build their own specific benchmarking*
- *The main tool in the hands of water and sanitation regional and/or national regulators (Cf Brasil)*

FRANCE CASE STUDY

STRONG INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS

- 30 000 service areas and municipal authorities (drinking water & sanitation separated)
 - 20 000 direct public management (35% of turnover)
 - 10 000 contracts of delegation to private or public-private entities (65% of turnover)
 - Obligation of annual reporting to municipal authorities for delegated management, no obligation for direct public management
 - No obligation at all for any information on the management of the service to the public in general
- *Very low economies of size for most service areas and local authorities in charge*

Other French Constraints to the development of OPEN DATA in the sector

- Not any standardization of statistical concepts and definitions,
- Only old fashioned public accounting without any of International Accounting Systems;
- For delegated management, most expenses are apportionments of total expenses and costs of the three large French service providers;
- Drinking water and sanitation public services cannot be consolidated as they don't have, very frequently, the same service areas and service providers;
- In condominiums, most households are not individually metered;
- Fixed assets (mostly owned by public authorities, not by service providers) are not or badly estimated.

French sector data available to the public on the web at may 2015

- Some very few 2009 data from the public ONEMA (National Board for Water & Aquatic Systems) at national and (100) departmental) levels;
- An 86 pages publication provided more extensive data for the same 2009 year (but at national level only) from the Federation of the Private Enterprises of the sector;
- Various papers on (always too high) tariffs of delegated services by the parastatal National Consumption Institute (with its monthly magazine « 60 million consumers »);
- The annual reports of delegated service providers to their public authorities don't use any standardized concepts

French Water & Sanitation Utilities Websites

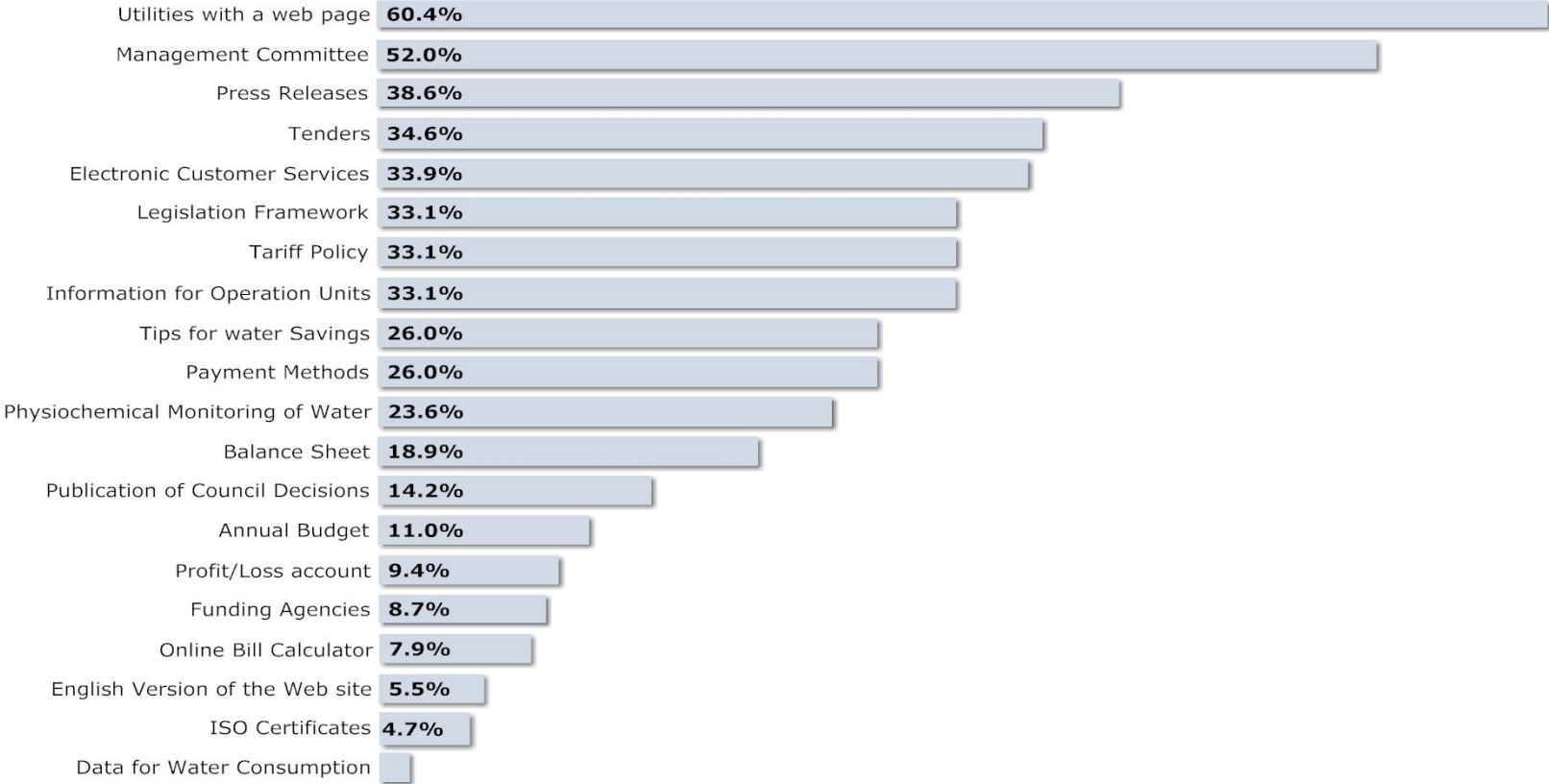
- Only the largest utilities (probably much less than 1%) have their own website;
- The annual reports of delegated service providers are never available on them;
- The two largest French utilities only report on drinking water, Eau de Paris (2.3 million inhabitants) and SEDIF (4 million inhabitants from its suburbs) and don't provide any commercial accounting nor operational statistics (Paris particularly).

GREECE CASE STUDY

- Greek municipalities are also the Authorities in charge of public water services;
- But, in spite of some 200 inhabited islands, at 325, their number is much lower than in France with an average of some 34 000 inhabitants;
- The two largest (semi private) utilities are EYDAP for the 4.3 million inhabitants of the Greater Metropolitan Area of Athens (2,030,000 meters) and EYATH for Thessaloniki region of 1 million inhabitants (208,500 meters);
- Other municipal utilities are coordinated by a professional voluntary Union called EDEYA (Abbreviation in Greek of Union of Municipal Enterprises of Water Supply and Sewerage). Each Municipal Enterprises of Water Supply and Sewerage (DEYA) serves one or more municipalities.
- In some cases of small municipalities, without a DEYA the water supply and sewerage are managed by a department within the municipality

SURVEY OF GREEK UTILITIES WEBSITES CONTENT

Information available in 2015 (provisional)



GREECE PROVISIONAL FINDINGS

- 1. The largely most informative water utilities are the public-private large companies (of private status and listed on Greek stock exchanges), EYDAP and EYATH serving more than 50% of Greek population;**
- 2. The larger the water utility the more the information they provide.**
- 3. In most utilities the majority of the key data listed below is missing (excluding tariff schedules) making difficult to monitor and compare both in national and international level.**

Coding of Information, Data and Statistics Open to the Public on Utilities' websites

- 1. Service areas** for drinking water & sanitation (km², inhabitants);
- 2. Institutional and legal status & arrangements**
- 3. Historical summary of the service provider;**
- 4. Basic technical** assets (raw water resources, networks lengths, plants...);
- 5. Detailed Tariff schedules** (how the service and connections are charged);
- 6. Technical statistics** (m³ produced & charged, connections...)
- 7. Quality of service** (Pressure at connection level, service interruptions, network breakage, water chemical & biological analysis, pollution discharged in the environment,
- 8. Budgets & Financial accounts (according to IASs)**
- 9. Manpower statistics** (including full-time externalized)

SOME PROVISIONAL CONCLUSIONS (1)

- **On a weighted average basis, the provision of Open Data on open websites is much better in Greece than in France;**
- **This is basically due to the largest metropolitan service areas of the two countries (50% of national population in Greece, 10% in France);**
- **In addition, the two service providers of Athens and Thessaloniki are semi-private listed on the relevant stock exchanges while those of the Greater Paris remain 100% public entities that don't have any legal obligation to manage financial accounts at International Accounting Standards with their statistical annexes;**
- **French sector utilities delegated to the private sector however provide more annual data than the Greek one. But most of them remain confidential within the offices of the municipalities.**

SOME PROVISIONAL CONCLUSIONS (2)

- Efficiency is roughly the ratio between the volume and quality of service on the one side and the costs on the other;
- If you want to improve your efficiency at numerator & denominator levels, instead of seeking budgets, loans and subsidies for investing in the revamping/replacement of existing facilities or the installation of new sophisticated ones (at the suggestion of technical only engineering consultants):
 - The help of your specific benchmarking with regional, national and international sector utilities more or less in the same kinds of contexts can be a great tool of decision making;
 - The regional, national and international development of an extended OPEN DATA policy and practice is absolutely necessary for that purpose;
 - With an improved open data policy and your specific benchmarking, you could find that your institutional, social, human resources, commercial (including metering or not), information systems are as much if not more important than new costly and sophisticated investments.

SOME PROVISIONAL CONCLUSIONS (3)

- The Limitations to a fair Open Data development and to the use of specific (to each utility) benchmarking in the water & sanitation utilities sector are quite numerous:
 - Institutional, political, soft or less soft corruption and vested interests (actually the public service is not so much in the first interest of the public);
 - National pride (we have the best public service in the world and cannot learn anything from other countries...);
 - Lack of powerful, independent and competent public regulator;
 - Lack of standardization definition of data and statistics concepts as well as of commercial & financial accounting and cost accounting;
 - Lack of ability to read and understand some important languages other than the English one : German, Scandinavian, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean...

And always the same human psychology of Water utilities managers

