



Executive summary

Introduction

This report forms deliverable D7.5.7, detailing consumer issues identified in the TECHNEAU case study site in Riga.

Importance

This report forms deliverable D7.5.7 on consumer issues facing Riga as part of the Work Area 7 activities in the TECHNEAU project. Riga was selected as a TECHNEAU case study site as it was a good example of a city with an aging infrastructure and one that had undergone a major social and economic change in recent years. This report details the consumer issues facing Riga and attempts to identify issues that stakeholders need to address in the near future.

Approach

Interviews were conducted with representatives of the water supplier, regulators and consumer organisations to understand what these stakeholders felt were the key consumer issues facing the sector in Riga. This was contrasted with focus groups conducted with consumers in various locations in the city of Riga.

The report contains a qualitative analysis of transcripts of these interviews and focus groups.

Overview of Findings

Stakeholders and consumers broadly agreed that a key concern was water quality and that many of the problems lay in the condition of the supply infrastructure, both the pipe work within properties and in the mains supply network itself.

The water company was not directly held to blame for the poor quality of the water by consumers as it was understood that infrastructure changes would require both time and considerable investment before there would be a noticeable effect on water quality. The key problem was who should pay for the improvements needed and there was little evidence here that consumers thought that they should pay either in the form of higher water prices or increased general taxation. Underlying this was a considerable lack of consumer trust in the motivations of the authorities and a belief that the water company was acting in its own interests rather than those of the consumer. This is contrasted by a mistrust of consumers on the part of some in the water company who believe that some consumers acted to minimise payments or avoid them altogether.

A concern from the point of view of improving consumer relations is that the city's preponderance of managed apartment blocks means that individual consumers have little or no direct contact with the water supplier. If they have problems or concerns they usually have to convey these to a house manager rather than directly to the water company. Greater mutual trust is required before there is likely to be any greater willingness to pay for improvements and this is only likely to occur if there are more opportunities for interactions between individual consumers and the supplier.

More information

The report is deliverables 7.5.7

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