

**STUDY ON SERVICE QUALITY
DELIVERED BY "TELEGA WATER PUBLIC
SERVICE DEPARTMENT"**

Abstract

The present work aims to make a brief overview of the crucial water resources role in growing citizens' life quality, especially now when we all realize and admit that water is a limited resource. This paper also tries to show how water has become an important element of economic, social and environmental sustainability. Another objective of the paper was to identify and analyse the clients' perception and satisfaction degree regarding the quality of water service delivery by Telega Water Public Service Department. In that sense, this paper presents results of a qualitative research conducted without ensuring representativeness of the population from which it was extracted, that on a number of 60 clients from Telega village to demonstrate the quality level of public water services. In this study the article author applied a questionnaire on a population of 84 subjects who were voluntarily self-selection and completeness response provided. Survey results demonstrate that there are problems in almost all sectors analyzed in terms of quality, communication with citizens and the City Hall capacity to solve emergency situations.

Keywords: Public service, quality, consumers perception, water supply, improving public services.

JEL CODES: L95

**STUDIU PRIVIND
CALITATEA SERVICIULUI
FURNIZAT DE „SERVICIUL
DE DISTRIBUȚIE APĂ
POTABILĂ TELEGA”**

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Rezumat

Unul din obiectivele prezentului articol este de a sublinia rolul extrem de important pe care îl joacă resursele de apă în creșterea calității vieții cetățenilor, în mod deosebit acum când cu toții realizăm și admitem faptul că apa este o resursă limitată. Un alt aspect important atins în lucrare face referire la faptul că apa a devenit un element important al sustenabilității economice, sociale și a mediului. Obiectivul principal al articolului a fost de a identifica și analiza percepția clienților și gradul de satisfacție al acestora vis-a-vis de calitatea serviciului de alimentare cu apă prestat de Serviciul de Distribuție Apă Potabilă Telega. În acest sens, lucrarea de față prezintă rezultatele unei analize calitative realizate fără asigurarea reprezentativității eșantionului. Metoda utilizată a fost chestionarul ce a fost aplicat pe o populație de 84 de subiecți care s-au oferit voluntari pentru a răspunde la întrebări. Din numărul total al chestionarelor distribuite au fost validate 60 ca fiind completate corect. Chestionarul a fost gândit și utilizat pentru a afla nivelul calitativ al serviciului de alimentare cu apă. Rezultatele anchetei au demonstrat că sunt probleme în majoritatea sectoarelor analizate, în special în ceea ce privește calitatea, comunicarea cu cetățenii clienți, precum și capacitatea primăriei de a rezolva situațiile urgente apărute inopinat.

Cuvinte cheie: Serviciu public, calitate, percepția consumatorilor, alimentare cu apă, îmbunătățirea serviciilor publice.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Since ancient times the presence of water was essential for human settlements development. They have developed along water courses. Water is the environmental factor with the greatest impact on human health, the presence of water is vital for physiological, biochemical, for sanitary and household needs.

One of the global problems humanity is facing today is water scarcity and water quality degradation. Rapid technological progress in the twentieth century made the past water technologies to be considered to be too old and far from the present.

Angelakis et al. (2012, p. xxi) point out that „there is a large number of unsolved issues related to management principles, decentralization processes, sustainable water projects, cost effectiveness and sustainability issues” such as protection against floods and droughts. In developing countries, such problems have intensified. Moreover, new problems have emerged, such as contamination of surface and underground water resources.

2. WATER – A POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL ISSUE

United Nations Environment Programme (UN, 2010) found that two out of three people on Earth will live in areas without water by 2025 if current way of water consumption will continue. World population growth, economic development and climate change are forces affecting the planet's water systems.

Following the water issue awareness, there have been diversified and globalized a series of actions and programs which central direction is water - water for life, water for human development, water for human health and the environment.

United Nations, through its various agencies is involved in a vast process of improving living conditions worldwide. Between UN activities there are also ensuring access to safe water supply:

- Between 1981 and 1990, the first UN decade of water, over one billion people gained access for the first time in their life to a safe source of water, over one billion between 1990 and 2002 gaining access.
- The second international water decade, 2005-2015 - "International Decade for Action Water problem" aims to halve the number of people without access to safe water sources.

In 1992 the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro by an international initiative, was born World Water Day, which on 22 March each year celebrating this day since 1993.

UN General Assembly adopted on December 22, 1992 resolution A/RES/47/193 and in accordance with the recommendations of the UNCED Conference of Chapter 18 (clean water resources) of Agenda 21, all states are invited to book on 22 March each year the implementation of United Nations recommendations and to prepare concrete actions to attract attention.

In 2000 all Member States of United Nations signed the United Nations Millennium Declaration (UNMD) with the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (UN, 2012). The objective number 7, Member States shall ensure environmental sustainability by halving the proportion of people without sustainable access to drinking water by 2015.

Commitment was reiterated at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which took place in Johannesburg in 2002, and was added essential sanitation Millennium Development Goal, the reason being that 3 billion people lack normal sanitation services.

William Cosgrove, vice-president of the World Water Council, said in early 2003 that "currently, 30% of the world is undergoing a water crisis. If it continues at this rate of consumption, in 2025 the crisis will affect 50% of the population".

In 2006 - UN issued the second part of the 2003 Report on the global problems of the water. The study "Water, a shared responsibility", examines the destructive force of water and the problems caused by its absence. In the "Foreword" of this report, Secretary General Kofi Annan stressed that shared responsibility is essential to progress. The report contains 15 chapters dealing with water issues politically, economically or socially.

Fifth World Water Forum, the largest industry event in the world, held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 16 to 22 March 2009, brought on international agenda worldwide water crisis. This forum has been subject to debate and analysis, the Conference of Ministers, a topic range and importance to the future of the planet and humankind, which is related to water and its management including:

- Global changes and water risk management products;
- Advanced human development and MDGs targets;
- Managing and protecting water resources and water supply systems to meet human and environmental;

- Structures and leadership and management issues;
- Funding Policy for water;
- Education, knowledge and publicity.

Objectives for the current millennium, highlighted at the 5th World Water Forum are:

- A. Providing water and feed the planet's inhabitants, to stop poverty and hunger;
- B. The best use of water for energy production and energy for water use;
- C. Improving services;
- D. Providing water and sanitation and hygiene conditions of all residents.

At this congress representatives around the world have signed the Istanbul Water Consensus (IWC), consensus created to develop water management strategies to the problems facing the planet.

In some areas of the world water resources are limited and human sectors experiencing water shortages and other water areas are in excess of requirements recorded excess humidity, flooding.

In 1988 the European Commission decided that it is time to develop a coherent and comprehensive water framework. In that sense it proposed development of the Water Framework Directive. After a decision process that lasted almost 10 years, in 1997 published the first version of the legislation, is subject to debate European Parliament twice: in February 1999 and February 2000. The final text was adopted in October 2000 and entered into force after publication in OJ L327 of December 2000 under the name "European Parliament and Council Directive establishing a framework 60/2000/EC action in the field of water policy".

Water Framework Directive of the European Union (Directiva Cadru Apa) (MMEDIU, n.d.) is the cornerstone in the history of water policies in Europe. It establishes a common framework for sustainable and integrated management of all water bodies. Water Framework Directive of the European Union among other things contribute to providing drinking water in sufficient quantities of good quality, surface water and groundwater as needed for sustainable, rational and fair.

Water Framework Directive was transposed into law in Romania by Law no. 310/2004 amending and supplementing Law no water 107/1996 updated and supplemented.

The drinking water in Romania is regulated by Law no. 241/2006 (ANRSC, n.d.), transposing Directive 98/83/EC on drinking water.

In this law are taken all the provisions of the Directive, including Annexes:

- Is defined water intended for human consumption - drinking water;
- Is introduced requirement of pure water and proper behavior;
- Are established quality parameters, their values and methods of analysis and criteria for validation of methods;
- Are established authorities in monitoring;
- Are established authorities and responsibilities on public information;
- Responsibilities and requirements are established by making periodic report.

In Romania, water is a specific resource, usable as natural, about 1870 cubic meters / capita / year, which ranks us 13th in Europe (the European average of 4,000 cubic meters / capita / year).

The 4864 rivers with a length of about 78,905 km, is Romania's main water resource. Approximately 7% of the total length of watercourses fall into classes IV and V quality (poor and bad ecological status).

In many geographical areas in the country, groundwater contains high amounts of nitrogen, due to historical pollution and fertilizers used in agriculture around large cities water from wells is contaminated with organic substances.

Add to this the reduction of usable water resources, the effect of climate change is manifested more strongly in recent years.

On the other hand, 35% of total population still lack drinking water supplied by the public and 47% lack access to services and wastewater collection.

The municipal water supply. According to the report prepared in 2004 by the Institute of Public Health, Romania is among countries with medium coverage in Europe, since only 65% of the population are provided in the public drinking water. In Europe, the population is connected to public water supply at 96% -100% in urban and 87% in rural areas, according to the WHO "Global Water Supply and Sanitation Assessment 2000". In the last 25 years Romania has made an increasing number of users connected to networks of water supply from 29% to 65% of the population, while the same time, major changes were in the report between urban and rural population.

Resident population of 256 urban localities is about 11,551,096 inhabitants, 86% of the drinking water being supplied through the public system. The figures show that in a number of 55 urban (21.5%), the population is connected to 100% to the public water supply.

In rural areas, 67% of people without access to drinking water and about 90% are connected to sewage systems. According to NIS, water supply networks in rural areas have been some improvements in the period 1998 - 2005, was extended from 16,245 km in 1998 to approximately 22,660 in 2005.

However, public facilities remain inadequate since not all households in a community are connected to water, even in those localities have such phallic. In most rural households are used for drinking water wells (approximately 70% of them). With regard to sewerage systems, the gap between urban and rural areas is considerably higher, given the existence of a percentage of 92.3% in urban areas and only 7.7% in rural areas (2005 data).

Providing people with safe drinking water in sufficient quantity will be one of priority directions in politics.

Regarding the water sector, Romania has undertaken to meet specific requirements of European Community.

Taking into account three aspects: economic, environmental and social issues of water and water supply there is a must for this resource to be considered in the context of sustainable development, because the value of water in the end is priceless.

"When the well's dry, we know the worth of water", said Benjamin Franklin, in other words when the wells run dry, we realize the value of water.

3. CLIENTS PERCEPTION AND SATISFACTION DEGREE ON WATER QUALITY

Unfortunately, today, due to population growth, especially in urban areas, intensive development of agriculture and industries, quantity and water quality worldwide dropped significantly. Uncontrolled expansion of human activities on the environment, especially on water will affect the global water cycle irreversibly (UN-Water, 2011, p.1).

Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry (1990, p. 20) agreed on three definitions for what service quality means. First of all they describe service quality as being the differences between „customer's expectations and perceptions". Second, they find a number of key factors that could have an influence on customers' expectations (e.g. personal needs, experience, different types of communications) and, finally, they identified during an exploratory study ten dimensions in order to assess service quality, as follows: „tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, competence, courtesy, credibility, security, access, communication and understanding the customer".

United Nations (2011) affirm that „water quality is determined by comparing the physical and chemical characteristics of a water sample with water quality guidelines or standards. Drinking water quality guidelines and standards are designed to enable the provision of clean and safe water for human consumption, thereby protecting human health. These are usually based on scientifically assessed acceptable levels of toxicity to either humans or aquatic organisms”.

UN-Water (2011, p.3) highlights the importance of water quality and stress the fact that managers should pay more attention to water resources and to involve all stakeholders from public, private and civil sector.

4. STUDY ON CONSUMER SATISFACTION REGARDING THE QUALITY OF SERVICE PROVIDED BY THE PUBLIC SERVICE DRINKING WATER DISTRIBUTION TELEGA

Research methodology and results

In order to get an overview of the Public Service Quality Drinking Water Distribution Telega, in January 2012, a survey was carried out "consumer opinion on the quality of service provided by The Public Service Drinking Water Distribution Telega". The survey was conducted in the village Telega, being interviewed local consumers. The questionnaire was developed from a model provided by the Romanian Water Association. I choseed this method of research because it allowed me to pick the exact information I needed. The research involved interviewing homes and businesses users.

The questionnaire aims to quantify the level of satisfaction of public water service from the village Telega. It comprises a total of 17 questions, divided into 5 sets, covering respondents opinions regarding the quality of water supplied, communication with service water distribution, collection system and occasional problems that may arise in the provision of water and four general questions about respondents: consumer category - home users or businesses, age, gender. The research hypothese is: the satisfaction level of water supply service clients from Telega village is low.

The sample consisted of 60 respondents living in Telega village and structured based on the type of customer (residential or trader).

TABLE 1 - SAMPLE DISTRIBUTION BY CATEGORY OF CONSUMERS

Consumer's type		Total
Residential	Economic/ trader	60
53	7	

All the respondents from this survey benefit from water supply service, and because of that an important place in this questionnaire is given to questions regarding water quality and the whole process of drinking water supply. This is why to question „Are you, in general, satisfied with the water quality supplied to your tap?” over 50% of respondents (ie 59%) said they were satisfied, 24% very satisfied, and only 17% said somewhat satisfied or dissatisfied with the quality of drinking water.

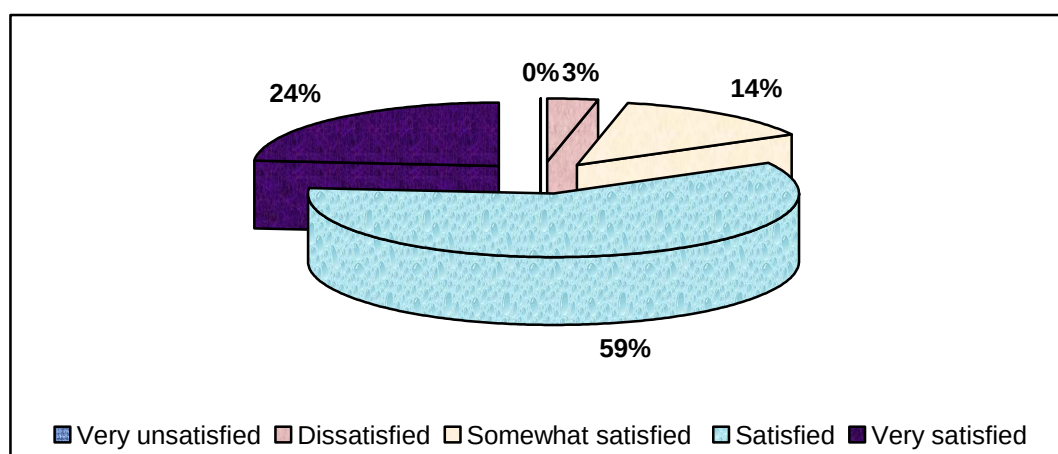


FIGURE 1 - RESPONDENTS' SATISFACTION DEGREE ON WATER SUPPLY QUALITY

Basically, in practice, the recognition of water quality depends on how it is perceived by consumers. In this case the respondents were asked questions about color, taste and smell of water supplied.

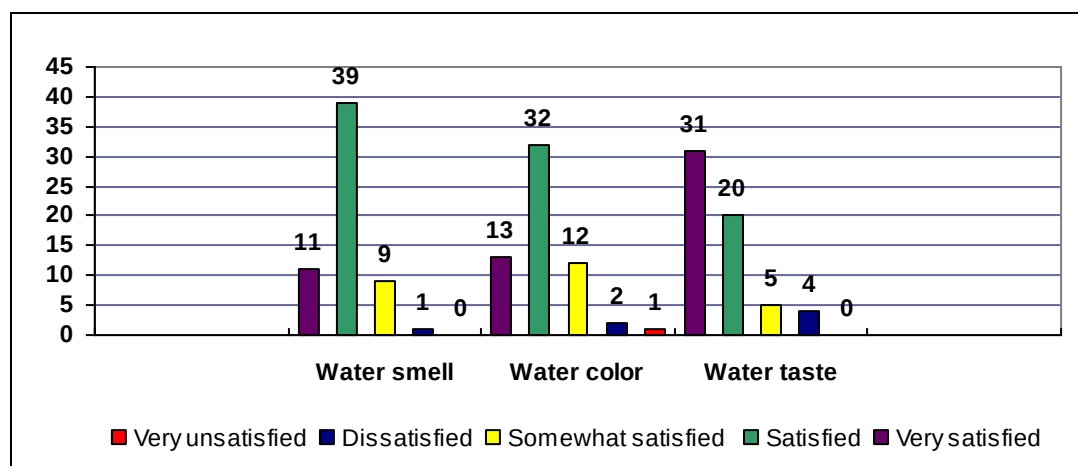


FIGURE 2 - QUALITY OF WATER SUPPLY

Most respondents were satisfied with the water taste (20), the water color (32) and the smell of water (39). A number of 31 respondents declared themselves very satisfied with the taste of water, and also the color and smell of water were considered very satisfactory near 13%. The dissatisfied and very unsatisfied respondents' number varied between 0 and 4. Survey results show that there are no big problems with water supplied quality, but there could be made improvements for water color and taste.

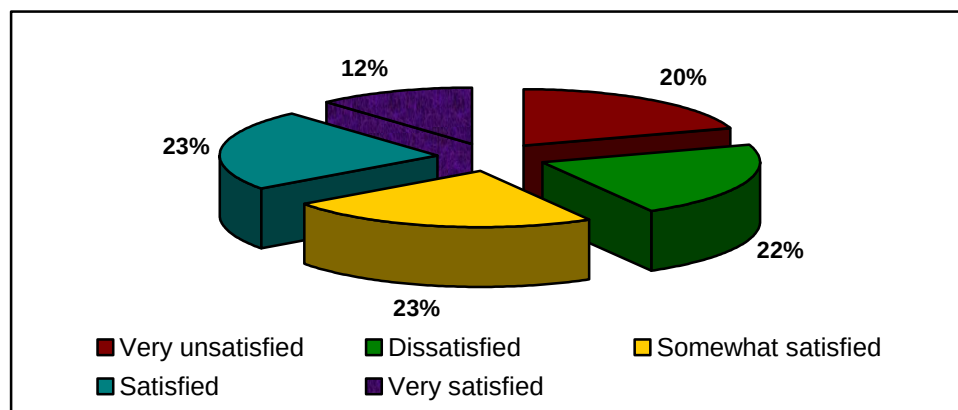


FIGURE 3 - PRESSURE OF SUPPLIED WATER

When it comes to pressure of water supplied around 20% from the questioned persons chose the answer "very dissatisfied" and 22% "dissatisfied". The difference between the percentages of those who declared themselves "satisfied" (23%) and very satisfied (12%) is near 20%. Explanation could be found in level differences occurring all over the village, which creates difficulties in maintaining water supply and pressure satisfactory to all residents. Thus there are areas where the pressure is either too high or too low. 23% are "somewhat satisfied" with the pressure that water is provided. The results raise a very important problem at this level that should be solved. In this case there are two ways in which this problem could be solved: by installing an additional pump pressure in order to ensure an optimal level or by reducing its level where appropriate.

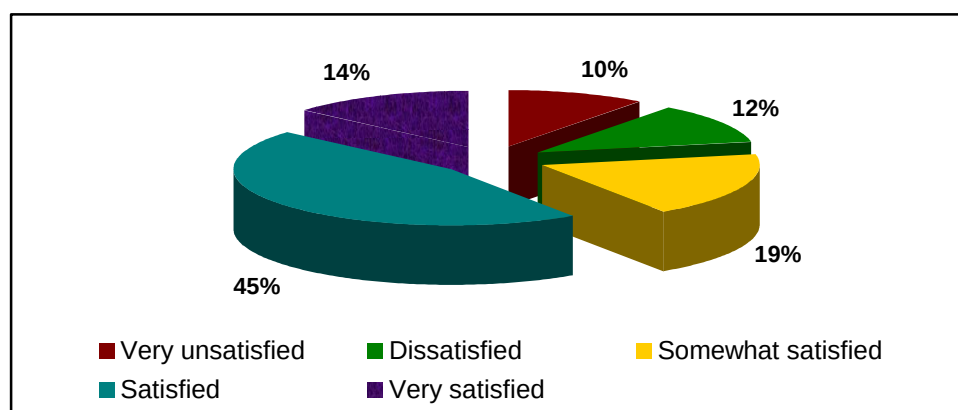


FIGURE 4 - CONTINUITY OF WATER SUPPLIED

One of the cornerstones of Drinking Water Distribution Service Telega is to assure consumers with water 24 hours, however, disconnections appear. According to almost half of the respondents continuity is considered satisfactory, while 14% are very satisfied with it. However a high percentage 22% are very unsatisfied or dissatisfied while 19% are 'somewhat satisfied'. This suggests a frequency of disconnections to be resolved.

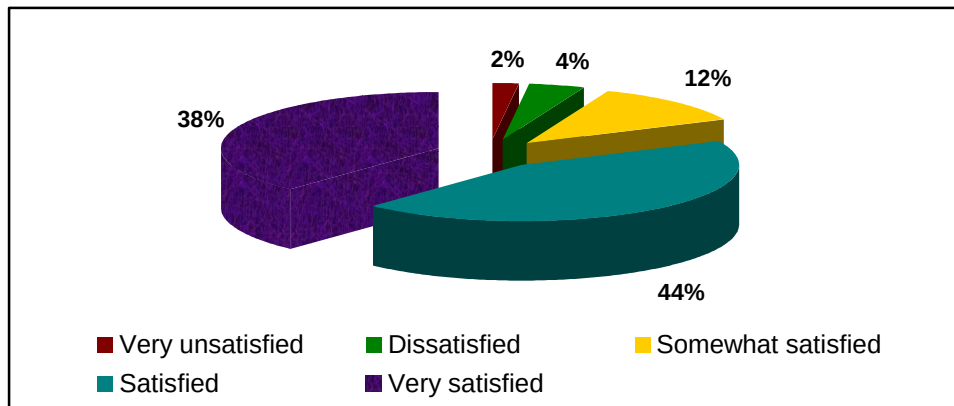


FIGURE 5 - BEHAVIOR OF SERVICE PERSONNEL

Behavior of the service staff is very highly rated. There is dissatisfaction expressed in values of 2-4%, but overall people are satisfied with the way in which they are treated: 44% are satisfied, 38% very satisfied and a relatively small percentage of 12% are somewhat satisfied.

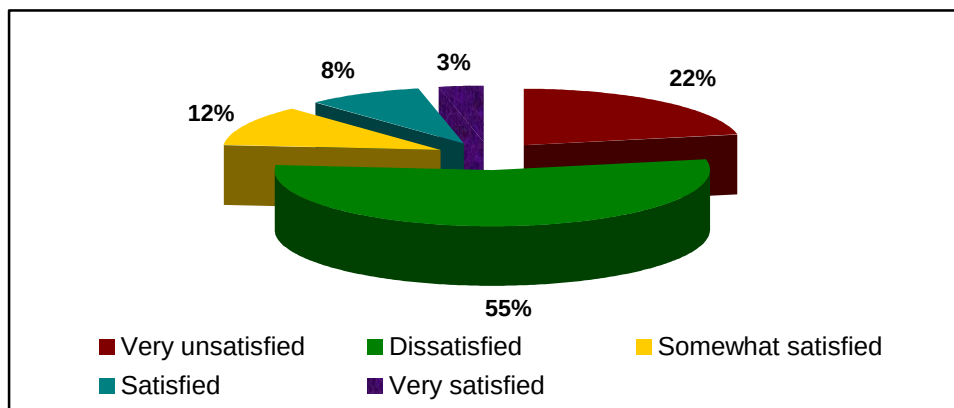


FIGURE 6 - PACE OF INFRASTRUCTURE MODERNIZATION

A priority should be modernization and development of water supply infrastructure as reflected in respondents' answers to the question: "Are you satisfied with the pace of modernization of water infrastructure in Telega?". Thus the category "very unsatisfied" fall 22% and more than 50% are dissatisfied (ie 55%). Aggregate percentage of those who are satisfied, somewhat satisfied and very, not exceeding 23%, a minimal amount. The need to modernize infrastructure is highlighted by a questionnaire applied to citizens of the village, created to identify their needs and to ground "The Local

Development Strategy of Telega Village". Thus to question: "How important do you think is the project for rehabilitation of drinking water supply network for Telega?" respondents answered "very important" (85%) and "important" (12%). In this context, infrastructure is a problem to be solved urgently.

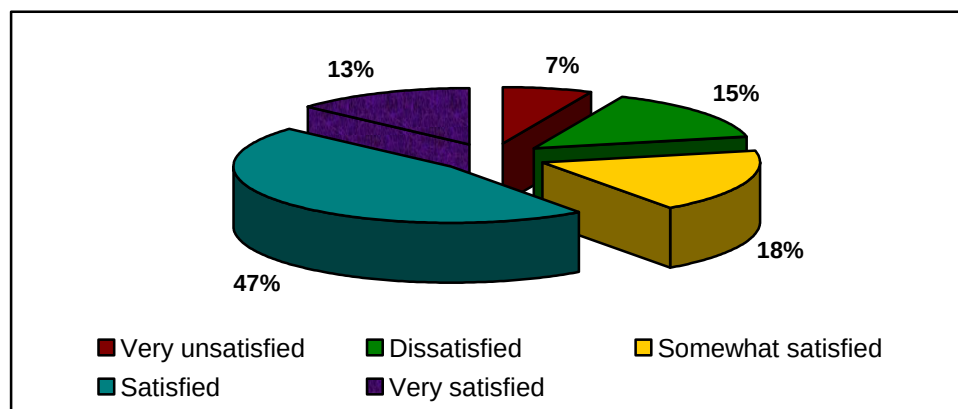


FIGURE 7. COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC SERVICE DRINKING WATER DISTRIBUTION TELEGA

Under „Communication with the Public Water Distribution Service from Telega” aspect, the respondents said they are very unsatisfied (7%) and dissatisfied (15%) with the way they can communicate with service provider. Practically, this can be done by phone or by going to City Hall. Other ways, such as some online complaints are not possible. However, more than half declared that they are satisfied (47%) and very satisfied (13) with these communication channels.

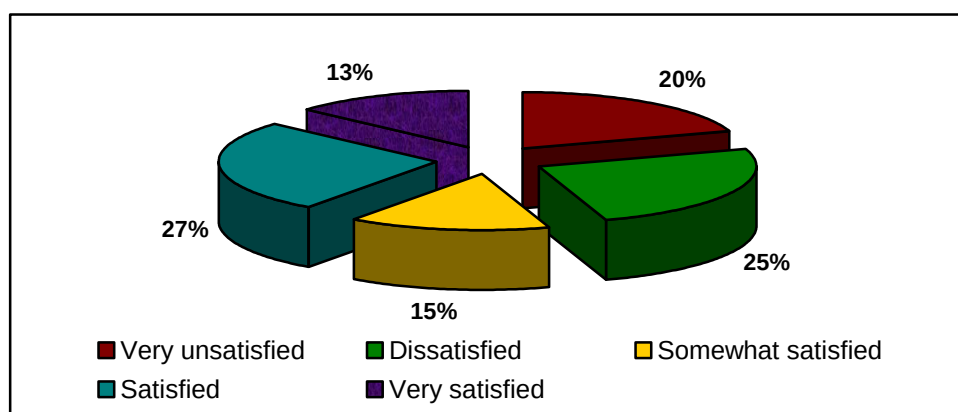


FIGURE 8 - PROMPTNESS TO CLIENTS' REQUESTS

In relation to the timeliness response to requests, opinions are divided as follows: 20% very unsatisfied, 25% - dissatisfied, 15% somewhat satisfied, 27% satisfied and 13% very satisfied. Timeliness response shows interest in public issues and professionalism, so the service should reduce time response to requests.

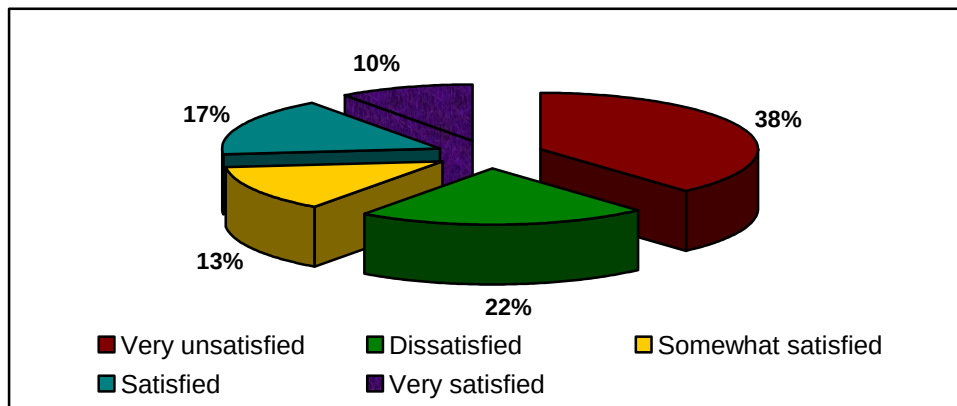


FIGURE 9 - CLIENTS' SATISFACTION DEGREE IN WHICH THEY ARE ANNOUNCED OF SCHEDULED INTERRUPTIONS IN WATER SUPPLY

In terms of consumer information on scheduled interruptions in water supply 50% are in general dissatisfied, from which 38% very dissatisfied. 13% are somewhat satisfied, 17% satisfied and only 10% very satisfied. Information is very important for service - client relationship. It should be found a solution by which all citizens could be informed in time regarding these interruptions, which would improve the institution's image and the service itself and lead to greater collaboration with citizens.

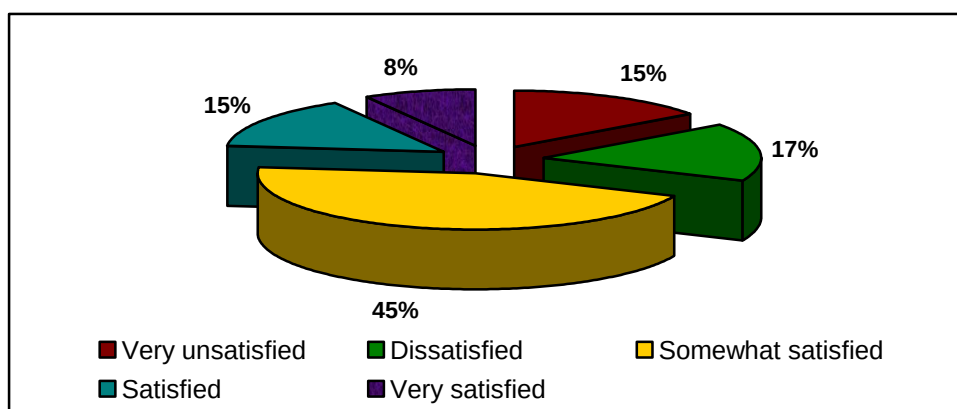


FIGURE 10 - CLIENTS' SATISFACTION DEGREE REGARDING THE DISTANCE TO THE POINT OF PAYING THE BILL

In this case the bill payment section is at the "Village Hall Telega", the center of Telega, and nearby villages residents have to travel a considerable distance to pay the bills. This unpleasant situation for citizens is due to the fact that one of the cashiers are in prenatal leave, so displacement on field for invoice is no longer made. 15% of respondents are very unsatisfied with the distance imposed by these conditions, 17% are dissatisfied, and almost half (45%) are somewhat satisfied. Only 15% of respondents felt satisfied and 8% very satisfied.

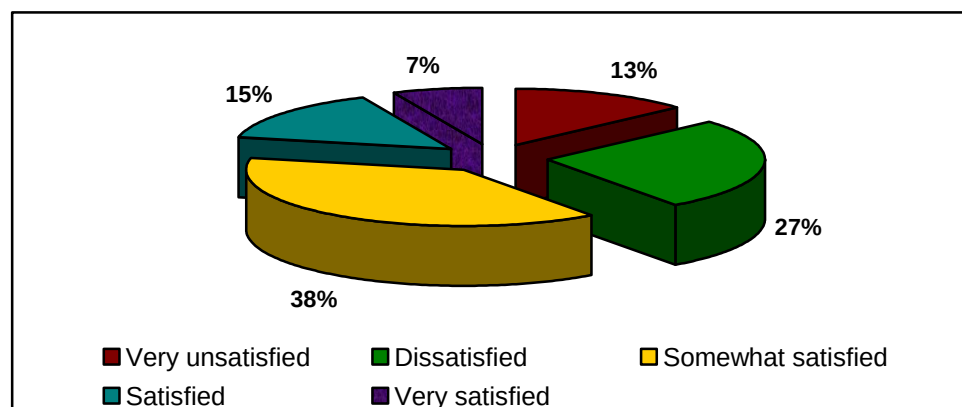


FIGURE 11 - CLIENTS' SATISFACTION DEGREE REGARDING THE WAITING TIME FOR PAYING THE BILL

Time of invoice payment varies depending on the amount of revenue from a particular day, the payment being made at the counter, there is the possibility that citizens will have to wait in lines. Thus 13% were very unsatisfied with the waiting time, 27% dissatisfied, somewhat satisfied scored a 38% percent rather than satisfied (15%) and very satisfied (7%).

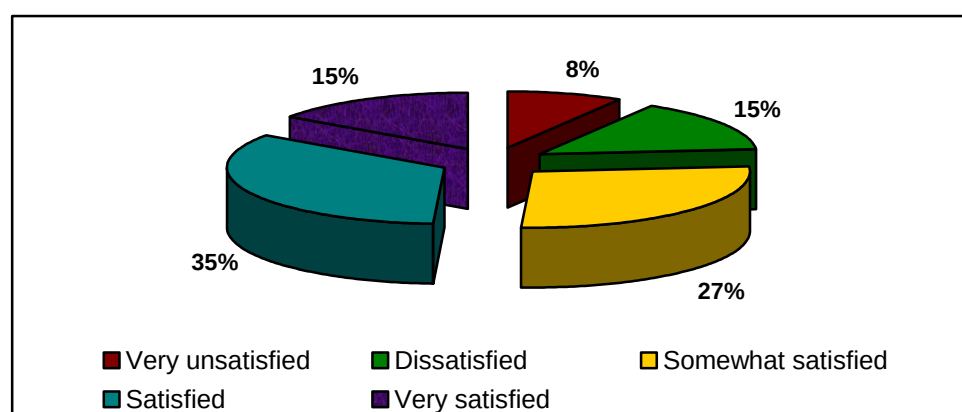


FIGURE 12 - CLIENTS' SATISFACTION DEGREE REGARDING THE TARIFFS USED BY DRINKING WATER DISTRIBUTION SERVICE TELEGA

Regarding the tariffs used, problems may arise because in Bustenari village is practiced a higher water tariff. Until 2011 this service was delivered by a private company. However this has no longer operating license and today the public authorities are delivering water supply from the same sources as for the rest of the villages, leading to the same charges.

A large percentage, 35% are satisfied with tariffs and in addition, 15% are very satisfied. 27% are somewhat satisfied and 15% are dissatisfied. This issue of discontent on the rate can be understood in terms of quality-price ratio, taking into account how respondents rated service quality.

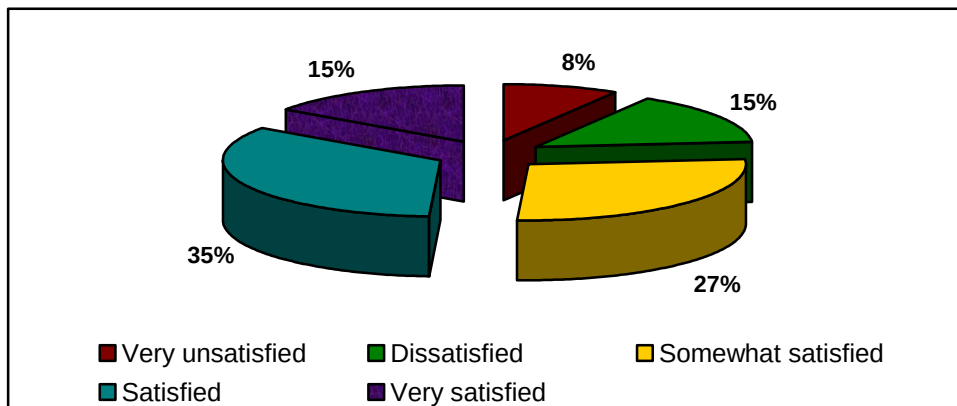


FIGURE 13 - CLIENTS' SATISFACTION DEGREE REGARDING THE TIME RESPONSE TO WATER SUPPLY INTERRUPTION

When it comes to promptness, service is not well rated. The percentage of those dissatisfied (28%) summed with 17% of those very unsatisfied reach almost half, and 35% are somewhat satisfied. Only 20% satisfied, namely: the satisfied (15%) and very satisfied (5%), such results show the necessity of solving the problem of expediency in order to decrease response time.

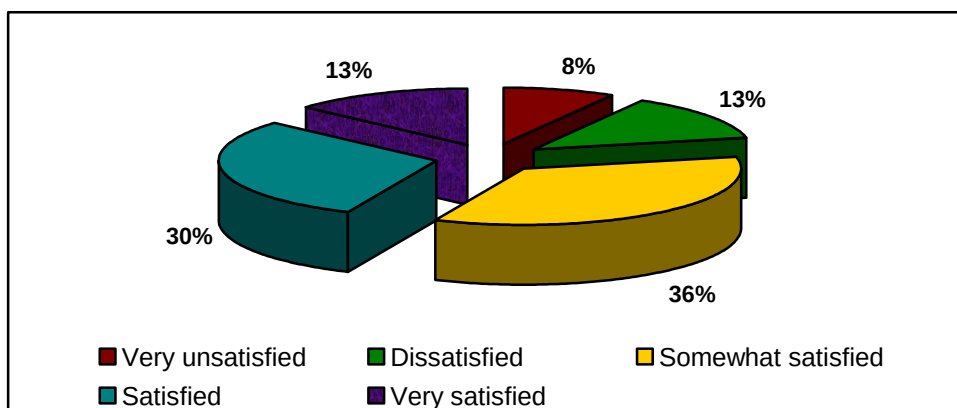


FIGURE 14 - CLIENTS' SATISFACTION DEGREE REGARDING THE QUALITY OF UNPLANNED INTERVENTIONS BY DRINKING WATER DISTRIBUTION SERVICE TELEGA

Things are at the opposite side when it comes to quality of work performed for unplanned interventions, the percentage of people who feel positive about the service studied grow: it doubles the number of respondents are satisfied: 30%, increase by 8 percent no of very satisfied (13%). Number of respondents somewhat satisfied unchanged in 35% but only 13% are dissatisfied and 9% very unsatisfied.

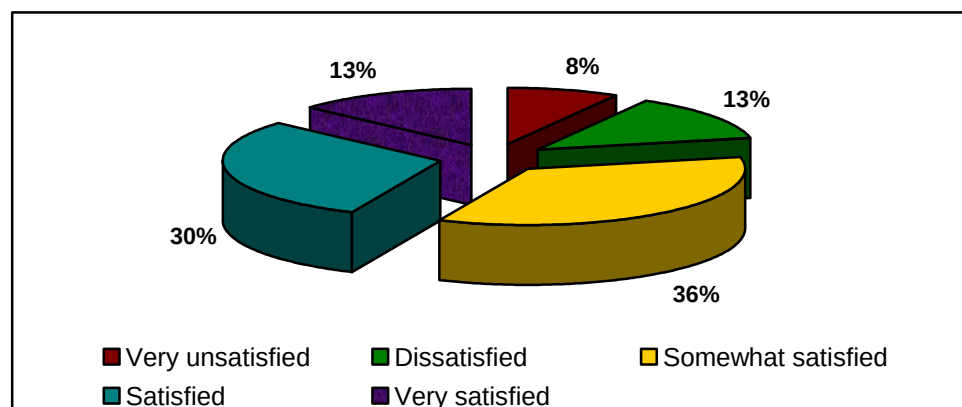


FIGURE 15 - OVERALL CLIENTS' SATISFACTION DEGREE REGARDING SOLVING OCCASIONAL PROBLEMS THAT ARISE IN WATER SUPPLY SERVICE

Considered in generally, occasional problems arising in the provision of water makes 28% to 18% dissatisfied and very unsatisfied, at the opposite side are much smaller percentages: 18% satisfied and 9% very satisfied. In fact 27% of respondents answered "somewhat satisfied". Thus in addition to problems related to pressure, level of information, communication and timeliness, the result shows that the questionnaire should be taken to effectively solve occasional problems that arise in the provision of drinking water.

5. CONCLUSION

Survey results demonstrates that there are problems in almost all sectors analyzed in terms of quality, communication with citizens, solve emergency situations. Base on the results presented above the hypothese of the survey confirms.

Taking into consideration the results from the survey presented above, the main guidelines for Drinking Water Distribution Service in order to improve, I think Telega should focus on the following:

Formulation and adoption by the City Council of a strategy to boost the service of public utilities - water - and to ensure sustainable development of public utilities services sector in concordance with the Government Decision no. 246/2006 approving the National Strategy for Accelerating Development of Community Public Utilities Services. Directions for actions, measures that could be included in such a strategy should include: all citizens should have access to a water source, continuously, at an affordable price, linked to quality and citizens' income level; alignment with current standards on water quality; consideration of environmental legislation, the effects of the service on environment and improve its quality; metering specific branching and reducing losses of drinking water supply, water saving; making

investment programs, looking for the latest technical solutions for modernization and expansion of existing water infrastructure.

Specific objectives that could be included in such a strategy are the following: 24 of the 24-h delivery of drinking water; ensuring all season distribution within the limits of quality; create programs for maintenance and repair of water supply system; increased responsiveness interventions emergencies, interruptions, failures; reduce energy consumption by optimizing; increase the population area served by the extension and modernization of the infrastructure.

Establishing performance indicators of service provision allowing an overview of performance and general development of the utility. Although these performance indicators of service, approved by the local government in each political subdivision are listed in the Decision no. 745 of 11 July 2007 approving the Regulation on licensing of public utilities services - Article 21 letter "o", they must be presented electronically. For a license by ANRSC, these indicators have not been established and approved by the Local Council of Telega. Sets of indicators proposed to be approved: 1. operational performance indicators (water production: m³ / day; total annual water distribution system supplied, expressed as an average year in m³/day); 2. compliance with Water Quality and Wastewater (number of samples / tests for water and wastewater effluent per year which comply with those standards. Expressed as a percentage of total samples in a year); 3. water consumption (liters / person / day. Total annual amount of water sold); 4. unbilled water (Non-Revenue Water - NRW). (Water produced / day (or year) – Water Invoice / day (or year). The difference between water entering the distribution system minus the amount of water sold divided by the quantity of water from the distribution system, expressed as a percentage.

Management Performance Indicators:

- A. Population coverage. Percentage of population connected to water mains.
- B. Percentage of Consumers counted. If not will be counted and will need to pay bills that are based on assumptions and environments, customers will have a low satisfaction.
- C. Population served per employee. An indicator of labor efficiency. Take into account the population connected to the water system divided by the number of employees providing water.

Financial performance indicators: profitability, liquidity and solvency, etc.

In the end I want to underline the fact that although there are a lot of problems in delivering this service, the City Hall can benefit and attract structural funds in order to improve the infrastructure and the water quality from Telega village.

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