

## Written Statement/Input by the Hungarian Water Association as accredited stakeholder organization to the UN 2023 Water Conference

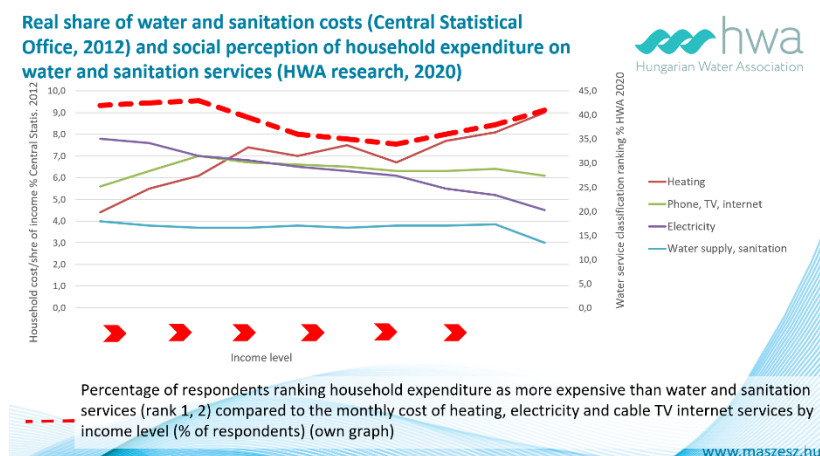
*Input to assess challenges and opportunities relating to, as well as support further action to implement, the objectives of the Decade and the water-related goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*

### The role of horizontal and vertical solidarity in solving water challenges and in accelerating the implementation of the objectives of the Decade

The statement is focusing on the question of asset management funding, especially for water and sewerage renewal needs, considering that the size of the urban settlements may influence the financial capacity within the water bill and even more introducing the idea that social or territorial solidarity should be put in place to solve this problem.

International scientific literature and research results demonstrate a deep and wide gap in both the value and the cost of water and water infrastructure and in addition also in the real user expenditures and users' perception of how much they pay for it! Facilities related to water and sewerage networks providing urban water utility services are more expensive than any other public service infrastructure, and yet, the tariffs of water and sanitation services are the lowest among household expenditures.

The tariffs of water and sanitation services are the lowest among household expenditures and yet users' perception is the opposite, putting water related service costs on the top of the list of their expenditures



While in developing countries it is the lack of infrastructure, in the developed world the replacement of assets, often aged 100 years and over, present increasingly pressing, still unresolved problems put off for decades.

The cost requirements of water supply and the underlying infrastructure show marked differences along a different social stratification, as well. The smaller the unit of supply, the size of the settlement, the higher the per capita infrastructure and service costs are, at the same time this is where disposable incomes are the lowest.

Social groups living in small and large settlements are aware of the substantial differences in communal water and sewerage service costs depending on the size of the settlement. They also feel the need for the renewal of the infrastructure, and although they require it on the one hand, and are willing to compensate, demonstrate solidarity and social engagement on the other hand, they are not, however, aware of its weight and extent.

Based on the inputs of the virtual side event organized by the Hungarian Water Association on the 20 March 2023 we can state that groups of society living in smaller and large urban settlements are aware of the significant differences in the cost of municipal water and sewerage services depending on the size of the settlement and feel the need to renew the infrastructure and on the one hand require, on the other hand are willing to provide compensation and offer solidarity and social engagement. During the event we asked if the participants would pay as much for safe drinking water and proper sanitation as they pay for telecommunication, 76% of the respondents said yes.

Based on the results of international research we can state that both the world aggregate figures (see [City-Level Decoupling: Urban Resource Flows and the Governance of Infrastructure Transitions \(unep.org\)](https://www.unep.org/publications/infrastructure-transitions)) and the social communication of the figures at regional or municipal level, and the contradictions behind them, do not reach the citizens, especially the young, or only in passing.

We, therefore, propose to place at the heart of UN public communication a call, already tested on smaller samples and now also discussed at our HWA virtual side event, which can engage and motivate citizens and society at the individual level to recognize these contradictory facts and to develop personal and social priorities and values.

We propose that these messages be included in the UN social communication material as one of, if not the main call to action:

- **BE AWARE:** Full-scale city level investment needs (3-5.000 USD/cap) are unrealistic to be funded and invested.
- **SUPPORT:** Near to consumers solutions are Affordable, sustainable, and Bankable.
- **DO CONSIDER:** the Horizontal and vertical Solidarity needs.
- **BE READY** to pay as much for water and sanitation services as for telecommunication.