

Application Form submitted by the initiative to participate in the Transformative Cities People's Choice Award

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Location:	Grenoble, France
Title of the Transformative Initiative:	<i>Eau de Grenoble</i> : an experience in the management of a common good based on solidarity and ecology
Name of organization:	Grenoble Une Ville pour Tous – RCGE
Type of organization:	The “Grenoble, une ville pour tous” (One city for all) coalition was created in 2013. The fruit of a historical process of citizen engagement in Grenoble led by numerous women and men committed to their city, the coalition is currently sustained by several citizen, left-wing and environmental movements.
Website:	http://unevillepourtous.fr/
Category and Edition:	WATER. Transformative Cities Award 1st edition (2018).
STORYTELLING	
Context and problem definition	
<p>In 1983, a new right-wing mayor was elected in the city of Grenoble in a context of decentralization and increasing power in the hands of local officials. His administration was marked by clientelism and the role he gave to large corporations in the management of public services. Elected officials and environmental activists mobilised in the 1980s and 1990s and finally proved that corruption was involved in many deals, namely the sale of the water system to Suez.</p>	
Design and Initiation	
<p>After the conviction of the former mayor for corruption, the operating agreement was renegotiated and a semi-public enterprise was created, which involved the municipality, in 1996. However, the renegotiated contract itself was also a source of controversy. It established that management and other services would be outsourced to Suez, which guaranteed</p>	

growth for its revenues, even in the absence of additional business risks. The decision to re-municipalise the water system due to corruption, lack of transparency and abusive tariffs was taken in March 2000 and implemented in 2001, and the private contract with Suez was cancelled.

Implementation

The municipal water company Régie des Eaux de Grenoble (REG) increased investments in infrastructure maintenance and renewal three-fold in comparison to the private operator, while maintaining the price of water at lower and more stable levels. The new public enterprise adopted an advanced form of public participation in decision-making by establishing its first water users' committee.

The committee is made up of representatives of the different water users. Every year, for example, its decisions on water prices have been made unanimously and the municipal council has always heeded the users' committee's opinion when voting on water tariffs. One third of the members of the REG's board of directors are civil society representatives and the other two thirds are municipal councillors.

Results achieved and Evaluation

Overview: between 2000 and 2008, remunicipalisation allowed users to save 20 million euros, mainly thanks to more efficient water use achieved by improving maintenance. The city then launched a social water tariff policy: households for whom the cost of the service exceeds 2.5% of their annual income are reimbursed part of the amount by the CAF.

The recently adopted social tariff policy, which stipulates that households spending more than 2.5% of their income on water services will be reimbursed for part of their water bill, benefits close to 10% of city residents. The policy also has the objective of reducing water consumption by gradually putting into place a monitoring and awareness building policy on saving energy that targets different actors. The municipal enterprise aims to implement a progressive tariff system for all users – an objective that currently faces the challenge of obtaining complete information on the composition of households.

In parallel to the social strategy, the goal is to maintain a pure and untreated water supply (the only case in France). To achieve this requires engaging in a daily struggle to convince the different bodies (especially municipal ones) that this policy does not create health problems, nor is it a malicious attack (terrorism).

Political Strategies

In general, today, the management of the water system by a public enterprise at Grenoble is part of a more global reflection on the governance of the commons, especially energy. An “Assembly of the Commons” was launched in March, which aims to reclaim governance over all public energy producing establishments in the basin of life – that is, water, but also electricity or gas. Or how the defence of fundamental goods is an issue of governance.

Related legislations

Grenoble is a pioneer in the remunicipalisation of water in France, which has enabled the city to rebuild a more efficient and democratic public service. The city currently has a social tariff and resource efficiency programme, which is part of a global process regarding the governance of the commons. The main effect has been the City of Paris’s decision to remunicipalise its service a few years after Grenoble did.

Lessons learned

Public water management represents an opportunity for many communities: it allows us to further our understanding of the resources, the network and the population’s needs. It also allows quality services to be offered at a lower cost, while avoiding the loss of control linked to the exploitation of the services by a private manager.

EXTRA INFO

Supporting documents

http://remunicipalisation.org/#case_Grenoble

<https://www.partagedeseaux.info/Retour-a-la-source-la-remunicipalisation-du-service-de-l-eau-a-Grenoble-France>