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*Senhora Presidente*

Na sequência do Despacho de Vossa Excelência de 5 de março de 2015 que autorizou a participação do signatário na Conferência em epígrafe, junto envio cópia das “Keynotes Speech” subordinadas ao tema “Evolução dos Serviços de Águas em Portugal e a Carta de Lisboa”.

Permito-me sugerir o particular acompanhamento pelo Parlamento, dada a experiência positiva ocorrida nesta área em Portugal nos últimos 20 anos e a necessária consolidação do conteúdo da “Carta de Lisboa”

Com os melhores cumprimentos, *e a amizade e estima pessoal*

Palácio de São Bento, 27.05.15

O PRESIDENTE DA COMISSÃO,

*António Ramos Preto*  
(António Ramos Preto)

# THE EVOLUTION OF THE WATER SERVICES IN PORTUGAL AND THE IWA LISBON CHARTER

KEYNOTES SPEECH GIVEN BY: ↵

MR. ANTÓNIO RAMOS PRETO, CHAIRMAN ON THE  
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE IN THE PORTUGUESE  
PARLIAMENT, A ASSEMBLEIA DA REPÚBLICA

Mr. Chairman, first of all I would like to express my sincere gratitude for being invited here today.

Mr. Chairman, Honourable Members, ladies and gentleman.

It is an honour and a pleasure to speak to you as chairman on the Committee on environment in the Portuguese parliament, a Assembleia da República.

Secondly I would like to stress that the topics of this meeting are very well chosen.

My intervention focuses on the Portuguese experience over the last 20 years in improving the water and sanitation services which have had a remarkable evolution and its link with the IWA initiative regarding the Lisbon Charter, which is a guide to the public policy and regulation of drinking water supply, sanitation and wastewater management services.

## ***1. A new public policy for water services in Portugal***

In 1993, a decision was taken in Portugal to define a new public policy which would ensure suitable water services to the population, integrating a global approach which involved various components in a holistic manner:

- Approval of strategic plans for the sectors;
- Definition of a legislative framework;
- Definition of an institutional framework;
- Definition of the governance of the services;
- Definition of access targets and quality of service goals;
- Definition of a tariff policy;
- Provision and management of financial resources;
- Construction of the infrastructure;
- Improvement of structural and operational efficiency;

The water services have a strong impact on environmental quality, particularly as regards the discharge of waste water into water resources. An indicator to assess this impact is the quality of surface waters, insofar as it is obviously affected by any pollution coming from wastewater, even if diffuse pollution and other sources can also contribute significantly. It can be seen that its evolution in the last two decades has been very positive, going from 19% to 78% quality of surface waters adequate to be used for drinking water supply after treatment, in accordance with European legislation.

Other indicator to assess this impact is the quality of coastal bathing waters and its transition, insofar as it is heavily impacted by any pollution coming from wastewater. It can be seen that the evolution in the last two decades of the indicator of beaches with good water quality has been extraordinarily positive, going from 57% to 99%, in accordance with European legislation.

Another indicator to assess the impact of the water and wastewater services on the environment is the quality of river bathing waters, insofar as it is also strongly affected by any pollution, particularly from the discharge of wastewater. It can be seen that its evolution in the last two decades has been extraordinarily positive, going from 17% to 95% for river beaches with good water quality, in accordance with European legislation.

Other indicators to assess the impact of the water services on the environment are the number of beaches with blue flag or classified as "gold" beaches. Blue flag is a distinction annually awarded to coastal and river beaches and marinas which comply with a set of requirements. It can be seen that the number of beaches and marinas distinguished has been increasing in a very significant manner, going from 89 to 289 with "gold" quality.

Summarizing, the improvement of water services in Portugal had a strong impact on environmental quality, namely surface waters, coastal bathing waters and its transition, river bathing waters and the number of blue flags.

The water services naturally have also a strong impact on public health, particularly through the quality of drinking water, which may transmit waterborne diseases, particularly cholera, typhoid and paratyphoid fever, other salmonellosis, shigellosis, leptospirosis, Legionnaire's disease and hepatitis A. Using hepatitis A to assess this impact, it can be verified that its evolution in the last two decades has been very positive, going from 630 cases to 8 cases annually.

The First International Regulators Forum, jointly organized by IWA and the Portuguese Water and Waste Services Regulation Authority (ERSAR), confirmed that it is timely for the IWA, together with the community of professionals and opinion leaders, to agree on an international framework of good practice for public policy and regulation in water services with clear references to the rights and responsibilities of the various stakeholders.

The result was the IWA initiative regarding the Lisbon Charter (Guiding the Public Policy and Regulation of Drinking Water Supply, Sanitation and Wastewater Management Services).

#### ***4. The principles for good public policy and effective regulation***

The Lisbon Charter relies on the following fundamental elements:

- The water services are fundamental to the health of communities.
- The water services are essential to the sustainable socioeconomic development of the society.
- The water services have been recognised as human rights.
- Governments must ensure water services provision in compliance with their international commitments as well as the commitments to their own people.
- With that goal governments should foster good public policy and effective regulation.

The Lisbon Charter recognizes the following principles for good public policy and effective regulation:

- Effective water services make a positive contribution to sustainable development of modern societies.
- Accountability and transparency should be enshrined in the provision of water services.
- The economics of service provision should be framed by long-term infrastructure investments and cost recovery instruments.
- Service provision should take into account the economic, social and environmental aspects of all water resources.
- Effective service provision relies upon the collective actions of interdependent stakeholders.

#### ***5. The roles and responsibilities***

According to the Lisbon Charter, the common responsibilities must be:

- Operate in accordance with the policies set out by governments.
- Act in strict compliance with legal, contractual and regulatory frameworks.
- Improve operational efficiency.
- Contribute to improving the structural efficiency of the sector.
- Implement the pricing policies.
- Contribute to human resources capacity development and innovation.
- Verify the integrity of their internal processes.
- Aspire to operate 'beyond compliance'.

The responsibilities of the users must be:

- Effectively exercise their rights.
- Assuming their corresponding obligations.
- Make appropriate use of the services.
- Attempt to ensure the efficient use of water resources.

### ***6. Principles of effective regulatory frameworks***

According to the Lisbon Charter, the regulatory frameworks should follow a set of principles:

- Regulation should be seen as a part of the public policies for the services.
- Ensure that all contributors act in an efficient manner.
- Assure an integrated regulatory approach for the services.
- Ensure an adequate level of institutional, functional and financial independence of regulatory authorities.
- Provide a separation between technical and managerial dimensions and political decisions.
- Ensure accountability and public scrutiny of regulatory authorities.
- Contribute for a competitive market.
- Foster a culture of adoption of standards, norms and good practice.
- Contribute to the modernisation of public administration and the economy.

### ***7. Conclusion***

In conclusion, I do believe it is timely for the political leaders to agree

on an international framework of good practice for public policy and regulation in water services, with clear reference to the rights and responsibilities of the various stakeholders and users.

That's the reason why Portugal fully supports the IWA Lisbon Charter and invites you to adopt it.

The Lisbon Charter will be inspiring and challenging, for all who really care about our common future.

Thank you for your attention.

Gyeongju, 15 April 2015

António Ramos Preto.

- All stakeholders should have an ongoing and open dialogue.
- All stakeholders should share information.

The responsibilities of governments & public administration must be:

- Adopt strategic plans for the sector.
- Establish and strengthen the legal framework.
- Define and evaluate the governance models of the services.
- Create and guarantee an effective institutional framework.
- Design regulatory frameworks with objectives, capabilities and capacities.
- Define goals and set realistic and measurable targets and standards.
- Ensure provision of mechanisms to access reliable information.
- Ensure equality and non-discrimination in access to the services.
- Establish a fiscal framework for the services.
- Promote tariff policies.
- Provide and efficiently manage the available financial resources.
- Improve the structural efficiency of the services.
- Develop the water sector related economy.
- Promote awareness and participation of users.
- Support the development of human resource capacity.
- Provide the means for the resolution of any conflicts.
- Promote research enhancing local knowledge.

The responsibilities of regulatory authorities must be:

- Ensure that services are carried out in compliance with legislation and with any contract.
- Supervise tariff schemes.
- Oversee and promote the provision of a suitable quality of services.
- Address the interface between service providers and users.
- Help to clarify the operating rules of the sector.
- Contribute to fair and open competition.
- Collect, analyse and disseminate accurate information.
- Promote research to facilitate innovation.
- Provide incentives and impose appropriate and proportionate sanctions for misconducts.

The responsibilities of the service providers must be:

In assessing the level of implementation of equitable access to water services, it is possible to state that Portugal has a clear public policy for the sectors, which in general is one that is very satisfactory, with a good compliance to the spirit of human rights in terms of access to water services, as referred above. In addition, the country has been promoting several necessary measures, particularly legislative ones, to consolidate the human right to water and sanitation, namely the creation of mechanisms to ensure affordability and accessibility.

The new public policy instituted in 1993 for the water services was implemented in a global and integrated manner, with greater stability over time. It brought together institutional, governance, management, planning, technical, economic, legal and environmental, public health, social and ethical instruments to ensure the suitable provision of these services. In that new policy, regulation has played an important role.

As a consequence, a very positive evolution in the provision of these essential public services can be noted, particularly in terms of the evolution of the water services, and the impact on environmental quality and on public health and also the impact of compliance with human rights in access to water and sanitation.

### ***3. The IWA initiative regarding the Lisbon Charter***

It is increasingly recognized around the world the importance of an enabling environment for the performance of water services through the formulation of good public policy and the establishment of effective regulation.

The number of countries with a regulatory framework for water services is on the rise and so is the number of regulators.

The satisfactory delivery of water services depends on contributions from all stakeholders, playing their role effectively and efficiently.

Several international documents regarding good practices have been produced addressed at water services:

- The “Millennium Development Goals” (2000) and the anticipated “Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations”.
- The “IWA Bonn Charter for Safe Drinking Water” (2005).
- The “International Guidelines on Decentralisation and Access to Basic Services” for all approved by UN-HABITAT (2009).
- “Access to safe drinking water and sanitation recognition as human rights” in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution (2010).



- Human resources capacity building;
- Promotion of research and development;
- Development of the water sector related economy;
- Introduction of competition;
- Protection, awareness and involvement of users;
- Making information available.

The successful implementation of this new public policy for water services was, thus, dependent on the ability to manage the implementation of all these components at relatively the same time, ensuring an effective global and integrated approach.

## ***2. The results of the implementation of that public policy***

In 1993 only 81% of the dwellings in mainland Portugal were covered by the public water supply service. Currently, 95% of dwellings are covered by the service, which means that the coverage target envisaged in the strategic plan for the drinking water supply and waste water management has been attained. It can be noted that the public water supply service has significantly evolved and attained its global target.

As for the water quality, in 1993 only 50% of the dwellings in mainland Portugal were provided with safe water, in accordance with national and European legislation. These public services currently ensure a high quality level of drinking water, with nearly 99% complying with drinking water quality legislation, with the remaining non-compliant situations being subject to immediate corrective intervention. This was an extraordinary evolution and the very ambitious target envisaged in the strategic plan has practically been attained. This is a remarkable example of a successful strategy, with a very positive impact on public health, on the reduction of diseases and deaths and the reduction of days absent from work.

In 1993 only 61% of the dwellings in mainland Portugal were covered by public wastewater collection services and only 31% of the dwellings in mainland Portugal were covered by public wastewater services involving collection and adequate treatment. Currently 81% of dwellings are covered by wastewater collection and 78% of dwellings are covered by collection and adequate treatment. This means that there has been a major evolution but what is intended is to ensure that the collection of wastewater and also the suitable treatment before its discharge into the environment reaches 90%, so we are working to achieve this in the coming years.

