



PRIVATISATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES AND THE IMPACT ON QUALITY, EMPLOYMENT AND PRODUCTIVITY

## LIBERALISING SERVICES OF GENERAL ECONOMIC INTEREST: THE CITIZEN-USER PERSPECTIVE IN SIX EU COUNTRIES

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This paper is the fifth Policy Paper of the EU-funded research project PIQUE (Privatisation of Public Services and the Impact on Quality, Employment and Productivity). It summarises the main results of a citizen-users survey on postal services, electricity supply and local public transport carried out in six EU countries. The full-length report "Liberalisation in services of general economic interest - A bottom up citizens' perspective: Analysis of the PIQUE survey" is available to download at <http://www.pique.at>

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Marketisation and the 'choice' paradigm

For the past twenty years, the European Union, but also many national governments, have embraced the belief that the dynamics of competition - sometimes referred to as the 'disciplines of the marketplace' or 'marketisation' - will improve quality and efficiency in public services. Since the second half of the 1980s, a number of public service sectors have gradually been opened up to competition following a series of European Directives, which pushed for this kind of liberalisation. Of the sectors included in the survey, the electricity sector has been fully liberalised and for postal services the remaining barriers for new competitors will be lifted in 2011 (Poland 2013). In local public transport and the hospital sector the situation is more varied.





The European agenda for liberalisation has been accompanied with a strong trend towards privatisation at the national level (Hermann/Verhoest, 2008). The EU introduced even new terms such as 'services of general interest' or 'services of general economic interest', to replace the notion of 'public services'. Perhaps this move signifies more than just a change of names, since the change has been accompanied by a new set of policies towards public services. The European policy perspective on services of general economic interest (SGEI) can briefly be summarised with the following statement: 'We do it to fulfil citizens' demands with an open and competitive market as main instrument'. Hence it is about 'serving the public'. This line of policy is of course what is defined as one of the key elements of new public management, namely the promotion of consumer sovereignty and choice in the provision of public services.

## 1.2. Survey design

This European bottom-up policy perspective of 'the happy citizen-consumer by regulated market solutions' in relation to services of general economic interest formed the conceptual framework of a citizens' survey carried out in six countries (Austria, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Sweden and United Kingdom) on three public services (postal services, local public transport, electricity supply).<sup>1</sup>

The following main research questions were tackled in the survey:

- *Still serving the public?* The PIQUE survey investigated citizens' and users' satisfaction with the services and wanted to shed light on what kind of service improvements users wanted. In a first step a general questions about user satisfaction with price and quality were surveyed. In a second step this question about user satisfaction was deepened by analysing a) which quality dimensions are important in this general attitude of satisfaction, b) how these dimensions are rated negatively or positively, and c) how (possible) quality problems in this regard lead to complaint behaviour on the part of the citizens.
- *Public support for policies?* The second part of the survey had a different focus. Here the policy approach of marketisation and consumerism, as promoted by the EU (and others), was tested by exploring how citizens' perceive these changes. The recent Eurobarometer (and other international) surveys "do not teach us much about citizens' attitudes towards the baseline values of these services and are restricted to perceptions of performance and satisfaction". The second part of the survey thus attempted to close this gap by analysing citizens' attitudes towards liberalisation, privatisation and universal service obligations. In addition the data collected by the survey was analysed with regard to individual preferences. Based on previous work from Bouckaert et al. (2003), we make a distinction between 'performance' and 'identity' theories. While the first approach refers to the experience with actual performance, the latter stresses societal factors, ideological beliefs and political values.
- *Consumer choice?* In its 'marketisation' and 'liberalisation' approach to public services, the European Union assumes that citizens act as consumers. "Choice" is introduced partly as a response to the new attitudes adopted by modern citizen-consumers, partly as a means to force suppliers to improve service performance. In short, choice in public services is understood as consumer preference and not as public services enabling citizens to make choices about their lives. Consumer values at least partly replaced public values or social objectives as a policy paradigm. Results are presented about whether citizens want to choose between public services offered by competing providers or not.

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<sup>1</sup> The survey also included a limited set of questions on hospitals, which are not taken into consideration in this policy paper.



## 2. STILL SERVING THE PUBLIC?

As part of the horizontal evaluations of the EU policies on SGEI, citizen-consumer satisfaction opinions were collected in a series of Eurobarometer studies between 1997 and 2007. The first goal of the PIQUE survey was to deepen this Eurobarometer approach.

### 2.1. Satisfaction with prices and service quality

As a starting point, we mapped the general satisfaction on price and quality for each of the services.

**Table 1: Satisfaction with the PIQUE services: % fairly or very satisfied**

<b>Quality</b>	<b>AT</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>DE</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>Total</b>
Post	75%	74%	79%	66%	62%	82%	73%
Transport	59%	73%	48%	57%	59%	67%	60%
Electricity	91%	84%	88%	85%	86%	88%	87%
<b>Price</b>	<b>AT</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>DE</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>Total</b>
Post	62%	55%	58%	61%	57%	77%	62%
Transport	33%	61%	23%	34%	36%	54%	40%
Electricity	45%	51%	30%	20%	38%	72%	42%

Source: HIVA-K.U.Leuven, PIQUE survey data

As we see in the table, citizen assessments varied depending on the sector, the country and some of the background characteristics.

In general, the satisfaction with prices is always lower than the satisfaction with quality. We found large differences between the sectors, with overall the highest quality satisfaction in electricity supply and the highest price satisfaction in postal services.

#### Methodological note

A citizens' survey was organised by telephone in the winter of 2007-2008. Not only users of the particular service were questioned. The sample population included all private persons aged between 18 and 79 living in a private household in one of the included countries; with furthermore a land-line telephone number and the capability to express themselves in the language of the questionnaire. An additional pre-survey representativeness measure consisted of quota. These were assigned according to gender, age, education, and urban-rural area. As a result in each country at least 1,000 respondents were interviewed based on this random sampling.



**Table 2: Citizens' view on changes in price and quality over the last 5 years**

<b>How has the quality of mail delivery changed over the last 5 years</b>	<b>AT</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>DE</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>Total</b>
Became better	14%	25%	20%	45%	10%	10%	21%
Stayed the same	59%	53%	60%	44%	50%	54%	53%
Became worse	27%	22%	20%	11%	40%	35%	26%
<b>Did the price of sending a letter increase more than the price of other things over the last five years?</b>	<b>AT</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>DE</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>Total</b>
Yes	25%	40%	16%	31%	23%	40%	29%
No	75%	60%	84%	69%	77%	60%	71%
<b>How has the quality of local public transport changed over the last 5 years</b>	<b>AT</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>DE</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>Total</b>
Became better	35%	54%	23%	52%	22%	35%	37%
Stayed the same	45%	31%	43%	28%	49%	38%	39%
Became worse	19%	15%	34%	20%	30%	26%	24%
<b>Did the price of local public transport increase more than the price of other things over the last five years</b>	<b>AT</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>DE</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>Total</b>
Yes	51%	42%	64%	47%	39%	63%	52%
No	49%	58%	36%	53%	61%	37%	48%
<b>How has the quality of electricity changed over the last 5 years</b>	<b>AT</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>DE</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>Total</b>
Became better	14%	13%	9%	25%	16%	14%	15%
Stayed the same	83%	78%	83%	72%	80%	75%	78%
Became worse	3%	9%	8%	4%	4%	10%	6%
<b>Did the price of electricity increase more than the price of other things over the last five years</b>	<b>AT</b>	<b>BE</b>	<b>DE</b>	<b>PL</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>UK</b>	<b>Total</b>
Increased	39%	57%	68%	70%	74%	63%	62%
Didn't increase	61%	43%	32%	30%	26%	37%	38%

This price sensitivity is also manifested in the citizens' view on recent changes of quality and prices in the three sectors investigated.

All these general perceptions of satisfaction show significant differences between countries, but they also differ by sector and with regard to price and quality.



## 2.2. The impact of liberalisation and privatisation on user satisfaction

**Table 3: Satisfaction with the PIQUE services: comparison of the most and the least liberalised and privatised countries**

		Postal Services		Local Public Transport			Electricity			
			Quality	Price		Quality	Price		Quality	Price
<b>Liberalisation</b>	Most	SE	62%	57%	UK	67%	54%	PL	85%	20%
	Least	PL	66%	61%	BE	73%	61%	AT BE DE	88%	42%
	Sign.		n.s.	n.s.		n.s.	n.s.		n.s.	*
<b>Privatisation</b>	Most	DE	79%	58%	UK	67%	54%	UK	88%	72%
	Least	PL	66%	61%	AT BE	66%	47%	AT PL	88%	33%
	Sign.		*	n.s.		n.s.	n.s.		n.s.	*

Source: HIVA-K.U.Leuven, PIQUE survey data, n.s.= not significant

We have not found clear evidence of a preferable market situation. As Table 3 shows, only three differences between the most and the least liberalised and privatised countries turned out to be significant. Furthermore, each of them had Poland in the comparison, which is possibly an outlier due to the socio-economic catching-up process in the post-Communist period. The clearest effects were obtained in the price-component of the electricity market. Here, people in the countries with the highest degree of liberalisation are more dissatisfied with the price, whereby privatisations seem to have the opposite effect. However, in general we have to conclude that on the basis of our data, people can be equally satisfied or dissatisfied with liberalised or privatised public service markets.

## 2.3. Main quality components

To gain more in-depth insight about the issue of user satisfaction with the quality and price of public services, we examined which quality dimensions are important and which complaints were expressed in specific countries and/or by specific groups.

**Table 4: Important quality dimensions for improvement of SGEI's**

Postal Services	Local Public Transport	Electricity Supply
Delivery time (AT, BE, PL)	Timetable information (AT, BE, PL, PL, UK)	Quality of customer service (BE, GE, SE, UK)
Reliability (UK, BE)	Connection options (AT, BE, GE)	Reliability of supply (PL)
Service Post Offices (SE)	Punctuality (GE)	Harassment by competing suppliers (BE, UK).
	Passenger comfort (PL)	

Source: HIVA-K.U.Leuven, PIQUE survey data; see detail tables in annex.

This exercise allowed us to point to policy priorities for improving the service. We were able to select quality components and complaints that give a good fit to the general satisfaction with the quality of the services. By looking at the amount of improvement needed and the frequency of complaints on the one hand, and the relative importance of these issues on the other, we identified the quality aspects that are most important for the service providers to focus on if they want to improve the satisfaction of the service's users in the future (briefly summarised in



Table 4). In general, we could conclude that it is especially time and time-related reliability questions that are key quality priorities in postal services and local public transport, whereas in electricity the quality of customer service plays an important role.

Within these general perceptions of satisfaction we were able to identify the same set of background characteristics that influenced these differences in opinion. A clear division emerged in this regard: Well-educated, critical user tend to have more problems with the quality aspects ('the value dimension') while among people with lower income or lower socio-economic status possible dissatisfaction relates more to the price or cost of a service ('the money dimension').

### 3. LIBERALISATION, PRIVATISATION AND UNIVERSAL SERVICE OBLIGATIONS

Since the Nice Council of 2001, evaluating the reform of services of general interest has been high on the agenda of the European Commission. According to the Commission, such an evaluation should also focus on how these changes are perceived by users (EC, 2002: 4). Despite increasing EU attention to consumer aspects of services of general interest, alarmingly little research exists on citizens' attitudes towards reforms in these sectors. The PIQUE project contributes to addressing this gap by means of an analysis of citizen attitudes in six EU countries towards liberalisation, privatisation and universal service obligations.

#### 3.1. General attitudes

The attitudes towards competition and privatisation were surveyed in the same way for all sectors. In relation to liberalisation, people were asked for each sector if they think competition would have a positive effect on price (first question) and quality (second question). They could agree or disagree with the statement on a 5-point scale. Respondents were also asked to express their preference for a public service provided by a state enterprise, a private company or a combination of both. They were also asked about (dis)agreement with the imposition of universal service obligations.

The surveyed attitudes in this regard are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5: Attitudes on privatisation, liberalisation and universal service obligations of SGEIs**

Attitude	Postal services	Local public transport	Electricity supply
Support for total privatisation	All countries very low	All countries very low	All countries very low
Support for liberalisation	All countries medium	All countries medium	All countries medium
Support for universal service obligations	High (AT, GE, PL, SE) Very High (BE , UK)	All very high except Sweden (high)	All high except Belgium (very high),

Source: HIVA-K.U.Leuven, PIQUE survey data

*A 'moderate' yes for liberalisation:* In terms of the survey questions on attitudes towards liberalisation (competition), the general trend shows a small majority of respondents in favour of liberalisation in most countries. The support for liberalisation ranges between 40% and 60% (medium) in all countries.



**Table 6: Attitudes towards liberalisation**

Country	% Agree with 'competition positive effect on ...					
	Post Price	Post Quality	Public transport price	Public transport quality	Electricity Price	Electricity Quality
AT	61%	50%	60%	60%	55%	62%
BE	57%	54%	63%	61%	55%	56%
DE	70%	57%	64%	62%	58%	70%
PL	65%	54%	69%	66%	58%	68%
SW	53%	44%	64%	61%	54%	68%
UK	53%	41%	56%	54%	61%	57%

Source: HIVA-K.U.Leuven, PIQUE survey data

*Certainly not purely private:* Survey results indicate that citizens still want public components in the provision of public services. The huge majority of respondents opt for a 'mix of both' constellation, while only small minority favours purely private public services.

*Universal service obliged:* Universal service measures are in general supported by the big majority of surveyed citizens in the six countries.

**Table 7: Attitudes on universal service aspects**

	Postal Services		Local public transport		Electricity	
	Universality - frequency/ generality of delivery	Universality - Post office in the neighbourhood	Reduced price for the less well-off	Every village must be served	Partly reduced price for the less well-off	Same price regardless of remote location
AT	92%	54%	86%	84%	77%	79%
BE	98%	64%	86%	89%	84%	83%
DE	96%	61%	80%	84%	66%	86%
PL	94%	42%	81%	89%	69%	81%
SW	92%	49%	59%	69%	37%	90%
UK	93%	80%	79%	91%	58%	86%

Source: HIVA-K.U.Leuven, PIQUE survey data

Belgian and UK citizens responded most positively to the universality statements, had the highest reservations about the introduction of competition and were clearly anti-privatisation. As these countries can in many aspects be defined as the most and the least liberalised countries of the PIQUE sample, the hypothesis could be put forward that hopes are raised during the transition period but do not last. Such a proposition, however, clearly remains a hypothesis and would need to be confirmed by comparative research carried out over a longer time frame and/or including more countries.

Possible positive or negative effects of the macro-processes of 'liberalisation' and 'privatisation' are, in other words, not confirmed by the survey results on political attitudes. Clearer results could be obtained in the analysis relating to individual socio-economic position. The respondents' socio-economic status seems to have the most significant influence on the 'belief



in competition' attitude variables. For instance, for every sector the results clearly show that the higher the respondents' educational attainment or the more satisfied they are with their income, the more positive is their attitude towards competition. The 'higher' professional categories are also more inclined to believe in competition, except with respect to the postal sector. Furthermore, it is also clear that price satisfaction is a more important driver of the liberalisation attitude than quality satisfaction. Price dissatisfaction (in the more liberalised sectors/countries) leads to a lower support for liberalisation.

The socio-economic 'haves' clearly also believe more in privatisation than the 'have nots', although this attitude is less significant and shows greater sector-specific variations than the 'belief in competition'.

This leads us to what is perhaps the main conclusion of this attitudinal part of the PIQUE survey, namely that it is clearly not only the actual macro situation and/or satisfaction with performance (price and quality) of public service(s) in a country that solely influences the attitude of citizens towards liberalisation, privatisation and universal service obligations. The socio-economic position also strongly matters. In their proposals to regulate liberalisation and privatisation, European policy makers certainly also need to keep in mind the effects of socio-political values and socio-economic differences with regard to these evolutions.

#### 4. 'CHOICE' AS CONSUMER ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR

A third and final part of the survey dealt with the 'choice' paradigm. For all three public services surveyed, the question was included on whether citizens want or do not want choice. For the electricity supply sector, additional choice questions were asked: on whether the respondents do or do not have choice and what reasons they have for (not) having changed their electricity supplier.

**Table 8: Wanting choice between different providers, % yes**

Want choice	Austria	Belgium	Germany	Poland	Sweden	UK
Postal services	21%	37%	32%	88%	35%	37%
Local public transport	39%	32%	42%	92%	29%	61%
Electricity supplier	63%	73%	75%	93%	90%	77%

Source: HIVA-K.U.Leuven, PIQUE survey data

**Table 9: 'Choice' behaviour in electricity supply**

	Austria	Belgium	Germany	Sweden	UK
Not possible	32%	20%	19%	12%	10%
Possible, but not considering or not doing	61%	64%	65%	65%	43%
Possible, considering or doing	7%	16%	16%	24%	47%

Source: HIVA-K.U.Leuven, PIQUE survey data

The main results of this 'choice' question of the PIQUE survey can be summarised as follows: The choice paradigm is not a general attitude and, as illustrated by the electricity sector, it is currently not a majority practice used in the public services under consideration. The results of the Polish sample form an exception in this regard: In Poland, there is an overall demand for



having (market/provider) choice. Based on the different findings by sector and country, we hypothesise that more citizens are pushed to acknowledge choice by preceding reforms rather than consumers ‘pulling’, or demanding, ‘choice’-based reforms.

**Table 10: What was the main reason for having changed supplier (the last time)?**

	<b>Austria (n=25)</b>	<b>Belgium (n=63)</b>	<b>Germany (n=74)</b>	<b>Sweden (n=107)</b>	<b>UK (n=229)</b>
Lower prices	92%	75%	74%	85%	78%
Better service	0%	14%	5%	1%	8%
Possibility to buy green power	5%	9%	7%	1%	0%
Recently moved and had to change supplier	3%	1%	10%	12%	14%
Previous supplier stopped activity	0%	1%	4%	1%	0%

Source: HIVA-K.U.Leuven, PIQUE survey data

When a consumerist attitude or behaviour (in electricity) is detected, it can be related to the public choice theory. It is the more critical, well-educated consumer that want more choice. When switching electricity supplier, the promise of price reductions seems to be the main driver. For some countries, however, the results show higher percentages of transaction cost problems (Table 11), such as lack of information in Belgium and administrative burdens in Austria.

**Table 11: % of non-switchers mentioning at least one process barrier as reason\***

<b>Austria</b>	<b>Belgium</b>	<b>Germany</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>UK</b>
16%	26%	20%	11%	14%

\* Process barriers: unable to obtain information, unable to compare offers properly, changing is too much trouble, not aware of other suppliers

Source: HIVA-K.U.Leuven, PIQUE survey data

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The survey, the results of which this policy paper summarises, constituted a major phase of the PIQUE research project, which is aimed at assessing the impact of liberalisation and privatisation processes in public services in Europe. As part of this assessment, the survey looked into the impact of these European Union driven processes from a citizens’ perspective, investigating on the attitudes towards services of general economic interest and its perceived service quality.

### *From a satisfaction perspective*

From a satisfaction perspective, one can conclude that citizens are generally satisfied with the quality of services. However, the level of satisfaction can vary substantially by sector and country, leaving substantial room for improvement. Price, in this regard, seems to be the main driver of satisfaction and, at present, a major cause of dissatisfaction, especially in the electricity sector.



### *From a quality perspective*

When looking at the quality components of the public services studied, time and reliability issues emerge as key components of these network industries: Postal items need to be delivered on time, busses have to be punctual and, with the necessary connection possibilities, electricity power cuts have to be avoided.

### *From a political perspective*

The surveyed citizen groups show moderate support for the liberalisation policies. However, they firmly reject full privatisation and clearly expect the state to guarantee a range of universal service obligations in each of the sectors.

### *From a market perspective*

We can certainly state that if marketisation is the policy goal, there is still a great need to 'train' citizens and facilitate consumerism today. The modern 'citizen-consumer' who expects and demands 'choice' from these public services is still largely a policy fallacy, if we look at the general attitude patterns and the behaviour experience in the electricity sector so far.

### *From a social perspective*

Throughout the study clear social demarcations were detected between 'haves' (higher educated, bigger income and higher professional status) and 'have nots' (lower educated, lower income and lower professional status).

- The latter show higher rates of dissatisfaction.
- The former give more importance to the quality/value dimension of a service than to its price/money dimension.
- Policy support is mainly determined by social-political values and socio-economic position than by the individual performance assessment of the services. Politics is clearly losing support on this matter at the lower end of society.
- The critical consumer paradigm of 'choice' is socially and paradoxically 'biased': people which show the lowest satisfaction also show the least interest in choice behaviour and practice.

### *Leading to a final reflection ...*

Based on these general conclusions, we want to end this paper by making two final policy reflections.

*At the direct policy level of implementation:* IF one believes in the market solution and IF one subscribes peoples' right to choose, THEN one also needs state intervention taking real consumer attitudes and behaviour into account. In other words: competition policies will also need a demand-side pillar involving: a) the design of a consumer-choice architecture as part of market creation; and b) social policies as corrective instruments.

In this regard we could refer to what in some countries is already happening in the field of electricity supply. Consumers are beginning to delegate their electricity buying decisions to consumer cooperatives or similar organisations because they do not have sufficient motivation, capacity (being trained and informed as critical consumers) or opportunity (the purchasing power to get a better deal). European policy makers could learn a lot from exploring the dynamics of such initiatives in order to understand consumer behaviour and create a regulatory environment that empowers service user instead of service providers.

*At the more abstract level of policy theory,* we can also read the results as a cry for safeguarding the public nature of these services. The public nature of services of general interest then seems to be less a question of state involvement or state ownership but much



rather lies in these services' immanent character: They have to be publicly available and universally guaranteed without much private consumer decision making.

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## ANNEX: QUALITY COMPONENTS OF THE SERVICES

**Table a-1: Postal services: How much improvement is needed?**

	AT	BE	DE	PL	SE	UK	Mean
The time it takes before a letter is delivered	37%	33%	28%	49%	22%	34%	34%
The frequency of mail delivery	16%	11%	15%	18%	9%	18%	15%
The reliability of the delivery	21%	28%	20%	31%	21%	30%	25%
The distance to the nearest mailbox	25%	22%	27%	25%	12%	12%	21%
The ease to obtain stamps	30%	29%	42%	37%	27%	13%	30%
The customer service in the post office	23%	36%	30%	35%	43%	21%	31%
Country mean	25%	27%	27%	33%	22%	21%	26%

**Table a-2: Postal services: frequency and filing of complaints**

	AT	BE	DE	PL	SE	UK	Mean
Mail not received	13%	27%	14%	11%	15%	30%	18%
Damaged mail	13%	21%	13%	9%	17%	21%	16%
Mail delivered to the wrong address	35%	71%	32%	19%	51%	51%	43%
Posted mail arriving too late	19%	34%	15%	31%	18%	34%	25%
Long waiting times, queues in the post office	26%	52%	43%	51%	19%	46%	39%
Poor customer service in the post office	11%	20%	17%	19%	20%	15%	17%
Country mean	20%	37%	22%	23%	23%	33%	26%
Have you filed a complaint in reaction to this negative experience? (postal services)	8%	15%	8%	11%	21%	12%	13%

**Table a-3: Local public transport: How much improvement is needed?**

	AT	BE	DE	PL	SE	UK	Mean
The timetable (frequency and availability)	42%	46%	45%	48%	45%	41%	44%
Comfort when travelling	33%	35%	33%	48%	21%	35%	34%
Punctuality of service (respecting the timetable)	34%	43%	48%	44%	30%	39%	40%
Connection possibilities	45%	44%	49%	38%	43%	40%	43%
Treatment by the staff	29%	26%	34%	31%	22%	26%	28%
Decent behaviour of co-travellers	41%	51%	46%	53%	25%	45%	44%
Information on fares and schedules	42%	33%	51%	47%	29%	40%	40%
Country mean	38%	40%	44%	44%	31%	38%	39%



**Table a-4: Local public transport: frequency and filing of complaints**

	AT	BE	DE	PL	SE	UK	Mean
Regular delays (more than 10 minutes)	20%	34%	22%	26%	15%	32%	25%
Vehicle breakdown	22%	18%	28%	25%	13%	18%	21%
Harassment when travelling	6%	11%	13%	9%	2%	11%	9%
Overcrowded buses	54%	68%	47%	48%	34%	50%	50%
Journey cancelled without notice	9%	25%	17%	19%	10%	27%	18%
Country mean	22%	31%	25%	25%	15%	27%	24%
Have you filed a complaint in reaction to this negative experience? (local public transport)	5%	6%	10%	4%	17%	12%	9%

**Table a-5: Electricity supply: How much improvement is needed?**

	AT	BE	DE	PL	SE	UK	Mean
The way electricity is produced in environmental terms	61%	74%	70%	66%	65%	64%	67%
Reliability of the electricity supply	22%	31%	24%	36%	35%	29%	30%
The technical support (for example in case of power cuts)	31%	37%	35%	47%	36%	36%	37%
The clarity of the electricity bills	43%	45%	48%	38%	51%	30%	43%
The quality of the customer service	29%	40%	37%	25%	34%	37%	34%
Information to compare suppliers	49%	59%	54%	60%	60%	43%	54%
Country mean	39%	48%	45%	45%	47%	40%	44%

**Table a-6: Electricity supply: frequency and filing of complaints**

	AT	BE	DE	PL	SE	UK	Mean
Administrative problem or dispute	4%	13%	2%	5%	10%	12%	7%
Disproportional price increase	20%	18%	33%	17%	14%	27%	22%
Unacceptable power breakdown	6%	10%	5%	12%	6%	13%	9%
Harassment by other suppliers in convincing to change	13%	28%	15%	0%	20%	46%	20%
Financial difficulties to pay the bill	3%	5%	4%	13%	4%	8%	6%
Country mean	9%	15%	12%	9%	11%	21%	13%
Have you filed a complaint in reaction to this negative experience? (electricity supply)	5%	17%	8%	9%	20%	14%	12%

## PROJECT INFORMATION

The PIQUE project (“Privatisation of Public Services and the Impact on Quality, Employment and Productivity”) explores the impact of liberalisation and privatisation strategies in public services on employment, working conditions, labour relations, productivity and service quality. Focussing on the sectors of postal services, local public transport, electricity and healthcare/hospitals, the research covers six European countries: Austria, Belgium, Germany, Poland, Sweden and the UK.



The project is funded within the 6th Framework programme “Citizens and governance in a knowledge-based society” of the European Commission’s DG Research.



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The project website offers news and detailed information on the project as well as a newsletter and project reports and publications to download.