

CASE LAW MOSAIC

QUARTERLY INFORMATION BULLETIN OF THE DEPUTY COMMISSIONER FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF NATIONAL MINORITIES IN HUNGARY, 2021/4

Complaint about accumulated water supply charge arrears in a rented flat that has become unsafe

A tenant of Roma nationality of a **municipality flat in a critical structural condition, classified as unsafe to life**, contacted the Minority Ombudsman in connection with a **water bill**. According to the complainant, the extremely high debt was caused by an increase in the water bill due to a burst main pressure pipe.

On the basis of the petition, the Minority Ombudsman sent a request for information to the local municipality of the place of residence, the water supply company and the head of the local family support centre.

Following the request, the water company informed the Minority Ombudsman that they were not aware of any failure in the main pipe supplying water to the property concerned, nor had they been aware of any such failure for years. The water company informed the Minority Ombudsman that if the complainant can credibly prove the burst pipe and provide invoices for the repair work carried out, the water company will credit the amount of the sewerage charge above the average consumption.

In the reply, the head of the family support centre described in detail the forms of support that the municipal government had provided to the complainant's family and the social services that the centre had provided in recent years. The head of the centre stressed that they would continue to do their utmost to help the family within the limits of the resources at their disposal.

The mayor replied that the problems with the condition of the property were known to the municipality and that therefore they intended to resolve the complainant's housing difficulties by finding another property. With this in mind, they consulted the complainant a few days before writing the letter of reply, and the complainant accepted the offer of a replacement.

The Minority Ombudsman considered it important that the mayor had taken urgent action in the complainant's interests. In addition, in her final letter, she asked the mayor to continue to monitor the family's social and housing situation and to continue to provide assistance to them within the limits of local possibilities, with particular attention to the settlement of the large outstanding water bill.