

The background of the entire page is a blue puzzle. The puzzle pieces are interlocking and have a subtle, embossed pattern of the letters 'S', 'A', 'T', 'I', 'S', 'F', 'A', 'C', 'T', 'I', 'O', 'N' and 'F', 'E', 'E', 'D', 'B', 'A', 'C', 'K' scattered across them. In the upper right quadrant, one puzzle piece is missing, leaving a gap. This gap is filled with a single, bright orange puzzle piece, which stands out prominently against the blue background.

GDF SUEZ

BY PEOPLE FOR PEOPLE

**MEDIATOR'S  
REPORT 2012**

# The Mediator's letter

To Gérard Mestrallet, Chairman & Chief Executive Officer  
To Jean-François Cirelli, Vice-Chairman and Deputy Chief Executive Officer  
Paris, 1st February 2013

Mr Chairman, Mr Vice-Chairman,

You have entrusted me with the task of developing mediation in the GDF SUEZ Group. I am pleased to submit my 2012 annual report, which presents our actions and achievements.

Numerous questions are being raised in several countries about trends in energy tariffs, the complexity of invoices, government intervention and increasing precariousness. Consequently the energy sector, often criticised at European level, is a major source of consumer dissatisfaction, as the latest «consumer scoreboard» shows.

In France, the situation is full of contrasts. On the one hand, we see for GDF SUEZ a very significant improvement in the handling of customer enquiries and claims, resulting in a big drop in the number of complaints and accordingly a decrease in recourse to mediation. On the other hand, disputes are more complex and customers are making ever more demands to quickly understand their billing and ways of making energy savings.

This year again, the GDF SUEZ Mediation team has been very active on these themes, both in the Group and in conjunction with most of the interested stakeholders.



## Mediation at the heart of many debates

There has been intense thinking and work at European level in 2012, in particular with debates revolving around the draft ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) directive. In France, there is an increasing number of mediation systems. The CMC (Consumer Mediation Commission) plays an increasingly important role. It defined its Charter

in 2011, and listed the first mediation systems, including that of GDF SUEZ. The CMC Charter confirms its role as a benchmark, like that of the «Club des Médiateurs de Services au Public», both greatly inspired by the 2008 mediation directive.

The most significant highlights of 2012 are as follows :

### In Europe :

- the work of the European Commission (DG Energy and DG SANCO) and the CEER (Council of European Energy Regulators),
- the 5th CEF (Citizens Energy Forum), a veritable crossroads of energy actors and consumers,
- the publication of BEUC's 2020 consumer vision on the occasion of its 50th anniversary,
- the studies of the EEOG (European Energy Ombudsmen Group) to improve the quality of mediation systems,

- the increasingly important role of GDF SUEZ's International Observatory of Fuel and Water poverty,
- the numerous meetings and contributions in preparation for the new ADR directive,
- the publication of the «consumer agenda» and the 8th «consumer scoreboard»,
- the initiative of the FCS (Fondazione Consumo Sostenibile), promoting a new vision of consumerism,
- the work done on «vulnerable consumers».

European work confirms the growing willingness to better protect the consumer, formulate policy and action plans, more particularly in the energy sector.

#### In France :

- the first listings notified by the CMC (Consumer Mediation Commission),
- the work of the “Club des Médiateurs de Services au Public”, and the success of its web site,
- the results of the CNC's Energy working group,
- the activities of the National Energy Ombudsman,
- the creation of mediation systems in new sectors,
- the symposium of the ANM (French National Association of Mediators) on 16 November : «La médiation : une volonté politique?».

This ANM symposium was a landmark event that through speeches of high quality demonstrated a «political will» and the real benefits of making out-of-court dispute resolution a priority.

## Less correspondence

Less correspondence was received by the Mediation team in 2012 (5 077 letters and e-mails, against 7 403 in 2011). We observed two contradictory factors :

- a significant decline in complaints lodged with GDF SUEZ's largest customer services in France, confirmed by the DGCCRF complaints indicator,
- an increase in cases relating to precariousness.

Cases referred to mediation have fallen from 78 in 2011 to 58 in 2012, still a very low figure in this context, and this testifies to the complementarity of the various forms of resolution available to customers.

Our analysis of requests received by the Mediation team confirms the trend towards improvement observed in 2010 and 2011. This has been further improved by initiatives taken in France :

- by CH&P (Clients H@bitat et Professionnels ; Residential and Business Customers). It is worth noting more specifically the «Esprit Services» and «Cap EcoConso» systems, well suited to today's expectations ;
- by Distributor GrDF, with «Distributor reception», also living up to high expectations.

Billing-related problems however are still the greatest in number. Furthermore, problems paying bills have increased dramatically. They may be one-off or recurrent. Far-reaching measures taken by GDF SUEZ mitigate the consequences for vulnerable consumers. Through its “Observatoire des Précarités Energétique et Hydrique” (observatory of Fuel and Water Poverty), GDF SUEZ is very involved in analysing fuel poverty and in encouraging and developing initiatives in this field.

Moreover, closer relations with consumer organisations are increasingly bearing fruit. This move has been extended to new Group department in 2012.

As far as mediation cases are concerned, 2012 has marked a significant development : thanks to improvements in the complaints handling, unresolved cases and cases referred to mediation are fewer in number and less complex.

The «customer experience» handled by customer services could in certain cases have been swifter and more personal. The complexity of these remaining cases generates persisting dissatisfaction among these customers, making the outcome of mediation more uncertain, above all when the Mediation team's investigation is slower than expected.

The first part of the sociological study conducted with the help of the Research and Innovation department has confirmed this. The second part, scheduled for 2013, should provide more detailed findings.

The quality system initiated in 2011 is now operative for the most sensitive aspects of requests. It has improved consumer follow-up in many cases. It now needs to be extended across the board.

The third annual satisfaction survey was conducted at the end of 2012. It confirmed the previous points : customer confidence (83%) and satisfaction (75%) rates are still high but the success rate has fallen to 80%, owing to the growing complexity of cases.

In 2011, the Mediation team embarked on documenting good practice observed in the GDF SUEZ Group, or in other complaint and dispute handling systems.

This document has been very useful in promoting out-of-court resolution on many occasions (in particular with GDF SUEZ Romania, Agbar and Electrabel), and in underscoring possible ways forward.

## Mediation, a political will

The 2011 annual report of the Mediation was hailed by many for the quality of the information it provided. So the 2012 report synthesises the Mediation team's background, activities, analyses, recommendations and results.

### Amicable dispute resolution is increasingly preferred to litigation

In 2012, the Mediation team improved the quality of existing cooperation schemes and intervened with new department, both within and outside the Group.

The investment made with the «shared good practice» file has been very useful for easy analysis of issues and for making recommendations on how to improve existing systems by adapting them to local characteristics.

Finally, 2012 was marked by a growing consensus on making out-of-court resolution a priority, at the heart of a real political will, as debated during the ANM (French National Association of Mediators) symposium at the Palais Bourbon.

However, many stakeholders have yet to be convinced.

These analyses directly concern many activities of the GDF SUEZ Group, a benchmark company among energy providers, whose ambition is to «by People for people».

Thank you, Mr Chairman & Chief Executive Officer and Mr Vice-Chairman and Deputy Chief Executive Officer, for pursuing GDF SUEZ's policy, which has helped develop the Mediation team in the Group, taking it to a very high level of quality. Respectfully yours.

**Michel Astruc**

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The photovoltaic farm at Porette de Néron in Haute Corse

## 1 | Mediation : GDF SUEZ's perspective

### Missions and values

GDF SUEZ's mediation service was set up 13 years ago, in consultation with consumer organisations that were co-signatories of the founding document. It is the last form of amicable resolution, and handles disputes in complete independence with any person or organisation affected by Group activities, whether or not they are customers. It supplements the complaints handling systems of each Group department and thus offers the complainant a last form of amicable resolution, within GDF SUEZ, when the answer to the complaint is deemed unsatisfactory.

### Duties

The main duties of the GDF SUEZ Mediation are to analyse requests received and to handle disputes out of court. Furthermore, it has the task of proposing Group mediation policy,

sharing best complaint and dispute resolution practices and providing operational support to divisions, department and subsidiaries by adapting Group policy. Lastly, it suggests improvements to customer relationship/complaints handling systems and contributes to the quality of Group relations with consumer organisations.

### Values

- **Listening** : responses are **balanced, accessible** and **personalised**. Each complaint is a special case.
- **Scrupulous respect** for individuals : **with an open mind, without being judgemental**.
- willingness to find **amicable solutions** : the Mediation draws on the involvement of all parties to reach a solution.
- **Fairness** : a **rule** or **practice**, even when **correctly applied**, may be seen as **intolerable** or even **unfair** in certain cases.
- **Impartiality** : The Mediator is neutral and never takes sides.

- A hearing **for all parties** : **each party** can **put forward its point of view**.
- **Confidentiality** : the **details** of the case and the **facts** are **anonymous**.
- **Transparency** : the **Mediator's annual report** is put at the **disposal of all everyone**.

### The Charter of the GDF SUEZ Mediation

The GDF SUEZ Mediation team has drafted its own Charter, further to the recommendations of the Consumer Mediation Commission when GDF SUEZ Mediation was listed in March 2012. It forms the reference ethical foundation for GDF SUEZ Mediation practices. It can be downloaded from : <http://www.gdfsuez.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Charter-de-la-M%C3%A9diation-GDF-SUEZ-21092012.pdf>.



## The process

The Mediator, as the last form of amicable resolution, studies all requests referred to it if the complainant has exhausted all internal forms of resolution.

Referral to the Mediator is open, simple, quick and free.

**Open** : the customer can appeal to the Mediation team quite openly. He explains his dissatisfaction in writing, after first receiving an answer from the department concerned. He can seek the assistance of a third party (consumer organisations, representatives of the "Défenseur des Droits" (the French Ombudsman), etc.).

### Simple :

- by letter sent to : GDF SUEZ Mediator - TSA 34321 - 92099 La Défense Cedex.

- by e-mail : the complainant fills in the form available on the web site at : <http://www.gdfsuez.com/en/mediator-contact/>.

**Quick** : On receipt of the request, the Mediator sends a letter within two working days confirming the case is being handled and explaining how the matter will be treated.

**Free of charge** : The handling cost is met solely by the Mediation service. The complainant only bears the cost of sending the case file.

The «Mediator» page at <http://www.gdfsuez.com/en/mediator/> features all the relevant information and the latest news about the GDF SUEZ Mediation team in particular and mediation in general.

## The team

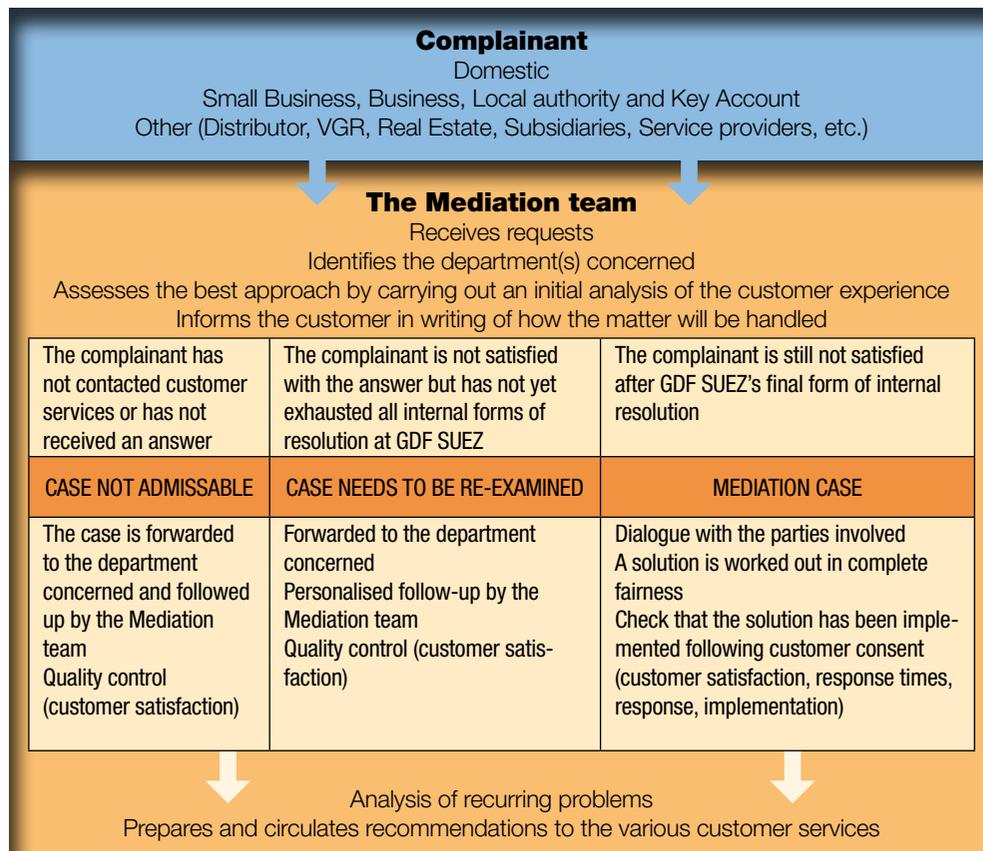
Michel Astruc, the Mediator, has gained considerable experience in energy and in relations with stakeholders. All this experience, supplemented by seven years' work in mediation, has helped him devise specific solutions with the various parties in all fairness. He also attends training courses dedicated to mediation <http://www.gdfsuez.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/cvmediateur.pdf>. His team includes experienced permanent staff and occasional extra staff.

## The annual report

The Mediator's annual report is freely available :

in the French version : <https://www.gdfsuez.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/rapportdu-mediateur2012.pdf>

and the English version : <https://www.gdfsuez.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/mediator-report2012.pdf>.



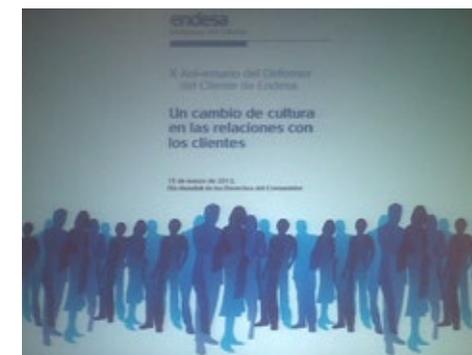
# 2 | The context of mediation

## Europe : mediation on the march

### EEOG

The European Energy Ombudsman Group (EEOG) : actively involved in all energy-related mediation issues.  
<http://www.energyombudsmen.com>

EEOG, an organisation formed in 2009 on the initiative of the Mediators of GDF SUEZ and Endesa, sets out to promote exchanges of information between the Mediation services of companies or sectors set up by various companies in the energy sector in Europe. In 2012, Endesa celebrated its 10th anniversary of Mediation, on the following theme : «a culture shift in customer relations».



## The ZUC project : customer satisfaction central to EEOG's thinking

EEOG works on the «Zero Unsatisfied Customer» project, which sets out to devise mediation processes that best guarantee customer satisfaction in the handling of their disputes and thereby restore confidence between consumers and the company.

This involves analysing and resolving the main causes of consumer discontent in the energy sector. This develops customer satisfaction and underscores the important role company or sector-based mediators and Ombudsmen play in dispute resolution in making recommendations for improvement.

An EEOG working meeting



### The draft ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) Directive and ODR (On-line Dispute Resolution) regulation is being followed with interest by EEOG

The aim of this very ambitious text is to give all consumers access to a mediation system in their country, throughout Europe and in all sectors of activity. In view of the wide range of situations in Member States and with a view to improving consumer information, the European Commission has asserted the importance of devising new systems and of relying on existing systems the quality of which is established through compliance with a set of criteria. The ODR regulation, in line with the ADR project, provides for the setting up of an online platform. This will facilitate the handling of consumer disputes about cross-border purchases on the Internet by providing better information, by offering web users the option of filing their complaints online, and lastly by granting them access to the most appropriate notified mediation system. EEOG, which is very committed to promoting mediation systems as long as they have the

characteristics described in the 2008 mediation directive, has proposed that the draft ADR directive be improved by incorporating relevant quality criteria based on its analysis of known mediation systems of EEOG members. The excellent cooperation of the European Affairs Service is worth mentioning.

### Le Citizen's Energy Forum (CEF)

The CEF, which was set up in 2008, contributes towards strengthening consumer protection across Europe. The CEF, the London Forum, is a meeting point of energy and consumption at European level. It relies on the combined work of consumer organisations, professionals, regulators, European Commission representatives and mediators. The CEF held its 5th meeting in London on 13 and 14 November 2012. GDF SUEZ's Mediator, in his capacity as EEOG spokesman for this Forum, attended it. This year, the main topics covered were : well-functioning markets, transparent tariffs and competition between players, vulnerable consumers, smart meters and energy efficiency.

### The "Fondazione Consumo Sostenibile" (FCS)

Paolo Landi set up this Foundation, which is based on an original concept of the role of consumers, developing the concept of the «responsible consumer». It prefigures a futuristic vision of consumerism.



## The Europe 2020 strategy : the consumer at the heart of European concerns

### The 2013-2020 consumer agenda : the will to boost the confidence European consumers

This European consumer agenda aims through its initiatives at strengthening consumer confidence in cross-border shopping and thereby significantly boost economic growth in Europe. It sets out the high-profile measures needed to give consumers means of action and boost their confidence.

The four key objectives for 2020 are the improved safety of products and services, better information for consumers to help them understand their rights, the implementation of legislation, and aligning rights and key policies with economic and social changes.

In the energy sector, the Commission is thus considering taking measures aimed at improving competition, and more particularly transparent electricity and gas prices so that consumers can better grasp Suppliers' offers.

### The «2014-2020 consumer program» project : the will to establish a reassuring environment for the consumer

This new programme will serve the overall objective of the future consumer policy, which is to empower consumers and place them at the centre of the Single Market. European consumer policy supports and supplements national policies to give European Union (EU) citizens the full benefit of the single market, while protecting their safety and their economic interests.

This project, which has the same objectives as the «consumer agenda», should be voted in 2013 and implemented in 2014. The debates are already underway.

### The BEUC's vision of the 2020 strategy

On the occasion of its 50th anniversary, the BEUC (Bureau Européen des Unions de Consommateurs, the European Consumer Organisation) imparted its vision of EU 2020 strategy in favour of consumers.

The strategy is based on the experience of its 42 member organisations in 31 European countries. Through their daily contacts with consumers in Europe, they have identified the challenges facing consumers and those that EU decision-makers should take up.



### Collective redress : The European Commission initiates a public consultation

The European Commission has initiated a consultation on collective redress. The aim is to record the opinions of stakeholders to define an approach to class actions in the European Union.

These should enable persons suffering from the same loss to bring legal proceedings collectively with a view to obtaining compensation. The EEOG is mindful of the complementarity between mediation and class action.

## In France : new steps

Interest in amicable settlement of disputes continues to grow in France. Several industry segments are studying the setting up of mediation systems. The involvement of the CMC (Consumer Mediation Commission), the "Club des Médiateurs de Services au Public", consumer organisations, governments, the ANM (National Association of Mediators) and the MEDEF among others has contributed to this growing trend. At the end of 2012, the French government announced the creation of the Mediator for government procurement contracts.

There is now an ever growing consensus among the various legal professions regarding mediation. Pierre-Grégoire Marly is a qualified teacher of private law from the University of Maine, dean of the Faculty of law, economy and management and Director of the Master II Insurance-Banking course.

### Professor Marly explains this trend to us :

#### Why do most people instinctively think «trial» rather than «mediation»?

Because they tend to be excessively optimistic about the outcome of the trial. What is more, even if they anticipate an unfavourable ruling, certain parties are intent on cashing in on trials, for media purposes for instance. More generally, trials have a reassuring image in the collective spirit, the guarantee of rigorous and objective justice.

#### But what are the advantages of mediation over a trial?

Mediation enables the various parties to a dispute to resume the dialogue. It is a justice of compromise rather than one of conflict. While simplicity, swiftness and fairness are the key

benefits of mediation compared with a trial, it is nonetheless a controlled and safe method of settling conflicts.

**What is the current thinking of law professionals on the subject?**

It is clear that law professionals are increasingly showing interest in mediation and promote it as an alternative to legal proceedings. The fact remains that the applicable rules have yet to be laid down.

**In your opinion, how can mediation be further promoted?**

I believe it is important, firstly, to make a distinction precisely between mediation and other alternative dispute resolution avenues such as conciliation. In addition one should emphasize the benefits of mediation, not as opposed to trials but rather in its own right. Lastly, I am personally campaigning for mediation to be taught more on law courses, and why not also in other educational courses such as corporate management.

**The «Conseil National de la Consommation» (National Consumer Council)**

On 23 November 2010, the «Conseil National de la Consommation» commissioned the «electricity and natural gas supply : preparing the future» working group to work on the various issues currently in the news in this sector. This working group formulated twelve recommendations in its opinion of 12 June 2012, on the following themes : information for consumers on the energy market, customer service and the complaints handling and disputes, the

formation of energy prices, support measures for persons in difficulty and against fuel poverty, new services for controlling energy demand and smart meters, the quality control of installations, in particular for contractors recommended by energy providers and the arrangements for implementing recommendations, the Supplier's charter of commitments. The successive stages of the complaints handling process it describes are : customer services, the complaints service, company mediation if it exists, and the National Mediator.

**The Consumer Mediation Commission**

**Interview with the Chair Elyane ZARINE**



**Could you tell us about the Consumer Mediation Commission (http://www.mediation-conso.fr) ?**

This Commission was established by the law of 1st July 2010. It presented its charter of good practice at a symposium on 27 September 2011. Its remit is to uphold the essential criteria for due performance of mediation in the consumer sector and develop this process in sectors that are not covered. It does not have a remit to handle disputes. It actively works to secure new listings and widely promote independent, impartial, accessible and effective mediation, with quick response times and free of charge for consumers. Three working groups have been set up : training, class actions, and the promotion and development of mediation (a standing working group in which the GDF SUEZ Mediator participates).

**More specifically, could you tell us about the listing process for the GDF SUEZ Mediation team?**

On 14 March 2012, I announced that the Commission had listed, with respect to its Charter of Good Practice (http://www.mediation-conso.fr/doc/French\_Charter\_of\_consumer\_mediation.pdf), and after hearing the Mediators, ten or so mediation systems. In order to list a mediation system, the Commission's members assess its compliance with the said charter on the basis of an assessment grid. This ensures that consumers benefit from quality Mediators.

The GDF SUEZ Mediation team was one of the first such systems to be listed, in March 2012. It was asked to make some improvements to it and given one year to bring it into compliance. To that end, the Mediator and his team drew up the GDF SUEZ Mediation Charter in September 2012.



**The «Club des Médiateurs de Services au Public»**

The «Club des Médiateurs de Services au Public», founded in 2002, continues to grow. It has welcomed new members over the years. It is now the only organisation in France that aggregates mediators in areas as varied as businesses, professional sectors, government departments and public authorities. It participates actively in the corresponding work, in France and in Europe (léna Forum in 2006, the CNC's work on mediation on 2007, the mediation directive in 2008, the «Assises de la Consommation» in 2009, the Consumer Mediation Commission in 2010, the draft ADR directive in 2012).

The Club's mission is to help develop quality mediation. Its Charter stipulates that, in addition to having expertise in areas relating to the disputes submitted to it, its members must also have completed specific training, or have

extensive practical experience, in mediation. They also undertake to refresh their theoretical knowledge and improve their practical skills through continuing education.

In 2009 it finalised a scheme for the professionalization of mediators and their teams. The training course entitled «The Fundamentals of Mediation», designed in partnership with the «Institut de formation des Ministères Economiques et Financiers» (Institute for the training of Economy and Finance Ministries), confirms general knowledge on mediation : the mediator's stance, the methodology of the mediation process, among other things. The course draws extensively on an analysis of real-world cases. Special emphasis is placed on communication, both oral and written.

Further training on the legal framework of mediation is regularly organised, to complement and update mediators' knowledge of arrangements applying to out-of-court dispute resolution methods.

The Club's web site, set up in April 2011, is a great success and is increasingly consulted. It is one of the most comprehensive sources of information on mediation in France. Its editorial board, headed by GDF SUEZ's Mediator, includes several of the Club's members.



Web site of the «Club des Médiateurs de Services au Public» <http://www.clubdesmediateurs.fr/> (10 000 visitors per month on average)

## The ANM's Autumn meetings

On 16 November 2012, the ANM (National Association of Mediators) organised the Autumn meetings on mediation (RVA), as it does every year. The theme this time was : «la médiation : une volonté politique?».

Excerpt from the talk by Emmanuel Constans, Mediator of the Economy and Finance Ministries, and Chairman of the "Club des Médiateurs de Services au Public" :

«...Mediation is useful to the citizen and to society. Because it addresses the deep-seated current need for a sympathetic ear, dialogue, respect and humanity in a greatly dehumanised world prone to violence... Its values are good faith, trust and pacification, not forgetting swift handling and the outcomes of mediation processes. Mediation is also useful because it is based not just on law but also on fairness... Successful mediation processes require both parties to be proactive and responsible...». This RVA underscored an increasingly broad consensus on making a priority of out-of-court dispute resolution, in all areas, compared with the conventional approach of litigation and legal proceedings.

A meeting with consumer organizations

## The MEDEF (the French Employers' union)

The MEDEF, through its Consumer Commission, is actively involved in all topical consumer spending issues. It pursues its campaign to promote mediation and provide support in new sectors.

## Consumer organisations

They naturally play a fundamental role in discussions and actions for improving consumer protection. Just like several other GDF SUEZ department, GDF SUEZ's Mediator maintains close relations with them. They hold many regular and fruitful discussions to share their observations and views on improving dispute handling processes. Three times a year, the Mediator organises plenary meetings to discuss current issues and topics that consumer organisations wish to address. In 2012, the most important ones they raised were the handling of verbal complaints and the complexity of certain customer experience have to go through.

## The energy sector

The upward trend in the costs of energy and taxes continues. Against a backdrop of economic difficulties for many citizens, paying bills is an increasingly delicate question.

In France for instance, energy savings and fuel poverty are issues that often emerge, either directly or indirectly, from an analysis of requests received by the Mediation. That is why it monitors these questions very closely. The debate about the bill planning to introduce progressive pricing shows how difficult it is to devise simple incentive schemes.

In parallel, operators in the energy sector have noted a falloff in complaints, in particular for GDF SUEZ. This trend is borne out by the complaints barometer of the DGCCRF (General Directorate for Competition Policy, Consumer Affairs and Fraud Control) and by consumer organisations. The Mediation team applauds the numerous initiatives taken by customer services and Distributors to improve customer and complaints handling processes.

GDF SUEZ's mediator meets the National Energy Ombudsman at regular intervals to exchange views on energy issues and on mediation.

## In the GDF SUEZ Group

Using the experience gained these last few years in GDF SUEZ Group department and in contact with other companies, in 2012 the GDF SUEZ Mediation drew up a compendium of «good practice» relating to complaints and disputes handling.

This collection allows department who so wish to advance in putting Group policy into practice based on two strong principles :

- aim for excellence in customer services,
- if need be, implement mediation policy in preference to the conventional litigation approach.

The themes that emerge most are :

- information for consumers on the various means of request at their disposal, through the appropriate media (general terms of sale, web sites, letters, verbal complaints),
- due observance of request procedures,
- skills development,
- quality controls,
- action plans to improve procedures,
- a comparative analysis of court proceedings and out-of-court resolution methods (quality and costs).

Beyond the general themes, the analysis shows that situations vary greatly according to the specifics of business lines, countries and management priorities.

This is the case for the different GDF SUEZ department with which the Mediation team is in regular contact.



## Department in the energy sector

### CH&P (Clients H@bitat et Professionnels ; Marketing and Sales B to C)

The improvements observed in 2010 developed in 2011 and 2012, with the «Esprit Services» approach and more recently «Cap Eco-Conso», which addresses a strong demand from many consumers wishing to play an active part in energy efficiency.

A direct consequence of these improvements has been the ongoing sharp drop in the number of complaints recorded by CH&P for matters that concern them directly. Another consequence is the decrease in the number of cases referred to the Mediation team. CH&P and the Mediation team have had many meetings to examine in detail how complaints handling links up with out-of-court dispute resolution, the corresponding themes, and the quality control of satisfaction of the customers concerned.

### E&C (Entreprises et Collectivités : business and public authorities)

The Entreprises et Collectivités entity handles «B2B» electricity and gas customers in France,

and generates few referrals to the Mediation team.

The latter has duly noted the introduction of a new organisation for complaints handling, which should make this more efficient. Through regular dialogue, areas for improvement have been identified.

### Cofely



This entity is increasingly involved with end users of solutions put in place with professional customers (apartment blocks, education, health, local authorities, etc.). Cofely has embarked on a process of consultations with consumer organisations. A «guide to communal heating» has already been drawn up with one of them. This partnership will be complemented by Cofely Services's participation in regional and national round tables, more particularly on fuel poverty and on raising awareness about saving energy.

## GrDF

GrDF is the natural gas Distributor covering most of the territory served with gas.

The ongoing deployment of the «Distributor reception» project is a major advance in relations between the Distributor and its customers. It meets strong demand from consumer organisations.

While strictly respecting its independence, the Mediation team is in frequent contact with GrDF regarding questions of meter reading error handling and reassessment procedures in the event of faulty meters.

## Electrabel

Electrabel for its part has supplemented its complaints handling system with a procedure for seeking out-of-court resolution of residual disputes. Discussions with the GDF SUEZ Mediation team are fruitful in comparing methods and outcomes.

**GDF SUEZ** has, in **Romania, Hungary and Italy**, the activities of an energy provider for numerous customers.

Through a number of meetings between the Mediation team and the teams of these department, their procedures have been analysed in more depth and areas for improvement worked out.



A customer information desk in Romania



A Savelys technician

## Suez Environnement

With **Suez Environnement**, the similarity of water metering and billing with energy has generated new contacts with several of its department and subsidiaries, in order to share expertise.

## Lyonnais des Eaux



Lyonnais des Eaux has a well-tryed system for complaints handling, and calls on the Water Mediator for unresolved disputes. Through dialogue with the GDF SUEZ Mediation team, they have been able to compare «good practice».

## Lydec

Lydec, a company listed on the stock exchange in Casablanca, serves over 3 million inhabitants. It is now the largest private operator offering water, sewerage and electricity services on the African continent.

Lydec created its mediation system in 2007, and has started thinking about how to improve this organisation. The GDF SUEZ Mediation exchanges views with this company in that respect to share its experience.



## Aguas de Barcelona

Spanish company Agbar, specialised in the water sector and a subsidiary of Suez Environnement, has also wished to set up a mediation system, through the political will of its Senior Management.

Several working meetings have taken place in Barcelona and Paris. The GDF SUEZ Mediation team has contributed its experience and Agbar's Mediator has defined a system adapted to the context of its company, in conjunction with customer services.



## SEAAL

SEAAL is a 100% Algerian public company in charge of the Water and Sewerage service throughout the Wilaya of Algiers (3.2 million inhabitants). SUEZ Environnement has a management contract there.

After significantly improving the results of drinking water distribution («H24» of 8% in 2006 to 100% today, drinking water at 100% since May 2008), it has embarked on a study of increased customer satisfaction.

In 2012, the GDF SUEZ Mediator met the various teams concerned (call centre, complaints handling, etc.). SEAAL drew up an action plan. In 2013, the GDF SUEZ Mediator will be associated with the related work.



## Relations with other structures

Other Group structures are also part of the network of counterparts of the GDF SUEZ Mediation : the European Affairs Service, Property, Ethics, Social Responsibility, Audit, Communication, Strategy, Sustainable Development, Solidarity and Purchasing. The growing cooperation between the inter-company Mediator and his regional counterparts is worth mentioning.

## Vulnerable consumers

Fuel poverty is an increasingly important issue. This concerns a growing number of citizens and therefore consumers of energy.

More particularly in France and Belgium, GDF SUEZ undertakes, in conjunction with the public authorities and the various organisations concerned, to fight fuel poverty in order to implement solutions as effectively as possible for customers who need them.

The GDF SUEZ Mediation team attended the 3rd Annual Symposium of GDF SUEZ's Observatory International Fuel and Water Poverty, which took place in Brussels on 28 November 2012. On that occasion, Director, General Manager of Electrabel, Sophie Dutordoir announced the launch of a series of initiatives to combat fuel poverty in Belgium, as well as a Belgian observatory of fuel poverty.



Sophie Dutordoir,  
Director, General Manager of Electrabel

# 3 | Requests received by the Mediation team

## 5 077 requests received by the Mediator

The number of requests is still low compared with complaints received by the GDF SUEZ's various customer services.

Requests are down on 2011. Because customers are very demanding and expect a quick answer, this results in follow-up notices after one or more requests. However, their volume has significantly decreased in 2012.

The preferred request method for complainants is still the letter, even though an increase in the e-mail method has been observed.

After analysing cases, the Mediation team handles requests according to three situations :

- there has been no previous contact with customer services or the latter has not responded,
- unsatisfactory response from customer services and internal forms of resolution unused,
- last internal form of resolution used but dissatisfaction persists.

All requests are analysed, processed and followed up to conclusion.

With nearly ten million customers in France, GDF SUEZ's residential customers are the major source of requests. These are mostly made directly or less often through consumer organisations, the Defender of Rights and its regional delegates, legal arbitrators, legal protection and

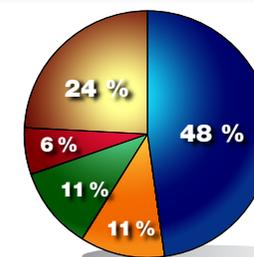
the media. In proportion, professionals, companies and sometimes service providers appeal less to the Mediator.

A major customer relations process, billing naturally generates the highest number of requests in the Group.

An analysis of requests indicates that they fundamentally relate less to the liability of Distributors GrDF and ERDF than in 2011. These Distributors have continued their improvement initiatives to that effect : quality of meter readings, accompanying measures for changing meters, incident handling, etc.

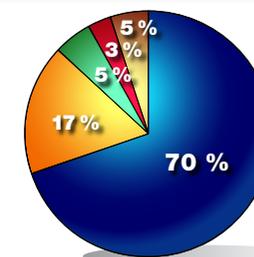
Breakdown of reasons for requests by type

%	Process	Reasons		
90%	Energy billing	<b>Disputed bills</b> Malfunctioning and replaced meter, estimated usage, lack of understanding of the bill	<b>Cancellation of contract</b> Contents of the bill, adjusted usage	<b>Payment of bills</b> Disputes about direct debit, payment method, due date, vulnerable customers
6%	Energy distribution	<b>Dispute regarding costs</b> following interventions (entry into service, cancellation, appointments missed)		
4%	Customer relations and pricing	<b>Advice unsuited to requests</b> (tariffs, services subscribed for)		



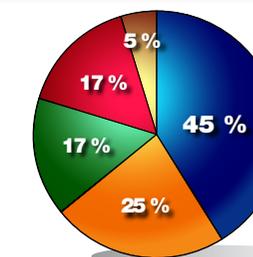
Energy billing

- billing disputes
- contract termination
- methods of payment
- vulnerable customers
- other reasons



Energy distribution

- dispute regarding costs
- unjustified disconnection
- appointment not kept
- meter reading error
- other reasons



Customer relations and pricing

- subscription to tariff and/or service
- quality of advice and information
- payment of energy saving bonuses
- energy price
- other reasons

## 1 938 requests referred to customer services

These requests concern customers who have had no previous contact with customer services or no response to their request. They are referred to the department concerned for handling. The Mediation team makes sure that a written response is sent to the customer.

## 3 081 requests followed up by the Mediation team

These requests are made by customers dissatisfied with the written response from customer services. These customers only partially use the internal forms of resolution offered by the company. Their case is referred to the services concerned for a more in-depth re-examination. The Mediation team supports the customer throughout the dispute.

The number of this type of case is down on 2011.

## 58 requests re-examined in the last form of amicable resolution

Customers are dissatisfied with the solution offered by the last form of resolution before mediation. In accordance with the CMC (Consumer Mediation Commission) Charter,

I owe you thanks for this and pay tribute to the concern for fairness that has manifestly inspired your decision.

the Mediation team re-examines the case, only at this juncture, and works out a solution in all fairness.

As in 2011, the number of cases handled has fallen, reflecting further progress in the complaints handling process performed by the relevant services of GDF SUEZ.

## Quality control

Further to its 2011 annual satisfaction survey, the GDF SUEZ Mediation team realised that a significant number of complainants considered that their dispute had not been fully resolved. Furthermore, even though their numbers fell in 2012, the Mediation team still receives a number of follow-up complaints. That is why it set up a more targeted case tracking system at the beginning of this year, according to certain characteristics and in line with the recommendations of the 2008 mediation directive. This gives the Mediation team more accurate information on the «customer experience». For these special cases, it contacts the customer to study dispute closure, more particularly if the customer is dissatisfied. In many cases this process has supported the customer throughout the process and resolved the dispute more quickly, in close cooperation with the Supplier and the Distributors.

initiated a sociological study aimed at determining customer profiles and describing the pathway that leads them to file their case with it. This study was overseen by the Research and Innovation department and carried out by two independent sociologists in the second half of 2012. It is based on a qualitative survey of customers who have appealed to the Mediator and of in-house or external parties involved in dispute handling. The study was highly instructive and came up with numerous initiatives to take with a view to improving the process (simplifying and clarifying the customer experience, symbolically repairing disputes to restore confidence, etc.). The Mediation team is currently thinking about how to follow up this initial study in 2013.

## Evaluation of the Mediation

### Satisfaction survey

Every year since 2009, the Mediation team has conducted an annual satisfaction survey among people who have contacted it in order to assess its work. Thanks to the findings of this survey, the Mediation team can improve its process.

The 2012 survey panel comprised **one thousand people** (a significant sample of the **5 077** requests received during the year).

A letter signed by the Mediator is sent with the questionnaire, which **includes twenty or so questions** and space for free expression.

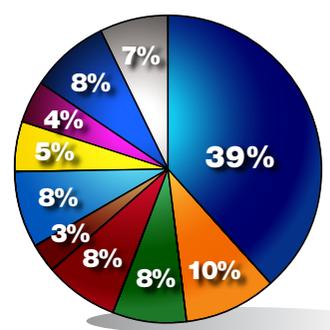
**Nearly 350 questionnaires were returned** to the Mediation team.

### Main findings

This year again, the survey was highly instructive. The key findings to remember are as follows :

### Contacting the Mediation

**39%** found out about the existence of the Mediator through the Internet (35% in 2011).



### Contacting the Mediation team

- via the Internet
- through an acquaintance
- through a member of GDF SUEZ staff
- through the general terms of sale
- through the intervention of another Mediator
- in a letter from GDF SUEZ
- through a consumer organisation
- through the media
- on the bill
- other

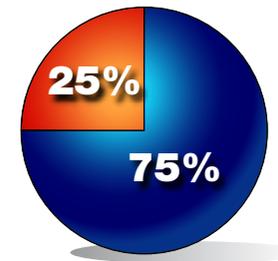
### Relations with customer services

**90%** had previously contacted customer services with success, but the dispute remained unresolved (same in 2011).

**53%** received a written response from customer services (41% in 2011, **a significant improvement worth noting**).

### Overall satisfaction of customers whose dispute was resolved through mediation

- **77%** were satisfied with the time taken to handle a complaint referred to the Mediator, **a significant increase** (59% in 2011).
- **75%** were satisfied with the Mediator's work (71% in 2011).
- **83%** would contact the GDF SUEZ Mediator again in the event of a new dispute (86% in 2011).



### Customers satisfied with the Mediator's intervention

- Satisfied
- Dissatisfied

### Lessons learned

#### Information

Many customers find out about the Mediation team through the Internet. However, in total, other channels are the greatest in number : letters from GDF SUEZ, the media, information on bills and in the general terms of sale ... The 2012 survey confirms that the customers concerned still consider themselves insufficiently well-informed (82%) about the existing forms of resolution. It is therefore important to ensure that the various information media are used judiciously.

#### Responses to complaints

In a significant number of cases, customers take the view that their dispute has only been partially resolved. Most of them regret that their case is handled by more than one person, and that they have no clearly designated contact who really takes charge of their case.

### Response times

In general, customers consider that response times could be cut even more. They would like to receive prompt confirmation that their case has been taken in hand. Any form of communication should be considered : SMS, telephone reminder, letter, e-mail... Long delays sometimes cause customers to call back. Personal follow-up during the handling of the complaint contributes greatly to customer satisfaction.

### Overall satisfaction

Most customers are satisfied with the Mediator's involvement. They would contact him again in the event of another dispute and would recommend his intervention. This success is testimony to the quality processes in place since 2011. It is borne out by a good success rate (the number of solutions accepted by the parties as a percentage of the number of closed cases), 80% in 2012.

### Verbatim

I appreciated the responsiveness, sympathetic ear, pragmatism and efficiency of the Mediation team.

Ordinary people like us don't know the ins and outs of the law; the Mediator is competent and free.

Confirmation of a case handled well by highly courteous and efficient mediation staff

your mediation process clearly avoided the trial that i had thought i would have to resort to.

Thank you for settling this dispute so quickly.



## Sociological study

The GDF SUEZ Mediation team wanted to understand the conditions of referral to the Mediator and know the profile of complainants. It

# 4 | Analysing disputes to work out solutions and prepare recommendations

The Mediation team intervenes in the last form of amicable resolution at GDF SUEZ when the customer has exhausted all internal forms of resolution. It contacts the customer to share with him the **eight values of the Mediation team**. After obtaining the customer's consent, it analyses the dispute by collating all the evidence provided by the parties, and exchanges views with them as and when necessary, before working out a solution in all fairness. The solution is sent in writing to the parties, who then confirm their consent. The Mediation team then requests that the solution be implemented. By bringing out possible areas for improvement, it prepares recommendations relating to recurring disputes for the attention of the various services.

The analysis is based on **54** closed cases : **5** received in 2011 and **49** in 2012. Their very

low proportion compared with the **5 077** requests received reflects the efficient handling of complaints by Customer Services. Only one case was connected purely **to the activity of Distributor GrDF**. It was handled with **strict respect for its independence**. The proportion of cases relating to professional customers has increased compared with 2011 : from 10 to 25%.

## Billing energy used

For the customer, receiving the bill materialises the customer's relationship with the Supplier. For CH&P (Residential and Business Customers), this was reviewed in 2012, anticipating enforcement of the ministerial order of 18 April 2012.

Re-examined disputes often show that the Distributor ERDF and GrDF are involved in billing incidents : meter readings, technical faults and meter changes. **Although they are approached by the Mediation team, their independence is strictly respected.**

### 1 - Billing error or bill issued following a change of meter

**The complainants** state their grounds for dispute and their expectations

- Customers dispute their billing after a change of meter. They dispute usage before or after the technician's intervention and calculated estimates, after a meter malfunction. They want explanations and would like billed usage to be calculated on the basis of an average similar to their usual usage.

- While carrying out work at a customer's premises, GrDF notes that the information relating to the pressure of gas delivered to the installation is erroneous. It proposes supplementary billing. The customer disputes the amount because he wants the two-year period of limitation of the Consumer Code to be applied and the error rectified.

**The Mediator** handles the case and works out a solution with the parties

- He studies the data provided by the Distributors and ensures that the billing limitation period is duly applied, depending on the situation. He wishes to assess the inconvenience caused (cash flow problems, threatened suspension of the energy supply) and the proposed compensation before the case dealt with by the Mediation team. Whenever he deems it fair, the Mediator confirms the proposed billing and the commercial gestures offered by the Supplier and/or Distributors. When he notes that the billing needs to be corrected, he recommended adapting it. When the inconvenience experienced by customers is established, he suggests that consideration be paid.

- The Mediator notifies the customer, a non-profit-making organisation, of the conditions for applying the two-year period of limitation (article L137-2 of the Consumer Code). He proposes that the Supplier's commercial gesture be supplemented.

### 2 - Incomplete or erroneous information provided

**The complainants** state their grounds for dispute and their expectations

- A long-standing gas supply contract stipulates a progressive daily flow rate as part of a new business start-up. The company contests the billing of excess flow by the Supplier. It takes the view that it was notified belatedly and requests another valuation.

- Further to a dispute about his billing, the customer receives a call from the Supplier advising him not to pay the disputed bill. The customer does not receive an adjusted bill for several months. He then asks his Supplier for an explanation ; the Supplier provides inaccurate details about this call. The customer starts being offensive with the persons he speaks to.

- Comparing the large amount of his first bimonthly bill with his annual usage, the customer wonders about this and has a GDF SUEZ quality diagnosis carried out, which reveals no abnormality on his installation. He then changes his boiler. The customer wishes to understand his billing, both before and after this change of equipment, and ascertains that the meter is working properly. He regrets the lack of information provided.

- For his electricity contract, the customer has doubts about usage billed in the winter and wonders about the billing of kWh used in off-peak hours and peak hours. He wishes to pay for what he has actually used, and not pay a large amount for five winter months. He thinks the meter may be faulty.

**The Mediator** handles the case and works out a solution with the parties

- After several exchanges with the Supplier, he confirms the validity of the contract but proposes just this once a reduction of the debt : strict application of the contract would have incurred an unsuitable penalty for the customer.

- The Mediator gets the recordings of the telephone calls from the Supplier. While lamenting the customer's caustic remarks, he notes that the mediation process restored an appeased and trustworthy relationship. To make up for the inconvenience caused and the inaccurate responses, he offers a reduction of the debt.

- Thanks to data contributed by the parties, the Mediator analyses changes in gas usage before and after the boiler was changed. He notes that the billing is accurate, despite numerous cancelled bills, which the customer has difficulty understanding. To make up for the inconvenience, and after talking the matter over with the Supplier, the debt is reduced, in exchange for a single payment thereof.

- The Mediator approaches ERDF and the Supplier, confirms all billing data and checks that the customer has been given an adequate explanation. After factoring in the data and records of ERDF interventions at the customer's, the Mediator confirms the billing. He proposes staggered repayments of the debt. The Supplier completes the commercial gestures already offered.

### 3 - Billing based on an index not read or disputed

The complainants state their grounds for dispute and their expectations	The Mediator handles the case and works out a solution with the parties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Professionals note that gas meter readings are not taken or are erroneous. This results in underbilling then in substantial adjusted amounts. Some of them challenge the price of the kWh applied to recalculate the billing and others want more details on these calculations (e.g. : conversion factor, the cost of hiring metering apparatus and the pressure regulator station on a sub-frame).</li> <li>▪▪ A private individual mentions electricity meter readings that were modified between activation of the contract and the cancellation invoice. In attendance when the ERDF engineer came to read his meter, he challenges the new indexes stated on the disputed bill and requests that the index readings he himself took be taken into account.</li> </ul>	<p>In both cases, he discusses the matter with ERDF, GrDF and the Supplier to understand their action and the observed malfunctions. He seeks to obtain an outline reply for customers, understand the billing and the commercial gestures already granted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The solutions make up for the observed malfunctions in the follow-up of the contract : no alerts after inconsistent readings, billing based on estimates, for several years, due to the lack of readings taken by the Distributor. He points out that the Distributor makes a gesture in addition to that of the Supplier.</li> <li>▪▪ The Mediator points out the indexes initially used to activate the contract were estimated by the former Supplier. To bring the dispute to an end, ERDF offers to refund the difference between the two indexes.</li> </ul>

### 4 - Unsuitable usage estimates

The complainants state their grounds for dispute and their expectations	The Mediator handles the case and works out a solution with the parties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This private individual challenges the amount of a gas bill. He wishes further explanation. As no contract has been signed, he demands bills that are consistent with his usage, a refund by cheque for any overpayments and payment of standing charges at term.</li> <li>▪▪ Finding that his electricity usage is too high for a small, little-used dwelling with communal gas heating but without double glazing, a private individual wants to adjust his billing. His estimated usage was overestimated, and he took the view that the explanation provided was hardly adequate.</li> <li>▪▪▪ A building manager takes the view that several incorrect gas meter readings combined with estimates that are too low have led to a very high adjusted amount. Wishing to understand these errors, which caused him problems in managing his budget, he expects compensation and an appropriate payment plan.</li> </ul>	<p>For these three situations, thanks to his dialogue with the Supplier and Distributors ERDF and GrDF, he studies the billing and ascertains that calculated usage is consistent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ After confirming billed usage, the Mediator proposes the «M@ relève» service to avoid estimated billing. He reiterates the conditions for refunding an overpayment and the validity of the contract with GDF SUEZ, based on contractual billing. To make up for the inconvenience, the debt is reduced by the Supplier.</li> <li>▪▪ He confirms the relevance of the billing based on an actual reading taken by ERDF and that the meter is not malfunctioning. To avoid unsuitable estimates, he suggests monthly payments to the customer. The Supplier will just this once offer to take a special reading of the meter in order to regularise the billing.</li> <li>▪▪▪ If he notes an error in the reading and underestimated usage, the Mediator offers to compensate for the inconvenience and takes into consideration the fact that it is difficult for the manager to recover the debt from former residents of the building. The Distributor and the Supplier compensate the customer.</li> </ul>

### 5 - Lack of billing

The complainants state their grounds for dispute and their expectations	The Mediator handles the case and works out a solution with the parties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ With no billing for two years, and noting that her gas supply has been cut off on the grounds of non-payment, the lady customer wishes to check the accuracy of her billing and expects compensation for the noted errors : incorrect address and no warning before the supply was cut off.</li> <li>▪▪ On receiving a hefty bill after several months without any billing, a customer obtains a payment plan, which is cancelled after the first payment, made belatedly. Confusion in the billing ensues and a new payment plan is issued. Convinced that he has been billed twice, the customer wants confirmation of the amounts claimed and the payments he has made over several years.</li> </ul>	<p>He wishes to understand why the customer did not receive any bills and notes the confusion in the understanding of amounts due. After studying the billing and payment records, the Mediator confirms them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ He reiterates the commercial gestures made by the Supplier who, to put an end to the dispute and make up for the inconvenience, agrees just this once to reduce the debt.</li> <li>▪▪ Expressing disapproval of the customer's rudeness towards the sales advisers, the Mediator duly notes the regrets stated in writing. He suggests that the Supplier compensates for the inconvenience caused.</li> </ul>

### 6 - Credit note not refunded or incomplete commercial gesture

The complainants state their grounds for dispute and their expectations	The Mediator handles the case and works out a solution with the parties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For several years, a credit note on a high bill is reported not to have been refunded to the customer. As the customer is not settling his current bills, his gas contract is cancelled. He holds the view that the overall amount outstanding should take into account the non-refunded credit note and that the cancellation of his contract is unlawful.</li> <li>▪▪ An expert's report reveals that the gas meter is faulty ; the customer has his billing rectified, and the Supplier makes a commercial gesture to compensate for the inconvenience caused. He requests a refund for the expert's report and an additional commercial gesture that he believes is legitimate.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ After discussing the matter with the customer, the Mediator discovers that the customer reconnected his gas supply, which is a fraudulent act and an indictable offence, and is using gas without a Supplier. GDF SUEZ agrees to reconnect the supply if the customer settles part of his debt. The Mediator points out that GrDF will agree to reconnect the supply if the customer pays the fine for fraud and the amount of gas used without a Supplier.</li> <li>▪▪ He inquires about the handling of the complaint and takes into account the rules for billing expert reports on meter conformity by GrDF. The Mediator deems the request groundless because GrDF covers the cost of the expert's report on a non-compliant meter. However, he indicates that the Supplier will supplement its initial commercial gesture to make allowance for the protracted handling of the dispute.</li> </ul>

## 7 - Inconsistent cancellation bill

The complainants state their grounds for dispute and their expectations	The Mediator handles the case and works out a solution with the parties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customers' contracts have been cancelled respectively after the death of the contract holder and a change of residence. The child of the deceased and the co-contractor challenge the amounts stated in the cancellation bills and ask for an explanation : a record of usage, the validity of the cancellation reading and confirmation of payments already made. One of the two customers, in a precarious situation, does not understand why the kWh billed rather than m3, and wants to be refunded for the sums unfairly billed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While reconstructing the records of amounts billed and payments made, the Mediator studies the cancellation bills. He studies the information given to the customers. After confirming the consistency of usage of each customer and taking into consideration the commercial gestures made by the Supplier, he offers a debt reduction together with a suitable settlement period. He points out the method for converting cubic meters delivered into kWh.</li> </ul>

## 8 - Usage billed before and after a change in the price of the kWh

The complainants state their grounds for dispute and their expectations	The Mediator handles the case and works out a solution with the parties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The customer challenges the breakdown of billed usage before and after a change in the price of gas. He thinks that the half-yearly variance in the conversion factor (m3 to kWh) is a way of increasing GDF SUEZ's cash inflows. He claims that the usage breakdown with monthly climatic factors when a tariff changes is always to the detriment of the customer, whether or not the billing is estimated. He asks GDF SUEZ to review its procedures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Already approached by this customer in past years on the same subject, he points out that the calculated billed amounts are consistent and that the setting of conversion factors is not designed to overbill the customer. Backing this up with statutory references, he demonstrates that the billing complies with current legislation and points out the enhancements that smart meters will introduce in the future.</li> </ul>

## 9 - Request for an extended term of payment after an unusually high bill

The complainants state their grounds for dispute and their expectations	The Mediator handles the case and works out a solution with the parties
<p>When customers receive abnormally high bills, they sometimes request a special payment plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A high adjusting bill is sent after a meter reading on a new gas meter via the Internet is overlooked. The Supplier refuses to grant a special payment plan to the customer, a low wage earner.</li> <li>For an owner of a small block of flats, his takeover of the management of the block led him to discover high and unusual amounts billed. Obtaining a payment plan for the debt, the following bills create confusion and the expected repayment is not forthcoming. The plan is cancelled and repayment of the entire debt is demanded. The call for funds from his tenants for additional billing proves complicated and generates financial difficulties. He asks for a refund of the credit balance and staggered payments of the new reduced debt.</li> </ul>	<p>He observes high bills, the consequence of incorrect readings, in both these cases, and studies the explanations given to the customers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>He notes that not enough information was given about the «M@ relève» service and the unsuitability of the monthly payments. A consistent payment plan and an additional commercial gesture are offered by the Supplier.</li> <li>Noting that the contract had been mismanaged, he makes allowance for the inconvenience caused and asks the Supplier to refund the customer, reduce the debt and grant a suitable payment plan.</li> </ul>



## 10 - Billing further to a fault in the remote metering system

The complainant state his grounds for dispute and his expectations	The Mediator handles the case and works out a solution with the parties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several years of faults on the remote gas index metering system lead to a high adjusted amount followed by an increasing number of inconsistent bills. The lady customer wonders about this and, without disputing her usage, wishes to settle her debt and benefit from a commercial gesture.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>He notes that GrDF complied with the requirement but made a mistake in the calculation. The multiple bills make it very hard to understand actual usage and the Supplier makes an additional gesture. Using an average based on actual index readings, the usage is recalculated. He considers that the initial gesture made by the Supplier is consistent with the difficulties experienced by the customer. GrDF acknowledges its error in regularising, as pointed out by the lady customer, and rectifies it.</li> </ul>

## 11 - Suspension of energy supply after a bill is sent to the wrong address

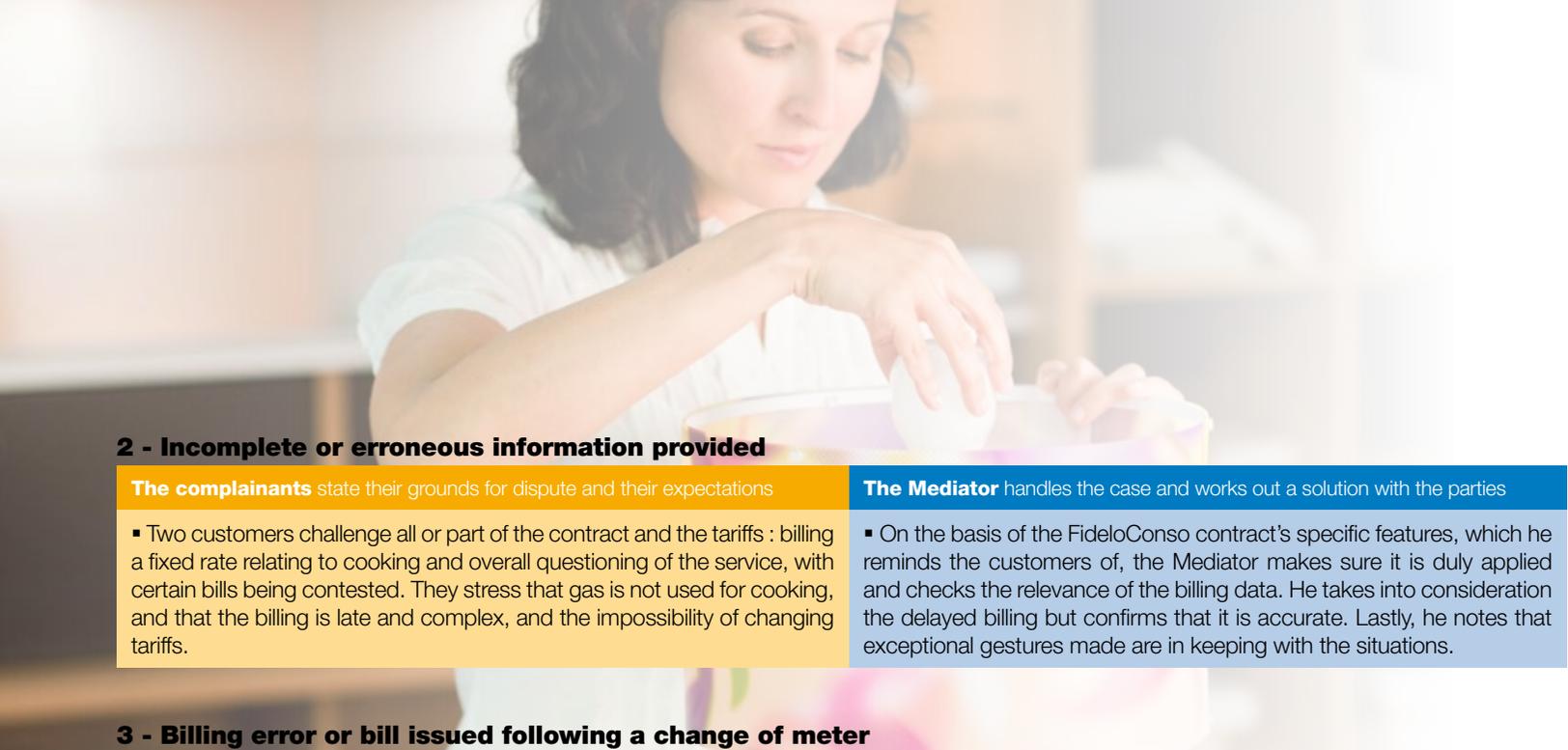
The complainant state his grounds for dispute and his expectations	The Mediator handles the case and works out a solution with the parties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gas bills for the customer's second home are usually sent to his main home. He receives a reminder for an unpaid bill. Having never received it, he requests a copy thereof. Unfortunately, this copy is once again mistakenly sent to his second home. When he goes there, he realises that the gas supply has been suspended. Having had to make several return trips to his second home, buy radiators to ward off humidity and incur sundry expenses to contact GDF SUEZ, he wants compensation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>He notices the error in the billing address and that the customer is acting in good faith in his claim for compensation. Taking into consideration the gestures it has already made (cost of disconnection and reconnection refunded and the commercial gesture), the Supplier makes an additional gesture.</li> </ul>

## Using natural gas in a residential block of flats with the FideloConso contract

The FideloConso contract, signed by GDF SUEZ and a co-ownership, supplies natural gas for a communal boiler through the sale of distributed gas to distribute generated heat per dwelling : domestic hot water and individual heating. By virtue of the powers devolved on it, the Supplier directly bills any user their share of gas used under an individual subscription contract.

### 1 - Unidentified contract holder

The complainants state their grounds for dispute and their expectations	The Mediator handles the case and works out a solution with the parties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Supplier approaches the various owners to recover the amount of usage, after noting that no contract owners are clearly identified. The owners challenge this and emphasize the lack of information on the specifics of the FideloConso contract and the belated billing. The request that the debt be written off, pointing out the impossibility of recovering monies from tenants who have already left.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In view of the distinctive features of the FideloConso contract, he wants to understand the usage billing conditions when no contract holders are clearly identified by GDF SUEZ. He studies the possibility of applying the two-year period of limitation. He confirms that the Supplier is legitimately entitled to ask the owners to settle unpaid usage. He notes due application of the period of limitation. He recalls the commercial gestures already offered by the Supplier to make up for the inconvenience caused.</li> </ul>



## 2 - Incomplete or erroneous information provided

**The complainants** state their grounds for dispute and their expectations

- Two customers challenge all or part of the contract and the tariffs : billing a fixed rate relating to cooking and overall questioning of the service, with certain bills being contested. They stress that gas is not used for cooking, and that the billing is late and complex, and the impossibility of changing tariffs.

**The Mediator** handles the case and works out a solution with the parties

- On the basis of the FideloConso contract's specific features, which he reminds the customers of, the Mediator makes sure it is duly applied and checks the relevance of the billing data. He takes into consideration the delayed billing but confirms that it is accurate. Lastly, he notes that exceptional gestures made are in keeping with the situations.

## 3 - Billing error or bill issued following a change of meter

**The complainant** state his grounds for dispute and his expectations

- In a block of luxury flats, individual meters are changed after a fault is noticed. GDF SUEZ then presents a regularisation to the contract holders in each flat. A tenant challenges the amount and legitimacy, pointing out that his complaint prompted the block's managing agent to express the discontent of all its residents : he wants the debt to be quite simply written off.

**The Mediator** handles the case and works out a solution with the parties

- He studies the commercial gestures offered to each resident, and looks for a solution in all fairness. He confirms the relevance of the additional billing. The customer receives compensation.

## Offering the contract and related services

Supplier GDF SUEZ proposes gas and electricity tariffs, both regulated and market-based, along with a range of services.

### 1 - Opening a contract without the complainant's consent

**The complainant** state his grounds for dispute and his expectations

- In order to compare the tariff offers of several Suppliers, to take out a gas and electricity contract, a restaurant owner asks GDF SUEZ to send him an offer. This is sent to him by post. He receives the GDF SUEZ bills, which he does not pay because he has not returned any signed contract. The gas supply is then suspended for one week, which he considers is unfair. He asks to be compensated for his loss of earnings because he can no longer cook.

**The Mediator** handles the case and works out a solution with the parties

- He gets information from GrDF and ERDF on the chronology of opening and cancelling gas and electricity contracts, according to requests drawn up by the Suppliers in question. The customer itemises the aggregate amount of his lost earnings. He notes that the Supplier chosen by the customer has omitted to formulate its request for a new gas contract. This oversight was the subject of an offer of financial compensation. He points out that ERDF and GrDF responded to the requests of the Suppliers concerned, in accordance with the normal procedure. GDF SUEZ acknowledges its blunder and offers financial compensation.

## Involving Distributor GrDF

GrDF runs and maintains most of the public gas distribution network in France. It carries out individual customer connections, including the meter. It takes half-yearly reading for all Suppliers for billing purposes. Its other tasks are varied : work on the system, connections, corrective maintenance and repairs. If a third party damages the system, GrDF bills it for the repair.

### 1 - Claim for compensation further to water damage to the gas meter

**The complainant** state his grounds for dispute and his expectations

- Following the cut-off of the gas supply during his absence, the customer contacts GrDF. The engineer notes ingress of water in his meter and asks him to empty the pipes. Repairs are carried out. The customer asks the Supplier to meet the committed costs. He believes that the damage is due to work by GrDF on the public network. He stops paying his bills.

**The Mediator** handles the case and works out a solution with the parties

- GrDF notifies him that the cut in gas through an inversion of pipes supplying hot water to a boiler in another dwelling is probably due to third party intervention. Work on the water pipes in his building was indeed carried out. GrDF confirms that no work has been done on its system. The Mediator rules out any liability on the part of the Distributor and the Supplier. However, the latter cancels the billing of costs for non-payment within the allotted time.

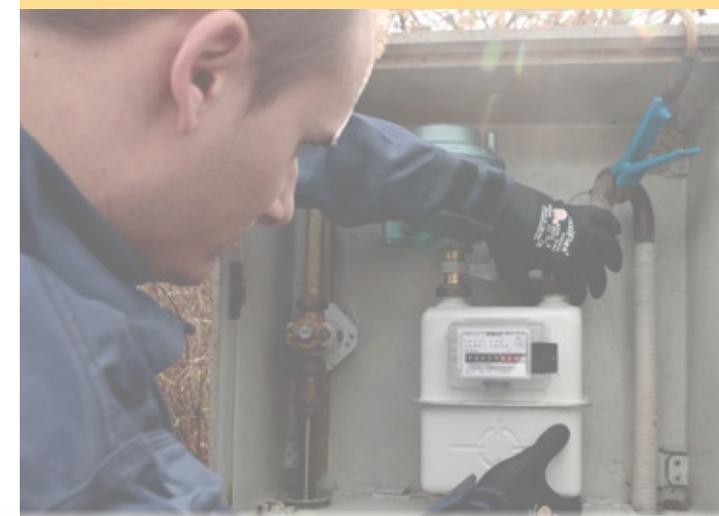
### 2 - Repair work on a distribution network component damaged by a third party

**The complainant** state his grounds for dispute and his expectations

- The customer unintentionally damages part of the individual connection of the gas riser pipe in his building. He immediately calls in GrDF : an engineer makes a temporary repair then some months later two technicians make the final repair. After asking for his bill several times, he agrees with the amount presented for the first intervention but challenges the number of hours spent on the second, as the engineers were not present as long as indicated on the bill. He requests a reduction in the number of hours billed.

**The Mediator** handles the case and works out a solution with the parties

- He asks GrDF what the procedures are to shut off the gas supply in buried piping, supplying both the customer's building and the adjoining one, riser pipes and all individual connections. He studies the documents supplied to the customer by GrDF, with the charged hours : the ministerial order of 2 August 1977 is the statutory source for shutting off the gas supply of an installation. Notwithstanding the deletions on the documents, which could be confusing for the customer, he notes the reality of the billed hours. The Mediator tells the customer that the billing is legitimate but that GrDF is considering reducing the number of hours presented, in addition to its initial offer.





# 5 | The Mediator's recommendations

Beyond handling disputes in the last form of amicable resolution, the Mediator's mission is to issue recommendations and ensure they are implemented. Throughout the year, he exchanges views with the various services concerned to jointly agree on areas for improvement in order to avert recurring complaints.

Here are the various sources the Mediation team has drawn on to formulate its recommendations :

- requests sent to the Mediator,
- cases handled in the last form of amicable resolution,
- dialogue with consumer organisations,
- the sociological study instigated by the Mediation team,
- the annual satisfaction survey,
- the CNC's opinion on the billing of energy,
- the guide of «good practice».

In view of the volume effect, the points below primarily apply to the French market. Nevertheless, by analogy, many of these recommendations can be studied in other GDF SUEZ Group department.

The main themes of these recommendations are as follows :

- The Mediator notes that the priority to be given to out-of-court dispute resolution is not formally defined in all department. He reiterates that Group policy favours out-of-court dispute resolution. Litigation should only be resorted to in special, duly analysed cases (in particular when the customer refuses out-of-court settlement, for instance by formulating claims out of all proportion with the dispute).
- As complainants are increasingly sensitive to the time taken to handle their complaints, different types of cases must be considered

in the supervision of these systems.

- The Mediator stresses the importance for the Supplier of giving consumers advice about their energy efficiency (analysis of current usage, possible savings).
- He lays great stress on the need to selectively check bills the amounts of which are inconsistent with the customer's customary or foreseeable usage (type of dwelling, square footage, uses, etc.).
- He reiterates the «good practice» consisting in ascertaining that the customer is satisfied with the handling of his complaint.
- He would like the customer to be even better informed of possible forms of resolution in the company throughout the handling of his complaint.
- Customers complaining about «complex channels» should be detected better and tracked.
- Verbal complaints are a growing trend. They

- must be tracked very closely.
- The detection and support for customers experiencing fuel poverty and more generally vulnerable consumers must be stepped up in conjunction with GDF SUEZ's partners.
- Certain collection methods should be better

supervised. The Mediator actively encourages the measures in place. Particularly when a complaint is outstanding, such measures may appear aggressive to the customer, and non-compliant with GDF SUEZ values.

- In France, the Mediator recommends specifying the conditions for applying the requirement for old disputed bills.



## Analysis of recommendations implemented in 2011 for 2012

GDF SUEZ's Mediator held numerous coordination meetings with the Group department most concerned in 2012. Among the issues addressed, progress on the implementation of the Mediation team's requests as set out in its 2011 report was checked on a regular basis.

### Improving the quality of customer relations

#### Billing – contracts

Improvements requested at the end of 2011	The Mediator's observations at the end of 2012
1 Reduce billing incidents further to a change of meter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fewer complaints in connection with this issue, however their numbers are still significant.</li> <li>• Optimise traceability when meters are changed, give a more detailed and comprehensible explanation of adjusted bills in such cases.</li> </ul>
2 Limit customer disputes relating to corrected billing after meter faults.	
3 Provide estimated billing closer to actual usage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The procedure for recording readings provided by customers should be more flexible.</li> <li>• Improve the reliability of estimated bills.</li> </ul>
4 Offer payment facilities for customers who have suffered meter reading errors.	
5 Take into account the meter readings supplied by customers for estimated billing purposes.	
6 Explain in writing the amounts of abnormally high bills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thinking in progress on detecting such bills, the customer support process in such cases and ways of averting this type of problem ; at the end of 2012 this problem is not uncommon.</li> </ul>
7 Ensure overpayments are refunded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue adapting the procedures and the associated quality controls to make the results more reliable and reduce the number of complaints.</li> </ul>

8 Make allowances for the financial difficulties of customers who are in fuel poverty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Earlier detection of customers affected by fuel poverty.</li> <li>• Relaxing the criteria for debt settlement plans.</li> <li>• Assistance for customers whose energy supply has been cut off.</li> <li>• Quick reconnection of the energy supply for customers who have paid off their debt.</li> <li>• Introduction of a check on collection measures.</li> </ul> <p>This year the Mediation team received fewer complaints in this respect.</p>
9 Make the disconnection process safer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interrupt reminders for customers in special situations (over indebtedness, claims, etc.).</li> <li>• Better information for the customer before and after disconnection the energy supply.</li> </ul>

## Optimising the complaints handling process

### Residential customers/billing - contracts

Improvements requested at the end of 2011	The Mediator's observations at the end of 2012
1 Improve the quality of information given to the customer during a dispute with GDF SUEZ.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think of ways to make the «customer experience» clearer.</li> <li>• Hierarchy of appeal bodies better and better respected.</li> <li>• Consultation with the Mediation team for cases where it has reported a problem.</li> </ul>
2 Comply with the hierarchy of appeal bodies.	
3 Systematically apply the appeal bodies procedure offered by GDF SUEZ to its customers in cases of dispute with the Supplier.	
4 Take into account alerts from the Mediation, particularly in terms of response times and «multi-claim» customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvement of the handling of multi-claim customers.</li> </ul>
5 Increase reliable implementation of solutions worked out by the Mediator for resolving disputes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in hand to guarantee due application of the solution.</li> </ul>
6 Ensure more systematic monitoring of customer satisfaction with complaints handling procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actions underway to reduce dissatisfaction with billing and with the quality of the customer relations. The «Esprit Services» system improves detection and handling of customer dissatisfaction.</li> <li>• Quality analysis carried out on the complaints handling by the Supplier for each customer relation item : monthly satisfaction surveys with a representative sample of complaining customers to measure satisfaction on an ongoing basis and record verbatim accounts of customers to improve the operational handling process.</li> </ul>

## Recommendations for 2013

### Residential customers

The Mediation team notes that the introduction of systems such as «Esprit Services» and «Cap EcoConso» is helping to improve customer satisfaction and to lower the overall number of complaints. This reflects the constant willingness to improve customer processes, including complaints.

#### Improve the quality of customer relations

Areas for improvement	Recommendations
1 Reduce billing incidents further to a change of meter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give customers better information on meter changing procedures.</li> <li>• Check the relevance of information on meter accessibility provided to the meter reader.</li> <li>• Continue improving personalised, written, detailed and comprehensible explanations on resulting adjustments to bills ; if necessary, contact the customer to further clarify these explanations.</li> <li>• Pass on information on meter changes as soon as possible (customer, Supplier).</li> </ul>
2 Limit customer disputes relating to corrected billing after meter faults.	
3 Provide estimated billing closer to actual usage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on the «Cap EcoConso» experience, the Mediator actively encourages targeted detection of cases where the billing seems either too low or too high compared with the customer's usual or foreseeable usage (a mistaken reading or lack of a reading can entail overbilling).</li> <li>• Pay more attention to customers who only receive estimated bills over a long period of time.</li> </ul>
4 Explain in writing the amounts of abnormally high bills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the bills concerned more closely.</li> <li>• Continue improving explanations already given.</li> </ul>
5 Ensure overpayments are refunded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue adapting the procedures and associated quality controls to make the results more reliable and further reduce the number of complaints.</li> </ul>
6 Make allowances for the financial difficulties of customers who are in fuel poverty, and more generally vulnerable customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beyond compliance with regulatory provisions concerning the August 2008 decree on unpaid bills and article L115-3 of the Code of Social Action and Families, the Mediator actively encourages approaches, often already adopted, tending towards : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- earlier detection of customers affected by fuel poverty,</li> <li>- relaxing the criteria for debt settlement plans,</li> <li>- assisting customers whose energy supply has been cut off,</li> <li>- reconnecting the energy supply quickly for customers who have settled their debt,</li> <li>- ensuring more reliable monitoring of debt recovery measures.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

7 Make the disconnection process safer.	<p>An analysis of certain cases prompts us to step up monitoring of the process in place consisting in :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspending recovery of billed amounts disputed in a well-argued manner by customers who continue to pay their current usage, until such time as the dispute is resolved.</li> <li>• Ensuring that debt collection agencies take more account of customer information to avoid any unnecessary and intrusive payment reminders.</li> <li>• Contacting the customer one final time before cutting off their energy in order to find a payment solution without resorting to cutting off supply.</li> <li>• Regularly updating the database of customers affected by fuel poverty.</li> <li>• Implementing an action plan for identifying unsent bills, in partnership with the Association des Paralysés de France.</li> </ul>
8 Give customers an overall view of their billing, their energy usage in general and potential energy efficiency improvements that could be made in their homes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve the monitoring of index reading records thanks to the «M@ relève» service .</li> <li>• Allow customers to access the latest bills issued, even those that have been cancelled, via their accounts.</li> <li>• Roll out «Cap EcoConso», the new free service that allows customers to analyse their usage, compare it with past usage and statistical panels of consumers (thereby enabling them to adjust their usage, and get an estimate of the energy savings they could make in their homes).</li> </ul>
9 Reduce the number of disputes in connection with cancelled contracts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Search for the coherence of records of cancellation for the former occupant and those of entry into service for the new occupant.</li> </ul>

### Optimising complaints handling procedures

Areas for improvement	Recommendations
1 Improve the quality of information given to the customer during a dispute with GDF SUEZ.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inform the customer of the various forms of resolution available in the company throughout his customer experience.</li> </ul>
2 Comply with the hierarchy of appeal bodies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Systematise the superior appeal body for unclosed cases of complaints, depending on the customer's opinion..</li> </ul>
3 Take into account alerts from the Mediation, particularly in terms of response times and «multi-claim» customers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handle multi-claim customers and reminders in a specific and appropriate manner.</li> </ul>
4 Optimise response times according to specific situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cut delays in handling complaints in a targeted manner.</li> </ul>
5 Make a distinction between disputed bills and current bills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In view of changes in regulations interrupting the recovery of disputed billed amounts, the Supplier should make a distinction between disputed billing and normal usage and adapt its process.</li> </ul>
6 Increase reliable implementation of solutions worked out by the Mediator for resolving disputes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact the customer before implementing the solution.</li> <li>• Reinforce measures for quickly implementing the solutions worked out by the Mediator.</li> </ul>

## Professional customers, Business and Local authorities (E&C)

As far as complaints handling is concerned, the Mediator notes that the advances made since 2010 are being improved and made more reliable. A new organisation was put in place in 2012 and many initiatives will continue into 2013. They are part of the overall objective of anticipating sources of customer dissatisfaction.

The Mediator shares the observations of E & C regarding customer demands for shorter response times (88% want a response within 10 days).

The main initiatives taken by E & C, with regard to the issues identified by the Mediation team, are as follows :

### Customer relationship

The Mediation team's requests	Key points of E & C's action plan
1 Reduce the number of Distributor-related incidents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An action plan has been introduced, shared with GrDF, to reduce the number of such incidents.</li> </ul>
2 Improve explanations given to customers with regard to adjusted billing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The customer is contacted by telephone if a significant adjustment is made.</li> <li>• The correspondence database has been updated to make letters more explicit.</li> </ul>
3 Provide estimated billing closer to actual usage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The customer is contacted by telephone if an estimated bill has been issued more than three times, to record his actual index and find a solution to access the meter.</li> </ul>
4 Take into account readings provided by the customer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The procedure and tools will be improved to take better account of information provided by the customer.</li> </ul>
5 Be proactive with regard to observed fluctuations in usage compared with the customer's normal usage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The customer is contacted, depending on his contract and usage, to alert him, find a solution and if possible avoid billing excess usage as provided for in the contract.</li> </ul>
6 Make a distinction between disputed bills and current bills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In view of changes in regulations interrupting the recovery of disputed billed amounts, the Supplier should make a distinction between disputed billing and normal usage and should adapt its process as necessary, in conjunction with the Mediation team.</li> </ul>

## Complaints handling

The Mediation team's requests	Key points of E & C's action plan
1 Improve follow-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer case tracking has been improved, enabling better supervision of progress. Surveys are conducted to measure customer satisfaction after their complaints have been handled : on the content and form of the response and the quality of handling of the case.</li> </ul>
2 Improve processing times for mediation cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specific follow-up of cases coming from the Mediation team has been set up and improves their supervision.</li> </ul>
3 Control the appeal bodies procedure better	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An experiment is in progress and should allow the complaints handling process to be reviewed.</li> </ul>
4 Improve processing times for customer complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ongoing work will result in announcing shorter delays for customers through commitments at each stage of the process.</li> <li>A dedicated organisation has been put in place to handle sensitive complaints in a targeted manner and to take corrective action.</li> </ul>

## Household services

The Mediation team receives few requests relating to this entity. It nonetheless recommends giving customers better information about the possibility of resorting to out-of-court dispute resolution, in particular with the GDF SUEZ Mediation team.

## VGR, Sale of distributed gas (FideloConso contracts)

A study of these cases handled in the last form of amicable resolution leads the Mediator to recommend continuing the efforts already made to provide detailed and clear information on contract conclusion and application procedures for managing agents, home owners and

their tenants. Consultations with customers should reduce disputes primarily resulting from limited or nonexistent knowledge of individual contracts taken out in residential blocks, and therefore of the responsibilities of each party involved.

## Purchasing - relations with service providers

GDF SUEZ has signed the mediation inter-company charter. In that respect, the Purchasing department has taken action to improve contract drafting and follow-up. Mediation clauses and economic dependency risk analysis have yet to be extended across the board.

## ERDF

GDF SUEZ has more and more electricity customers ; therefore the number of complaints in this respect has risen. However, the Mediation team is satisfied with contacts with ERDF during exchanges of views on electricity cases handled in the last form of amicable resolution, their proportion remaining very small, in strict compliance with the independence of the Distributor.

## GrDF

The Mediation teams notes a reduction in requests directly relating to this Distributor. It has noted with great interest the work in progress at GrDF to improve the quality process. Among other things this concerns the introduction of «Distributor reception», a real strategic project in the transformation of the customer relationship, which finds expression in changing stances of technicians directly in contact with customers, the work of analysing calls to hotlines and the ongoing development of digital channels. Requests received by the Mediator in 2012 concern claim follow-ups, poor workmanship, meter reading errors and their impact on billing, changes of meters, especially with regard to cancellation and connection readings, and information not forwarded to the Supplier or passed on belatedly.

The Mediator confirms the significance of the following measures :

- traceability of meter readings : the follow-up procedure introduced in 2012 has halved the risk of information being passed on belatedly to Suppliers,
- the deployment of a process that detects malfunctioning meters more quickly ; there is a dedicated telephone number for such situations,
- systematic announcement of the meter reader's visit,
- better information before an old meter is changed.

While strictly respecting the Distributor's independence, the Mediator encourages it to continue its efforts to make the overall meter reading/billing process more reliable.

# Appendix

## The Charter of the GDF SUEZ Mediation

- contains, in its introductory remarks, the values that underpin the action of the GDF SUEZ Mediation team,
- forms the reference ethical foundation for GDF SUEZ Mediation team practices,
- describes the GDF SUEZ Mediation team and Mediator,
- defines the field of application of the GDF SUEZ Mediation team and its process.

<http://www.gdfsuez.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Charter-de-la-M%C3%A9diation-GDF-SUEZ-21092012.pdf>

... The Mediator is appointed by the company's CEO...

... Through his authority, experience and position in the company, he thus gives complainants the best guarantee of **impartiality** and **independence**. **He undertakes to refuse, suspend or interrupt the mediation process of the intrinsic values of mediation are no longer observed.**

... The Mediator **provides clear information on his position** in relation to the department concerned so that complainants are able to choose him with full knowledge of the facts, as a third party involved in seeking to reach an **impartial settlement of their disagreement**.

... The Mediator undertakes **always to treat all parties fairly** during the mediation process...

... When the case has been examined, and barring complex cases, the Mediator sends his findings, legally and fairly, to the complainant

and the GDF SUEZ service concerned within no more than two months of receipt of the referral.

The parties are free to accept or decline the Mediator's solution, subject to so informing the Mediator, who ensures that the solution is implemented by the department concerned.

The complainant can still institute legal proceedings, unless the solution comes with a formal settlement.

In France, and if the complainant is a customer of electricity and gas Suppliers subject to the Consumer Code, he can appeal to the National Energy Ombudsman...

... **The Mediator's solution is confidential** : unless otherwise agreed, the parties may not disclose it, even to a judicial body...

... **Anyone contacting GDF SUEZ's Mediator undertakes to abide by all the provisions of this Charter.**

Our values

—  
drive  
commitment  
daring  
cohesion



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