

PRESS RELEASE



## 10 YEARS SUPPORTING CONSUMERS

*€42 million recovered in favour of end users and over 5 million calls managed*

Rome, 18 February 2020 - The Energy and Environment Consumer Help Desk celebrates its tenth anniversary. Ten years of free information and free assistance to consumers in the electricity and gas sectors and, in recent years, for integrated water and waste services. The Help Desk, established by the Italian Regulatory Authority for Energy, Networks and Environment (ARERA) at the end of 2009, is managed, by law, by Acquirente Unico, the Italian Single Buyer.

Since its establishment, approximately €42 million have been recovered in favour of consumers (Complaints, Special Procedures and Conciliation Service) and more than **5 million** calls have been received, with a daily average of **2,000** calls, and approximately **700,000** issues resolved. The level of service is deemed satisfactory by **96%** of users.

The Help Desk services include: *Contact Centre, Conciliation Service, SMART Help Service (for specific energy sector problems), Complaints Service and Reporting Service*. There is also a Help Desk specifically dedicated to Consumer Associations and small and medium-sized enterprises. Conciliation, introduced in 2013 (and mandatory for electricity and gas from 2017), plays a particularly important social role, in part due to the fact that it is completely free. To date, more **than 42,000** conciliations have been managed and **96% of customers are satisfied with the service** received. In terms of “compensation”, approximately **€20 million** has been obtained by customers or end users who have signed an agreement before the Conciliation Service.

In the last two years, **for the electricity, gas and water sectors**, in terms of requests for information and assistance, the most active regions have been **Lazio (around 213 per 100,000 inhabitants), Abruzzo (around 161 per 100,000 inhabitants) and Liguria (approximately 155 per 100,000 inhabitants)**.

For the electricity and gas sectors, there were roughly **13,000 requests for support concerning social bonuses, 44% of which from Northern Italy (around 6,000)**. Moreover, almost **38,000** requests were received for support on the functioning of the market, of which almost half, **49%**, come from **Northern Italy**. The most popular issues: disputed contracts, change of supplier, double billing and pricing of new contracts.

With regard to the water sector, the topic raising more interest is the Social Bonus, with around **70,000 calls to the free-phone number**, concerning requests for general information and assistance on the status of specific applications for tariff concessions. In terms of complaints, the most reported issue is billing, with around **3,000 complaints**, with **Central Italy** the most active, making more than **2,000 complaints (79%)**.

Finally, **11%** of users inquired about the *Portale Offerte*, the Purchasing Groups, the “Placet” offers or for general information on the dynamics linked to the development of the **free market**.