



**Have you been staying in the Czech Republic for a long time? SOS MaS, z. s. advises: DO YOU KNOW BY WHICH RULES ARE BUDGETING AND ACCOUNTING OF COSTS FOR HOUSING SERVICES ABIDED IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC AND WHAT YOU HAVE THE RIGHT FOR?**

*Everyone associates April 30 more with evening driving, lighting fires and looking forward to the next day, filled with a romantic walk with their love. However, this date is important for another, not so romantic reason. Usually, by the end of April, every tenant, member of a housing co-operative, or the owner of a housing unit in the Czech Republic must receive from the provider the bill of housing services for the past period. During April, we usually learn how we managed or failed to manage heat, water, but also, for example, electricity in common areas.*

*This bill gives many people a big surprise each year, but while the vast majority of consumers know that goods may be defective for two years, not everyone knows that different deadlines apply. Therefore, we will now briefly summarize the rights of tenants, members of housing cooperatives and apartment owners in apartment buildings, which are associated with the annual billing of services related to housing in the Czech Republic (heat, water, lighting common areas, as well as reception of TV and radio broadcasts, chimneys...). Foreign nationals residing in the Czech Republic and having leased residential property are also entitled to the following rights.*

The starting and length of the billing period is usually determined by the service provider, with a maximum period of 12 months. This is most often a calendar year, and since the bill must arrive no later than 4 months after the end of the previous period, the deadline is usually the end of April.

Before we receive the final bill, we must first determine our share of the total cost of services within an apartment building. This process is called allocation. It is true that the method of accounting for the costs of services shall be agreed by the provider in writing with a two-thirds majority of tenants, or it shall be decided by the cooperative or Association of the Owners. All recipients of services should receive this arrangement in writing. A change in the method of billing can only occur after the entire billing period has elapsed.

The procedure for allocating the cost of housing-related services among individual beneficiaries is governed by the so-called Services Act. The allocation of heat and domestic hot water supply is regulated in detail by Decree No. 269/2015 Coll.

When our share is determined, it is compared with the advances we paid during the year and the difference is quantified. We are either charged for the outstanding balance or, in a more pleasant case, the provider is obliged to return part of the advance payments as an overpayment. The billing shall include the actual cost of each service with all necessary

particulars, including the amount of advances received, so that the amount of any differences in billing is clear and controllable in terms of the arrangements and rules agreed for billing.

Few know that they have the right to ask the service provider in writing to provide him with the supporting documents on which he is based. The latter is then obliged to prove the costs of individual services, the method of their calculation, the method of determining the amount of advance payments for services and the execution of billing within five months after the end of the billing period at the latest. Service recipients also have the right to make copies of these documents.

If we do not agree with the received billing, we have the right to file a so-called billing objection with the provider. Attention to any objections to the method and content of the bill must be submitted to the service provider without delay, no later than thirty days from the date of receipt of the bill. If we asked for evidence, then we have thirty days from the moment we could get to know them. We should receive a response to our dispute within 30 days.

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