



Utilities and Calculation of Utility Costs

Make sure when you move in to check where the main switches, circuit breakers, and meters for the different utilities (gas, electricity and water) are in your apartment. Read the meters and take a note of the numbers (only the black numbers) if you are paying for utilities separately. Upon registering with the Florence and Abroad office you will be given a sheet with the current utility costs. By checking your meters you can calculate for yourself how much of any one utility you are using.

If you receive utility bills or other mail addressed to your landlord you should inform him immediately. If bills are left unpaid the utilities may be cut off without warning.

Generally, utility bills come in every 2-3 months and the amounts indicated are often based upon estimated consumption, thus these may not exactly coincide with the actual units you have used. Occasionally, (once or twice a year usually) meter readings are made by the utility companies and any differences are balanced out on the next bill.

THERE ARE THREE PAYMENT POSSIBILITIES:

1) At the beginning of the contract period you may put ALL utilities into one of the tenants' names. This is not only rather expensive and time consuming but it also means that you may be without utilities for some days. To set up new contracts you must go to all of the utility companies (gas, electricity, water, telephone) and you will also have to pay a substantial deposit. At the end of your lease, you would then be responsible for changing back the utility contracts. Furthermore, only the person that has signed the contracts with the utility companies is responsible for all payments, which could lead to disputes with apartment-mates when bills arrive. This option is not recommended for short leases and may not be permitted by the landlord for certain leases.

2) You can pay all bills as they arrive, at the post office or to the main utilities office (they will only accept cash) or reimburse the landlord for the bills he has paid for you. Keep in mind that the bills are based on estimated use and not your actual use. Any differences between what you pay in bills and what meter readings indicate you owe will be settled at the end of the lease or sometimes even after your departure. Because you may be paying for much more or much less than what you actually consume, we do not recommend this method of payment.

3) This is the option we generally use for short-term leases, it is by far the easiest: along with the rent, a monthly down payment is made for the utilities. All meters are read at the beginning of the lease period and a second reading is taken at the end. Calculations are then based on these readings and monthly basic charges are added. For your own peace of mind check the meter readings and take note. Differences are generally settled at the end of the lease however the landlord may ask for outstanding amounts at any time during the rental period.

Some apartments may share a meter with other apartments in the building. In this case, the landlord will calculate your apartment's consumption considering: apartment size, number of tenants, etc.

If rental payments include utilities remember that the same moderation must still be used in order to comply with local anti-pollution laws and energy-saving regulations. Any excessive consumption will be charged to tenants. Heating, for example, must not be left on during the night and thermostat temperature must never exceed 18-20°C. (64-68°F). Please note that high temperatures may also damage the heating unit and that you will be responsible for any subsequent repairs.

Heating may be turned on from November 1 until April 1 only and for no more than a maximum of 8-10 hours per day. This is under the Municipal Regulation (Regolamento Municipale) and must be respected by law. Ask your landlord to show you how the various utilities are measured by the meters in your apartment. At the same time he will show you the main on-off lever for each utility which can be used in the case of leakage or electrical malfunctions. From the meters (read the black numbers only) you will be able to get an idea about how much energy you are consuming and how much money you are spending, although be aware that these may not be exact bill amounts, as the landlord may have special contracts with the utility companies. Also note that there are basic charges for utilities.

HOW TO CALCULATE THE CONSUMPTION OF: WATER, GAS AND ELECTRICITY

As soon as you move into the apartment write down the initial meter reading of each meter (water, gas, electricity).

Use only the black numbers.

With the difference between the second reading and the first reading you will find how many units you have consumed.

The Florence and Abroad office will provide you with a document that states all current unit charges and basic charges. By multiplying the unit consumption by the unit charge you will easily find the amount due. To this amount you must add the monthly basic charge.

To avoid unpleasant surprises, we suggest you do this calculation often.

Example:

Your gas meter reads 2468 the first day you arrive.

After 30 days the meter reads 2703.

Therefore the unit consumption is 235.

Multiply this number by 0,70 (this is the apx. cost per cubic meter).

The result is Euro 164,50.

To this amount you must add the monthly gas basic charge apx. Euro 9,00.

The amount you have calculated is Euro 173,50.

This is the amount due for the period in question (30 days).

TEMPORARY INTERRUPTIONS OF SERVICE

If you have no light, water or gas in your apartment, before calling the agency or the landlord make sure that it is an apartment-related problem. Check with your neighbours, or look for notes that the utilities companies may leave in the building hallway, to verify that you are the only ones experiencing the interruption of service. Especially lack of water and gas are most likely due to temporary works carried on in the building or in your street.