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European Commission fails to take real steps towards the recognition of the Human Right to Water

The European Water Movement regrets that the European Commission decided not to take real actions, ignoring 1,9 million citizens

Brussels - The European Commission (EC) made public today the communication on the European Citizen's Initiative on the Right to Water. [1] The communication fails to respond to 1,9 citizens asking for a legislative provision excluding water and sanitation from "internal market rules" and liberalization. The EC's reaction is lacking in real legislative proposals, and it boils down to a compilation of already ongoing actions plus the announcement of a public consultation on the drinking water directive whose outcomes will not be binding.

While the Communication acknowledges the importance of the Human Right to Water and Sanitation and it confirms water as a public good, the EC fails to propose legislation that recognizes this right. The Commission also commits to promote universal access to water and sanitation in its development policies, including the promotion of public-public partnerships.

Water and sanitation services were excluded from the concession directive thanks to public pressure, but the Commission has not committed in its Communication to explicitly exclude these services from the trade negotiations (such as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership - TTIP).

The answer of the European Commission to the first European Citizen's Initiative (ECI) to achieve the required support will not reassure European citizens who question the democratic legitimacy of the European institutions. The European Water Movement considers that overall the Communication does not address the actual demands to guarantee the Human Right to Water and Sanitation, and implies a bad precedent for the future of the ECI mechanism.

Water privatization remains a very concrete menace in the EU. In countries like Greece and Portugal, the Troika is pushing for water privatization [2], and more and more citizens are being deprived of water access in municipalities where water supply is managed by private companies [3]. In line with the signatures collected for the Initiative, citizens are fighting against water privatization across the EU, with many examples of massive mobilizations in Italy with the 2011 binding referendum [4], the local consultations in Madrid and Berlin, more recent mobilizations in El Puerto de Santa

María (Spain) [5] and upcoming local public consultations in Thessaloniki (Greece) [6] or Alcazar de San Juan (Spain) [7]

Water should be a commons, not a commodity. The European Citizen's Initiative [8], that collected nearly 1,9 million signatures, expected the European Commission to propose legislation implementing the Human Right to Water and Sanitation as recognized by the United Nations, and to promote the provision of water and sanitation as essential public services for all. The European Water Movement will continue to support local struggles in places such as Thessaloniki or Alcazar de San Juan to ensure that water is declared a common good. And it will remind candidates in the elections for the European Parliament of the importance of recognizing that water is a human right, to concretely act towards its implementation and to avoid liberalization and commodification of water and sanitation services

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The European Water Movement is an open, inclusive and pluralistic network of movements, social organizations, local committees and unions whose goal is to reinforce the recognition of water as a commons and as a fundamental universal right, an essential element for all living beings. We are part of the global water justice movement. We are united to fight against privatisation and commodification of this vital good, and to construct a public and communal management of water, founded on the democratic participation of citizens and of workers.

www.europeanwater.org

[1] http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-277_en.htm

[2] <http://www.tni.org/article/ec-stop-imposing-privatisation-water>

[3] For example, more than 200 families were deprived from water supply in Jerez (Spain) after the water management was assumed by Aqualia

http://ccaa.elpais.com/ccaa/2014/01/24/andalucia/1390591317_911564.html

[4] More information www.acquabenecomune.org

[5] More information: <http://apemsanosevende.blogspot.com.es/>

[6] More information: <http://aguasnosevende.blogspot.be/> Background information in English bit.ly/1eRQC6A French bit.ly/1I3D5JO and Italian bit.ly/1cZFR6G

[7] More information: <http://sostetonero.blogspot.be/>

[8] Website of the European Citizen's Initiative on the Right to Water <http://www.right2water.eu/>