



## EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE "Water is a human right!"

Concrete proposals to implement the human right to water and sanitation in European legislation.

### Summary

The ECI "Water is a human right!" collected 1,8 Million signatures in 28 EU countries. In 13 countries the quorum was surpassed. Therefore our proposals for EU legislation should be taken into consideration by the European Commission. In order to realize the human right to water and sanitation for all, we invite the European Commission to propose legislation on three aspects.

#### 1. **Guaranteed water and sanitation services for all in the European Union.**

We believe that the European Union must implement the human right to water insofar as water and sanitation services are subject to European law (as a service of general interest). The European Union must promote national implementation of this human right by setting binding targets for all Member States to achieve universal coverage. The European Commission can take action to:

- **Prioritize water for domestic purposes; targeting access for the most disadvantaged.**
- **Encourage and support Member States to fulfil their obligations to ensure the right to water and sanitation.**
- **Make the Human Right to Water and Sanitation central to all communications on water and sanitation.**
- **Set a target for 100% coverage of good quality water and sanitation in all EU Member States by 2016.**
- **Define sanctions against Member States in case of non-compliance.**
- **Define options for situations where people cannot be connected to the grid (inhabitants of isolated areas) and how to fulfil the human rights obligations in these cases.**
- **Make regional structural funding dependent on democratic and human rights principles and refrain from making such funding dependent on market principles.**
- **Establish a coherent process for all legislative actions in relation to water and water resources.**



## **2. Human Rights before market interests: No liberalisation of water services.**

We want the EU to change its mind-set from the current focus on competition and a completely market-based approach, to a public service and rights-based approach. Water is a limited natural resource and a public good fundamental for life and health. It is a 'natural' monopoly and must be kept out of internal market rules.

To put this into practice we suggest the European Commission takes action to:

- **Declare water and water resources as a public good.**
- **Implement the demand that 'the management of water and water resources should not be subject to internal market rules' (EP Resolution P5\_TA(2004)0183).**
- **Ensure that water services will not be included in any trade or investment agreement.**
- **Promote benchmarking for water services operators similar to long standing practices in the Netherlands and Germany.**
- **Establish guidelines for transparency, accountability and participation to ensure that information on profits and payments to shareholders by water companies are made public.**

## **3. Global/Universal access to water and sanitation for all.**

We believe that the EU should make a bigger effort to ensure universal access to water and sanitation. The EU must set targets and make the achievement of universal (global) access to water and sanitation part of its development policy. By doing so the EU will actively promote the global right to water and sanitation.

As concrete efforts we suggest that the European Commission should:

- **Target resources so as to prioritize access for those communities without essential levels of access with a focus on sanitation.**
- **Devote more financial and institutional resources, and improve planning, to ensure constant investment in operation and maintenance.**
- **Call on the European Investment Bank to dedicate ( earmark) a larger part of its investments to water and sanitation, and to focus on persons without access.**
- **Ensure meaningful participation in order to make sure that water, sanitation and hygiene solutions are socially and culturally acceptable, as well as sustainably used and practiced.**



- **Adopt a human rights-based approach to development cooperation, encompassing all human rights, whether civil/political or economic/social/cultural in nature and in line with UN indications.**
- **Include a water and sanitation goal in the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015 targeted at eliminating inequalities in access and ensuring sustainability.**
- **Promote international cooperation, based on not-for-profit principles and solidarity, among water operators and authorities for capacity building and to improve quality of water services (Public-public partnerships or Water Operator Partnerships).**
- **Continue the ACP EU-Water Facility or a similar body and make a new and higher budget available for water and sanitation.**
- **Promote and support new and innovative ways of financing for water services such as the Decentralized Solidarity Mechanism.**