



José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission,
Maroš Šefčovič, European Commissioner for Inter-Institutional Relations and Administration and Vice-President of the European Commission

B - 1049 Brussels

Ref.: JWG/cb

Brussels, 7 May 2013

Dear Commissioner Šefčovič,
Dear Commission President Barroso,

We are pleased to inform you that the European Citizens Initiative *Water is a Human Right* has reached the minimum number of signatures (over 1,5 million, electronically and on paper) as well as the minimum number of countries that have passed the threshold required namely Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovakia, Slovenia. While we are aware that the signatures need to be officially validated the margins everywhere are such that we can be confident. And we expect several other countries to pass the minimum threshold soon.

We will continue to collect signatures to have more people and more countries. We have not decided yet on the moment of submitting the signatures.

We do ask you not to take any measures that would contravene the objectives of the initiative and the clear wishes of the many European citizens and their organisations that have engaged in the campaign. This implies in particular to:

- Discussions on trade. The scope of negotiations on trade agreements does include environmental services. And including these in trade agreements could undermine the demands of the initiative.
- Ongoing debates on the concessions directive. There have been many discussions. In reaction the Commission has made it clear that water is a “bien commune” and that the Commission does not want to privatise water services. That needs to be reflected in the final results of the legislation.
- The Blue Print for Water. It considers issues such as water pricing and trade in water rights. This also implies to the discussions in the European Resource Efficiency Platform. The human right to water and the demands of the ECI should inform all discussions that touch on water services and policy.

This is even true of the position the European Commission takes in the Troika when discussing the measures that countries need to take to comply with demands to adjust their public finances. We are not convinced that the European Commission has informed itself and verified if privatisation of water companies in countries such as Greece and Portugal, part of the commitments made to comply with the demands of the Troika, do guarantee the implementation of the right to water. We have not seen such an evaluation from the Commission or Troika. Privatisation and operating these services as economic activities will bring them under the logic of the internal market rules and hence would be contrary to the objective of the ECI. The Commission should

• EUROPEAN
FEDERATION
OF PUBLIC
SERVICE
UNIONS
• FEDERACIÓN
SINDICAL
EUROPEA DE
SERVICIOS
PÚBLICOS
• FÉDÉRATION
SYNDICALE
EUROPÉENNE
DES SERVICES
PUBLICS
• EUROPEISKA
FEDERATIONEN
FÖR ÖFFENTLIG
ANSTÄLLDAS
FÖRBUND
• EUROPÄISCHER
GEWERKSCHAFTS-
VERBAND FÜR DEN
ÖFFENTLICHEN
DIENST
• ЕВРОПЕЙСКАЯ
ФЕДЕРАЦИЯ
ПРОФСОЮЗОВ
ОБЩЕСТВЕННОГО
ОБСЛУЖИВАНИЯ

consider preventing the privatisation of water services until this has been clarified and put a moratorium on it.

We would appreciate if the Commission can inform us of the steps that will be taken to ensure that in these dossiers that have played a role for many citizens when signing, draft legislation and policies will not make the implementation of the ECI more difficult, or even will undermine it.

The initiative was recognized by the European Commission on 10 May 2012. Due to the problems there were with the on-line collection of signatures the time line was extended to 31 October 2013. We started the on-line collection in September and have effectively achieved in 9 months what so far no organisation has ever done. Some of the supporting organisations will continue to collect signatures as there are a number of other countries that are close to the threshold. The support shows that there is support from North to South, and East to West in the European Union, in older and in newer Member States.

We are pleased with the results so far but many citizens have expressed concerns that the Commission will simply ignore their demands. We all understand this would be a terrible blow to the strengthening of democracy and the involvement of citizens in the European Union and that at a moment that EU skepticism is at a high peak.

We will be in further contact when we will officially submit the signatures.

Yours sincerely



Jan Willem Goudriaan
EPSU Deputy General Secretary and member of the Citizens Committee

cc.

Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament
Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council

Encl.: ECI water demands