



Background note to the European Citizens' Initiative: Water and Sanitation are a human right!

History

The European public services unions (EPSU) decided to take an initiative to obtain one million signatures for water as a human right at their 2009 Congress. This included: mobilizing workers and citizens in support of this right and against the negative effects of liberalization and pro-competition policies which are predominant within the European Commission and amongst European governments. The European Commission finally set the rules for such a European Citizens' Initiative in March 2011. For more details about the regulation, see: <http://ec.europa.eu/citizens-initiative/public/welcome?lg=en> .

The United Nations have recognised the universal human right to water and sanitation. On 28 July 2010, through Resolution 64/292 , the United Nations General Assembly explicitly recognized the human right to water and sanitation and acknowledged that clean drinking water and sanitation are key factors to the accomplishment of all human rights. The Resolution calls upon States and international organisations to provide financial resources, help in capacity-building and technology transfer with the objective to provide safe, clean, accessible and affordable drinking water and sanitation for all.

All citizens need potable water and a safe system of sanitation. The United Nations have recognised the universal human right to water and sanitation, but still many people do not enjoy this right. This right must be implemented within the European Union.

What we want

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.
2. **Human Rights above market interests: No liberalisation of water services.**
We want the EU to change their mind-set from its current focus on competition and completely market-based approach, to a public service attitude and a 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.

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3. Global/Universal access to water and sanitation for all.
We believe that the EU should make a bigger effort for water and sanitation to be enjoyed universally. 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 that the right to water and sanitation can be enjoyed globally.

To get these demands taken into consideration we have to collect one million signatures within the EU-27. **We have one year to collect one million signatures.**

Signatures can be put on the campaign website www.right2water.eu and on paper. The collection of signatures started 1 September 2012. Both online and offline events are and will be organised to collect signatures and promote this ECI.

Support

We are receiving support in all kinds of organisations that have an affinity with “water” to help in promotion of this ECI. We continue to broaden our support in society. We also look for support across the political spectrum and for individuals that are ‘public figures’ to be ambassadors for our campaign. Organisations that support this ECI and Ambassadors can be found at the website www.right2water.eu

Brief overview of the process that organisers need to go through to present an ECI.

- a) The aim of the initiative must be within the powers of the European Commission to propose legislation under the Treaties and is not manifestly frivolous or contrary to the Union's values.
- b) The organisers must form a citizens' committee of at least seven members from seven different EU Member States.
- c) A significant amount of signatures must be collected in at least 7 Member States. For each country, this (minimum) amount is equal to the number of European Parliament seats they hold multiplied by 750.
- d) On registration and throughout the process, organisers must declare and ensure full transparency about their sources of funding.
- e) It will be possible to collect signatures on-line or on paper. Organisers face different national procedures for signature registration and verification. Of 27 member states, 18 require an ID or passport number with the signature, 9 do not.
- f) The organisers of citizens' initiatives and the authorities are subject to data protection rules to ensure that personal data is only collected for the purpose of the initiative, for no other reason and destroyed thereafter.

The ECI must be seen for what it is: an agenda setting tool that enable citizens to turn not only the Commission's attention, but also the media and the general public's attention to a certain topic and to initiate a European-wide debate on it.