

Concessions Directive moves behind closed doors - We need to continue public debate says EPSU

(Press release - Brussels 22 February 2013)

The European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) is disappointed that the concessions Directive will go to trialogue in which small delegations of Parliament, Council and Commission will hammer out compromises. EPSU had argued for a plenary debate given that the Directive is new, complex and several parts are contested and transparency is required.

We welcome the statements of several political groups and politicians promising to fight against water privatisation made in the context of the debate. This is a success for the more than a million European citizens that are supporting the first up and running European Citizens Initiative (ECI) www.right2water.eu . We expect that these words will become legal guarantees to protect public services.

An EPSU delegation met Commissioner Barnier, responsible for the Internal Market, procurement and concessions, 22 February 2013. The Commissioner argues that the directive does not impose privatisation of water and he recognizes water is a common good.

If there is to be legislation on concessions EPSU wants to see meaningful legislation that includes social criteria, more transparency for citizens and the recognition that water is a common good that benefits all of us. EPSU Deputy General Secretary, **Jan Willem Goudriaan**: *"Water is to be recognized as a human right. The Commission is still to explain how this directive will protect natural resources and public services such as water and sanitation, so key to our daily lives, so they are not exploited for profit."*

EPSU remains concerned about the Commission newspeak denying there is no intention of fostering privatisation but as member of the Troika the Commission is forcing Greece and Portugal to privatise water. It also believes that privatisation of public utilities such as water delivers benefits and is not neutral. *"There is a history here of a Commission that is not promoting public service provision and doing its very best to break open public service markets. People do not buy it anymore*

" Goudriaan continued.

EPSU continues to support the ECI to collect signatures to reinforce the strong mandate of the ECI. The next main event will be world water day on March 22. We call on all those that support water as a human right to mobilise for the occasion.

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