



European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)

EPSU Press Communication

EUROPEAN ORGANISATIONS CELEBRATE THE 1st ANNIVERSARY OF THE UN RESOLUTION ON THE HUMAN RIGHT TO WATER

Brussels 28 July 2011 – Civil society organisations, collectives and trade unions¹ gather around public water fountains today in Brussels to celebrate the one-year anniversary of the UN General Assembly resolution on the human right to water.

2011 has been an important year for public water in Europe, increased citizen participation has played a major role in the issues of water supply management and wastewater treatment, allowing populations to take a giant step toward re-municipalisation – the process of bringing water under public control.

Paris, the birthplace of the French water privatisation model, successfully managed to re-municipalise its water and in one year has reduced its water prices by 8%.

In Berlin, more than 700,000 citizens came out to vote in a referendum on February 13th to disclose the details of privatisation contracts between water companies, Veolia, RWE and the government. It was the first time a citizen's initiative managed to pass a referendum in Berlin.

Finally, the biggest success so far this year is probably the Italian referendum. On June 12th and 13th, more than 27 million eligible Italian voters came out to keep their water safe from private hands.

These cases provide proof that a growing number of communities are becoming frustrated by the broken promises of water privatization. Claims of lower prices, more transparency and new jobs never materialize. More and more communities in Europe are now considering going back to public water. This failure of the privatisation model has shown that it is in direct conflict with the human right to water.

¹ Signatory organisations : ACME France, EURACME, Aquattac, Aqua Publica Europea, Association pour un Contrat mondial de l'Eau (France), CGSP-ACOD, EGEB Etat Généraux des Eaux de Bruxelles, European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), Food & Water Europe, IERPE Institut Européen de Recherche sur la Politique de l'Eau.



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Despite this victory at the UN last year, the battle for the right to water is not over. Only 11 European countries voted for the UN resolution (amongst them Belgium, Spain and Germany), while 16 abstained. These included the UK, Austria, Poland, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic.

Currently, more than 1 billion people still do not have access to drinking water and more than 2,5 billion people have no access to sanitation. To change this we need to come up with alternative solutions to privatisation. An Alternative World Water Forum will take place next year in Marseille, France. (www.fame2012.org) The event is being organized by associations, trade unions, citizens and elected representatives from all over the world, with the aim to defend water as a common good and as a fundamental human right.

For more information contact: Kim Le Quang 0499 439350 , Gabriella Zanzanini 0488 40 96 62 or Pablo Sanchez 0474 626633

EPSU is the European Federation of Public Service Unions. It is the largest federation of the ETUC and comprises 8 million public service workers from over 275 trade unions; EPSU organises workers in the energy, water and waste sectors, health and social services and local and national administration, in all European countries including in the EU's Eastern Neighborhood. EPSU is the recognized regional organization of Public Services International (PSI).