

Greek workers and citizens are fighting back privatisation of water services in Thessaloniki - Initiative 136

(2 March 2012) Despite the massive protests of trade unions, pensioners and many other citizens, the Greek parliament ratified the "memorandum 2" mid February 2012. According to the memorandum several public companies need to be sold of to reduce the public debt. One of these companies is Thessaloniki's water company (EYATH). The government wants to "speed up" the process. The local and national press are mobilized by the government to support the sale-off. Articles appear praising the privatisation and how it will "help the country out of its debt", The voice of the unions and the citizens against these measures do get little attention. The government aims to sell the company by September and hence the public tender will take place in May 2012.

The Initiative 136 aim's to stop the sale but if it goes forward the initiative seeks to have "citizen's participation" in the public tender, and is developing a plan for social management of the company by it's users. Cooperatives are established for this purpose based on citizens participation. These cooperatives will be the shareholders of the new company that will claim the acquisition of EYATH. Each household will have a "participation" of 136 euros that will guarantee their inclusion in the decision making process.

The participation will be non-transferable, no one will be able to speculate with it, and we will apply the principle of 1 household (water meter) = 1 vote, so no one will be able to "buy" influence over decision making. The initiative is independent and has raised its funding from its members. In a recent poll (carried out by an "establishment" newspaper), over 75% of those who knew of the proposal were in favour of it. Support is also arriving from all mayors and local town councils of Thessaloniki's metropolitan areas. The initiative is supported by the unions of Thessaloniki.

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