

Fighting for water democracy following the Right2water European Citizen's Initiative

(12 January) Water activists, trade unionists, environmental organisations and European politicians discussed the ongoing fights to defend quality public water services at the invitation of the [GUE/NLG group in the European Parliament](#), on the 11th of December. EPSU's General Secretary Jan Willem Goudriaan told attendees of the lack of action on the key demand of the European Citizen's Initiative (ECI), that being the implementation of the human right for water and sanitation based on the UN resolution in EU legislation.

Goudriaan stated that, 'three years after the publication of the European Commission's response to [the Right2Water](#) and first ever successful European Citizens' Initiative, the Commission has still not taken steps to propose legislation'. He also warned that the European Commission is undermining another key demand which is to promote the rights to water in its development work and to foster cooperation between public companies so called PPPs, public-public partnerships.

The recently published Commission proposal for a [new consensus for development strategy](#) does foresee a role of the private sector. Despite the [overwhelming case against PPPs](#) the Commission continues to promote a role for the private sector in managing and operating these basic services. Europe's citizens do not want that the EU's development policy is abused to promote privatization.

Several activists reported on campaigns such as preventing water privatization in Ireland and Portugal, the recent [Slovenian change](#) to include the human right to water in the constitution and the experience of actions against privatization plans in Denmark. PSIRU presented the trend towards [remunicipalisation and the failure of privatization](#). Food and Water Watch reported on the struggles to keep water services outside of trade agreements, a very topical issue given the discussion on [CETA and upcoming votes](#) in the European Parliament on the agreement.

A special focus was on the Greek plans to privatize the water companies of Athens and Thessaloniki. Their assets have been transferred to a Superfund which plans to sell shares to private investors and involve them in the management of the

companies. This plan is opposed by the trade unions, the Greek water movement SafeGreekWater and many others. This privatization is being promoted by the European Commissioner and creditors who have forced this on the Greek government in the infamous Summer of 2015 Memorandum, despite the evidence that the [Greek people do not want this](#). EPSU remains steadfast in its support for the Greek social and union movements campaigning for public water services.

Attendees:

- ECI and the referendum in Ireland, MEP Lynn BOYLAN, GUE/NGL, Ireland
- New privatization push in Denmark, MEP Margete AUKEN, Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance, Denmark
- Ms Luísa Tovar, PCP Representative
- Ms Maria Kanellopoulou, Savegreekwater GREECE
- The successful campaign in Slovenia, Mr. Matej Vatovec, Member of the Slovenian Parliament, United Left.
- Trade deals and/or EU legislation affecting right2water, Mr David Sanchez, Food and Water Europe
- Re-municipalisation in the water sector: Dr Emanuele Lobina, Principal Lecturer in Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU), University of Greenwich

The Greek trade unions and water activists used the opportunity of the conference to filed [a request for information](#) on the role of the European Council on the water privatization in Greece, 12 January 2017.

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