



European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)
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**Recast Drinking Water Directive step forward but misses the opportunity
to recognize Human Right to Water.**

(Brussels, 31 January 2018) Tomorrow the European Commission will approve the Recast of the Drinking Water Directive (DWD). It is the first time that legislation takes account of the demands of the first ever successful European Citizens Initiative (ECI) Right2water. The ECI collected over 1.8 million signatures asking the European Commission to propose legislation implementing the human right to water and sanitation as recognised by the United Nations (UN).

The Recast Directive takes steps in the right direction especially with an obligation for Member States to take all measures necessary to ensure access to drinking water for vulnerable and marginalized groups. However just providing health advice and information on the quality of water falls short of our expectations.

The Recast Directive fails to go all the way and recognize this human right. There is no reference to the considerable work of the UN Special Rapporteurs for the Human Right to Water and Sanitation. These rapporteurs have made numerous suggestions on how this right can be realized. While the Commission recognizes the demands of citizens and continued support for the implementation of the Human Right to Water and Sanitation this is not reflected in the legislative text.

Jan Willem Goudriaan, EPSU General Secretary and Right2water vice-president states *“It is an achievement for the supporters of the right2water that Member States have to do more to provide access to drinking water for vulnerable groups including refugees. I am disappointed EU failed to become a world leader by recognizing this right in its legislation. We are expecting the Commission to take up the Right to Water and Sanitation up in the Frame Work Directive as well”*.

EPSU has actively supported the ECI Right2water and will continue to campaign with the European Water Movement and others to achieve a clear commitment by the European Institutions on the implementation of the Human Right to water and sanitation as defined by the United Nations. It is now for the European Parliament to give its opinion and proposals. Members of the European Parliament have been supporting this right consistently.

EPSU hopes that the European Commission can make this up during the debate on the upcoming Water Framework Directive (WFD) publishing an ambitious piece of legislation that will take into account the Right2water views.

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Background

Text of the European Citizens Initiative Right2Water

Water is a public good, not a commodity. We invite the European Commission to propose legislation implementing the human right to water and sanitation as recognised by the United Nations, and promoting the provision of water and sanitation as essential public services for all. The EU legislation should require governments to ensure and to provide all citizens with sufficient and clean drinking water and sanitation.

We urge that:

1. The EU institutions and Member States be obliged to ensure that all inhabitants enjoy the right to water and sanitation.
2. Water supply and management of water resources not be subject to 'internal market rules' and that water services are excluded from liberalisation.
3. The EU increases its efforts to achieve universal access to water and sanitation.

[Right to Water](#)

[The UN Human Right to Water and Sanitation](#)

[Report of the EP](#)

Achievements of the ECI

- [Nearly 1.9 million people signed it and 1.68 million signatures were valid.](#)
- [The ECI has played a role in many local and national water struggles.](#)
- [Slovenia recognized the right to water in its constitution](#)
- [The European Commission decided to keep concessions for water services out of its proposals.](#)
- No initiatives have been taken to open water services for more competition through an EU initiative.
- [The ECI has helped to prevent water services being fully liberalised in trade agreements but numerous other challenges remain for the right to water and sanitation](#)

*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 260 trade unions; EPSU organises workers in the energy, water and waste sectors, health and social services and local, regional and central government, in all European countries including the EU's Eastern Neighborhood. EPSU is the recognized regional organization of Public Services International (PSI). For more information please go to: www.epsu.org*