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[Event](#) | 27.06.2013

Water is a public good

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PRESENTATION

Recent developments have confirmed that threat of privatisation of the water sector is still very real. The "Troika" (International Monetary Fund, European Commission and European Central Bank) has been attaching privatisation of public services, including water utilities, as a condition for Member States such as Greece and Portugal receiving rescue loans. The Troika claims that privatisation will contribute to repayment of government debt. In addition, there are concerns of back-door privatisation of the water sector in the on-going negotiations relating to the adoption of a European Directive on Concessions (i.e. specific type of contracts between a public authority and an economic operator, in which the latter executes works or performs services while bearing the economic risk linked to this activity). Although the directive proposal itself does not require the privatisation of water nor of any public utilities, it contains in its current wording, provisions, especially on "public-public cooperation" (i.e. cooperation between public authorities in the provision of public utilities) and on "affiliated undertakings" (i.e. the rules for an entity to be considered as controlled by a public authority), which would jeopardise the necessary room for manoeuvre and legal certainty regarding the provision of water services by public actors. The exclusion of water services from the Concessions Directive is clearly a key breaking point and a major success for Greens/EFA. The Greens/EFA have always been against the Concessions Directive as such because there is no evidence that such a Directive is needed at all and that it would bring any added value to the current situation. However the main criticism addressed by the Greens/EFA was about the fact that water services in the Commission's proposal were included in the scope, and that this was opening up the way to risks of privatisation. Against this back drop, the European Citizens' Initiative "Water is a public good", calling for strong measures to protect and promote universal water delivery as an essential public service, has galvanised attention across Europe and is scheduled to be the first Citizens' Initiative to be adopted. On June 21st, Commissioner Barnier took note of this and decided to propose the withdrawal of water services from the scope of the directive. This is a major achievement for Greens and all the citizens who fought for this, and likely to change Greens/EFA's final position on the Concessions Directive as a whole since the inclusion of water services in the scope of the Directive was the major reason for Greens to vote against the Directive in the IMCO Committee in January. This conference aims at discussing these issues and at contributing to the mobilisation against these threats in the water sector.

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

11:15

Opening and introduction

by MEPs **Heide Rühle**, **Nikos Chrysogelos** and **Karim Zéribi**

11:25

Film presentation 'Water makes money'

(10-15min)

11:40

Explanations

by the author of the film **Leslie Franke & Herdolor Lorenz**

11:50

The Citizens' initiative right2water:

presentation by the campaign responsible / EPSU representative

Jan Willem Goudriaan, vice-President of the citizens committee of the ECI and EPSU

12:00

Presentation of local/regional case examples:

- **Dr. Kostas Nikolaou**, Kinisi 136 (Greece)

- **Luís Babiano**, Director General, Asociación Española de Operadores Públicos de Agua, Saniamiento y Distribución (Spanish Association of Public Services of Water)

12:10

Discussion with the public

12:55

Conclusion

by **Raül Romeva**, MEP

_____ *Simultaneous interpretation will be provided in EN, FR, DE, EL, ES*

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