

Right2water citizens' initiative: Commission must act, say MEPs

Plenary sessions [08-09-2015 - 14:07]

The European Commission's response to the first EU citizens' initiative (ECI) petition, on the "Right2Water", lacks ambition and failed to meet the demands of the organizers, said MEPs in a resolution voted on Tuesday. ECIs enable citizens to ask the Commission to propose laws in areas within its competence, if they can muster at least one million signatures from at least a quarter of EU member states.

The Right2Water citizens' initiative was the first successful example of this democratic mechanism. Ownership and management of water services are clearly key concerns for citizens that cannot be ignored", said lead MEP Lynn Boylan (GUE/NGL, IE), whose report was approved by 363 votes to 96, with 261 abstentions. "It is pitiful that the Commission has not come forward with legislative proposals enshrining water as a human right and a legal requirement across the European Union (...). Profits should not be made on public goods such as water", she added.

Commission "limits itself to reiterating existing commitments"

MEPs regret that the European Commission communication responding to the "Right2Water" ECI and a European Parliament hearing in February 2014 "lacks ambition, does not meet the specific demands made in the ECI, and limits itself to reiterating existing commitments".

"If successful and widely supported ECIs (...) are neglected by the Commission, the EU as such will lose credibility in the eyes of citizens", MEPs say.

They call on the Commission to table legislative proposals, including a revision of the EU Water Framework Directive if appropriate, in order to recognise that affordable access to water is a basic human right.

MEPs point out that EU member states have a duty to ensure that access to water is guaranteed for all, regardless of the supplier and that suppliers provide safe drinking water and improve sanitation.

Keep water out of trade deals

MEPs stipulate that production, distribution and treatment of water and sanitation services must remain excluded from the Concessions Directive in any future revision. Moreover, the special character of water and sanitation services, such as production, distribution and treatment, makes it imperative to exclude them from any trade agreements the EU is negotiating or considering, they add.

Note to editors

In February 2014, organisers of the "Right2Water" campaign attended a hearing with the Environment Committee, in association with the Development, Internal market and Petitions committees. The ECI collected 1,884,790 signatures.

Press release

The initiators urged the EU Commission to guarantee access to water and sanitation as a human right, and give a legal undertaking that water services will not be liberalised in the EU. MEPs shared the view that access to water is a basic human right, but some pointed out that rules on providing drinkable water remain within the remit of EU member states.

Procedure: Non-legislative resolution

Facts

- In February 2014, organisers of the “Right2Water” campaign held a hearing with the Environment Committee
- They urged the EU Commission to guarantee access to water and sanitation as a human right
- The ECI collected 1,884,790 signatures

Further information

- Adopted text will be available here (click on 08.09.2014)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/plenary/en/texts-adopted.html>
- Video recording of debate (click on 00.00.2014)
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-live/en/plenary/search-by-date>
- Procedure file:
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2014/2239\(INI\)&l=en](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2014/2239(INI)&l=en)
- Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety:
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/envi/home.html>
- Right2Water ECI initiators website
: <http://www.right2water.eu/>
- Background note
: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/content/20140214BKG36173/html/Background-note-on-Right2Water-European-Citizens'-Initiative>
- Profile of rapporteur Lynn Boylan (GUE/NGL, IE): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/124984.html>

Political groups

- Press releases by the EPP group: <http://www.eppgroup.eu/press>
- Press releases by the S&D group: <http://www.socialistsanddemocrats.eu/newsroom>
- Press releases by the ECR group: <http://ecrgroup.eu/news/>
- Press releases by the ALDE group: <http://www.alde.eu/press/press-and-release-news/>
- Press releases by the GUE/NGL group: <http://www.guengl.eu/news/archives/category/gue-ngl-news>
- Press releases by the Greens/EFA group: <http://www.greens-efa.eu/press/70-press-releases.html>
- Press releases by the EFDD group: <http://www.efddgroup.eu/newsroom/press-releases>

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