



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2014 - 2019

Committee on Development

2014/2239(INI)

12.5.2015

OPINION

of the Committee on Development

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

on follow up to the European Citizens' Initiative Right2Water
(2014/2239(INI))

Rapporteur: Cristian Dan Preda

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SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Development calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas UN General Assembly resolution 64/292 of 28 July 2010 explicitly recognises the human right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation, and this right is also clearly referred to in various other international instruments and agreements; whereas access to safe drinking water and sanitation is inextricably linked to the right to life, health and human dignity and to the need for an adequate standard of living;
- B. whereas at least 748 million people do not have sustainable access to safe drinking water, and a third of the world population lacks basic sanitation; whereas, as a result, the right to health is threatened and diseases spread, causing suffering and death and posing major impediments to development; whereas about 4 000 children die daily from water-borne diseases or due to inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene; whereas the lack of access to potable water kills more children than AIDS, malaria and smallpox combined; whereas there is, however, a clear downward trend in these numbers and their decline can and must be accelerated;
- C. whereas access to water also has a security dimension which requires improved regional cooperation;
- D. whereas lack of access to water and sanitation has consequences for the realisation of other human rights; whereas water challenges disproportionately affect women, given that in many developing countries they are traditionally responsible for domestic water supply; whereas women and girls suffer most from the lack of access to adequate and decent sanitation, which often limits their access to education and makes them more vulnerable to diseases;
- E. whereas every year, three and a half million people die of water-borne illnesses;
- F. whereas access to water is among the keys to achieving sustainable development; whereas focusing development assistance on improving the supply of drinking water and sanitation is an efficient way of pursuing fundamental poverty eradication objectives, as well as promoting social equality, public health, food security and economic growth;
- G. whereas the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which entered into force in 2013, created a complaint mechanism allowing individuals or groups to file formal complaints on violations of the human right to water and sanitation, among other rights;
- H. whereas in developing countries and emerging economies, demand for water is increasing from all sectors, in particular for energy and agriculture; whereas climate change, urbanisation and demographic developments may pose a serious threat to water availability in many developing countries, and an estimated two-thirds of the world's population is expected to live in water-stressed countries by 2025;

- I. whereas the EU is the largest donor in the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector, with 25 % of its annual global humanitarian funding dedicated solely to supporting development partners in this area; whereas, however, a 2012 European Court of Auditors' Special Report on European Union development assistance for drinking-water supply and basic sanitation in sub-Saharan countries pointed out the need to improve aid effectiveness and the sustainability of the projects supported by the EU;
- J. whereas the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe declared that 'access to water must be recognised as a fundamental human right because it is essential to life on earth and is a resource that must be shared by humankind';
- K. whereas the EU Water Framework Directive recognises that 'water is not a commercial product like any other but, rather, a heritage which must be protected, defended and treated as such';
- L. whereas the privatisation of basic utilities in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s has, inter alia, hampered the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on both water and sanitation, as the focus of investors on cost recovery has, among other things, intensified inequalities in the provision of such services, at the expense of low-income households; whereas in light of the failure of water privatisation, the transfer of water services from private companies to local authorities is a growing trend in the water sector all around the world;
- M. whereas the EU and the Member States shall comply with the commitments and take account of the objectives they have approved in the context of the United Nations and other competent international organisations;
- N. whereas access to water is essential for life, health, food, well-being and development, and water can therefore not be considered simply as a commodity;
1. Welcomes the commitment of the Commission to ensure that the human rights dimension of access to safe drinking water and sanitation remains at the heart of its development policy¹; acclaims the importance of the European Citizens' Initiative instrument and hopes that it will become increasingly effective and, above all, lead to legislation;
 2. Highlights that the human right to water and sanitation is closely linked to a number of key global challenges, such as health, energy, food, employment, gender equality and environmental sustainability; strongly supports the inclusion of the proposed Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 on ensuring availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030 within the post-2015 global development framework, including the objective of achieving universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all; stresses that realisation of all SDGs requires mobilisation of much more financing for development than is currently provided, from both developed and developing countries, including from new sources and innovative financing instruments; calls on the EU and its Member States to ensure that access to drinking water and sanitation are priority topics at the forthcoming UN Conference on Climate Change

¹ Communication from the Commission on the European Citizens' Initiative 'Water and sanitation are a human right! Water is a public good, not a commodity!' (COM(2014)0177), p. 10.

(COP21);

3. Recalls that access to water is essential for agriculture in order to realise the right to adequate food;
4. Stresses that access to a basic water requirement should be a non-debatable fundamental human right implicitly and explicitly supported by international law, declarations and state practice;
5. Calls on governments, international aid agencies, non-governmental organisations and local communities to work to provide all humans with a basic water requirement and to guarantee that water is a human right;
6. Urges that the ‘human right to water’ be included in the list of universal fundamental human rights, including the right to sufficient water of an appropriate quality, to satisfy the explicit right to life and the broader rights to health and well-being;
7. Insists that the WASH sector in developing countries should be given high priority both in official development aid (ODA) and in national budgets; recalls that water management is a collective responsibility; favours open-mindedness in relation to different aid modalities, but strict adherence to development effectiveness principles, to policy coherence for development and to an unwavering focus on poverty eradication and the maximisation of the development impact; supports, in this regard, the involvement of local communities in the realisation of projects in developing countries, as well as the principle of community ownership;
8. Recalls that ensuring sustainable management of groundwater is indispensable to poverty reduction and shared prosperity, as groundwater has the potential to provide an improved source of drinking water for millions of urban and rural poor people;
9. Calls for effective monitoring of projects carried out through external aid; stresses the need to monitor financing strategies and budgets to ensure that allocated funds address existing disparities and inequalities in access to water and respect the human rights principles of non-discrimination, access to information and participation;
10. Calls on the EU to target its development assistance to the construction, operation and maintenance of small-scale infrastructure, capacity-building and awareness-raising;
11. Notes with concern that, according to the UN Special Rapporteur on the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, people living in slums generally have to pay more than those living in formal settlements to receive unregulated, poor quality services; urges developing countries to prioritise budget allocations for services for disadvantaged and isolated people;
12. Underlines that efficient and equitable management of water resources relies on the capacity of local governments to deliver services; calls, therefore, on the EU to further support the strengthening of water governance and infrastructure in developing countries, while addressing in particular the needs of vulnerable rural populations;

13. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to adopt a policy 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;
14. Supports the Global Water Solidarity Platform launched by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in order to engage local authorities in finding solutions to water challenges; also welcomes the ‘1 % solidarity for water and sanitation’ and other initiatives taken by citizens and authorities in some Member States in order to support projects in developing countries with funds from consumption fees; notes that such initiatives have been put into practice by several water utilities; reiterates its call on the Commission to encourage solidarity arrangements in this and other areas, for example through dissemination of information, facilitation of partnerships and exchanges of experience, including through a potential partnership between the Commission and Member States, with supplementary EU funding being provided for projects implemented via that initiative; in particular, encourages the promotion of public-public partnerships in water facilities in developing countries, in line with the Global Water Operators’ Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA) coordinated by UN Habitat;
15. Urges the Commission to ensure that aid is spent effectively and that it is better targeted to the WASH sector in the perspective of the post-2015 development agenda; calls for the creation of a global monitoring mechanism to track progress in achieving universal access to safe drinking water, the sustainable use and development of water resources and the strengthening of equitable, participatory and accountable water governance in all countries;
16. Encourages public sector and partly state-owned water supply companies operating in developing countries to reinvest all the profits generated by the water management cycle in maintaining and improving water services and in protecting water resources; invites the EU and the Member States, to that end, to promote an exchange of best practices, in fields such as water management, water treatment and water conservation, between European companies and companies operating in developing countries;
17. Calls on the Commission to relaunch the ‘Water Facility’ instrument, which has proved to be effective in fostering better access to water services in developing countries by promoting capacity-building measures for local communities;
18. Reaffirms that access to drinking water in a sufficient quantity and of a sufficient quality is a basic human right and considers that national governments have a duty to carry out this obligation;
19. Insists on the need for local public authorities to be given support in their efforts towards establishing an innovative, participatory, democratic system of public water management that is efficient, transparent and regulated and that respects the objectives of sustainable development;
20. Emphasises that distribution of water should be essentially looked upon as a public service and hence organised as such to guarantee affordable access for all.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	6.5.2015
Result of final vote	+: 25 -: 0 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	Louis Aliot, Beatriz Becerra Basterrechea, Nirj Deva, Charles Goerens, Enrique Guerrero Salom, Heidi Hautala, Maria Heubuch, Teresa Jiménez-Becerril Barrio, Stelios Kouloglou, Arne Lietz, Norbert Neuser, Maurice Ponga, Cristian Dan Preda, Lola Sánchez Caldentey, György Schöpflin, Pedro Silva Pereira, Davor Ivo Stier, Paavo Väyrynen, Bogdan Brunon Wenta, Anna Záborská
Substitutes present for the final vote	Patrizia Toia, Joachim Zeller
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Daniela Aiuto, Tiziana Beghin, Julie Ward