

**Question for written answer E-008837/2012  
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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and Heide Rühle (Verts/ALE)**

Subject: Privatisation of water by the Troika

On 15 May 2012, a group of NGOs sent a letter to Olli Rehn about the Troika's recommendations that public services, including water, should be privatised<sup>1</sup>.

The Commission's answer, which took four months to arrive, stated that 'the Commission believes that the privatisation of public utilities, including water supply firms, can deliver benefits to the society when carefully made. To this end, privatisation should take place once the appropriate regulatory framework has been prepared to avoid abuses by private monopolies. (...)' This declaration reaffirms the goal of privatisation and appears to be in violation of the EU's supposed neutrality on the question of public or private ownership and management of collective water services (Article 345 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Article 17(1) of Directive 2006/123/EC on services in the internal market).

As the European Parliament made clear in its resolutions of 14 January 2004, 10 March 2004 and 31 May 2006, the water sector should not be liberalised but modernised. The water sector should therefore not fall under the scope of the directive on service concessions. Parliament's resolution of 3 July 2012 on the implementation of EU water legislation<sup>2</sup> states that 'access to water should constitute a fundamental and universal right'. The European Citizens' Initiative 'Right to Water'<sup>3</sup> calls on the EU to step up its efforts to achieve universal access to water and sanitation.

1. How does the Commission explain the contradiction between the Troika's recommendations, the above-mentioned Treaty article, the spirit of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the initiatives of the European Parliament?
2. Are these recommendations a violation of Article 345 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the EU's principle of subsidiarity?
3. Will the Commission withdraw these recommendations in all the bail-out countries?

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<sup>1</sup> <http://corporateeurope.org/open-letter-eu-commission-water-privatisation>

<sup>2</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2012)0273.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.right2water.eu/>