

**Question for written answer P-002257/2013
to the Commission**
Rule 117
Thomas Händel (GUE/NGL)

Subject: Concession directive / privatisation of public services

In a letter replying to NGOs, dated 26 September 2012 (ref. Ares(2012)1125135), the Commission stated the following: 'The Commission believes that the privatisation of public utilities, including, water supply firms, can deliver benefits to the society when carefully made.'

On 21 February 2013, however, in an interview with the Austrian newspaper 'Der Standard', Commissioner Michel Barnier stated inter alia the following: 'I personally prefer water to be supplied as part of the public domain, not private. This is a public good.' (unofficial translation).

Can the Commission answer the following questions:

1. Is the Commission having a rethink in this connection in that it acknowledges the value of public services such as water supply, suggesting that, in future, it will take greater care with regard to regulatory proposals?
2. Can it accordingly be assumed that, in its crisis management dealings with the International Monetary Fund and the European Central Bank, it will make every effort to ensure that Member States drawing on financial assistance from the Union and from the other Member States are no longer called on to privatise public services, in particular water supply, and that, in this connection, there are no plans to encroach in any way whatsoever upon the arrangements, exclusive to Member States, for organising public services?
3. Is the Commission prepared to accept the call by the European citizens' initiative 'Water is a Human Right', for which more than 1 200 000 signatures have been collected, and, accordingly, exclude water supply from the concession directive and all further regulatory proposals?