



## European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)

**“Water is a human right!” will submit certificates for 1.6 million signatories.**

**Press communication – 10 December 2013**

(Brussels 10 December) **10 December is human rights day.** We celebrate and remember the struggle of many for human rights and dignity. The European Citizens’ Initiative “Water is a human right!” ([www.right2water.eu](http://www.right2water.eu)) is proud to be part of that struggle that unites many on our planet. It has engaged hundred thousands in Europe to demand that the European Commission takes steps to implement the right to water as adopted by the UN in 2010.

The ECI collected more than 1.85 million signatures after a long campaign that started in May 2012 and submitted these to the national authorities in September 2013. As the first ECI we submitted the signatures to the national authorities for validation.

*“It is a great satisfaction to the supporters of the ECI that we can now, on human rights day, announce that we have the certified minimum number of signatures required”* says **Jan Willem Goudriaan** of the citizens committee. *“The ball now moves in the Court of the European Commission to listen to the voice of people and propose legislation to implement the human right to water and sanitation in European law”*.

While not all results are back yet, based on the certificates received from the national authorities the ECI has collected more than 1 million valid signatures and passed the minimum threshold in more than 7 countries (Spain, Italy, Luxembourg, Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany, Slovakia, Slovenia, Greece, Lithuania and Finland) countries. When all the certificates are back we will submit our demands officially to the European Commission. So far we have over 1.5 million valid signatures.

The demands of the ECI “right2water” are:

- For the EU to recognise the UN right to water and sanitation into EU law
- Not to liberalise water services in the EU
- To contribute to achieving access to water and sanitation for all across the world

According to the World Health Organization, 780 million people lack access to drinking water, including in Europe. The European Environmental Agency stated in 2012 that more than 50% of the rural population in 10 EU countries have no access to improved water or sanitation. This has a direct impact on their health.



## **European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)**

We have used the ECI campaign as a tool to commit to the human right to water and sanitation. It is a tool to change the mind-set in the European Commission from a market-based approach with the focus on competition to a rights-based approach with the focus on public services. It aims to achieve universal (global) access to water and sanitation and to safeguard the limited public water resources for future generations.

Today, on human rights day, we think we have made a big step to bring the realisation of the right to water and sanitation closer to all the people whose rights are not fulfilled yet and a big step in defence of those who see their rights threatened by corporate interests. We also made a major advancement towards more participation of citizens in EU decision-making. The European Commission will give its answer on how and what it will do in three months.

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*EPSU is the European Federation of Public Service Unions. It is the largest federation of the ETUC and comprises 8 million public service workers from over 265 trade unions; EPSU organizes workers in the energy, water and waste sectors, health and social services and local and national administration, in all European countries including in the EU's Eastern Neighborhood. EPSU is the recognized regional organization of Public Services International (PSI).*