

Water Campaign Action Plan

Adopted at the EPSU Executive Committee, 9 & 10 November 2009

1. Congress decision: Take the initiative of organising a petition to obtain one million signatures for “water as a human right” and “water is not for sale” based on national action to gain broad public support during 4 weeks in the month of May in 2010, inviting other water activist groups to join, setting aside resources for the development of campaign materials, assistance to the EPSU Secretariat and establishing a Campaign Steering Group to accompany the campaign.
2. The central aim is to obtain recognition of water as a human right in the EU and to build further opposition to the commercialization of water services to prevent liberalization and privatization of water services.
3. The method is to reach this aim through a one million signatures campaign. This target is based on the Citizens Initiative as laid down in the Lisbon Treaty. This is a challenging target even more so as the European Parliament (EP) has argued that in at least a quarter of the Member States (seven) the signatures should be 1/500th of the population of the Member State (see appendix III A attached).
4. Apart from the direct aim, the action would assist unions to improve our public profile, build alliances with other progressive groups, and possibly assist in recruiting new members. It also will be an EPSU-wide campaign.
5. Formulation of the Petition (Working text for the moment):

WATER FOR PEOPLE – WATER FOR LIFE

The signatories ask the European Commission to take an initiative:

- *To recognize (access to) water and sanitation as a fundamental human right in the European Union and in the UN*
- *To keep water and sanitation services public and prevent their commercialisation*
- *This can be done through a commitment of the European Commission:*
 - *Not to liberalise water and sanitation services*
 - *Not to include water and sanitation services in Trade Agreements such as GATS*
 - *Not to pressure for Water and Sanitation Services to be covered by the Services Directive*
 - *To promote Public-Public Partnerships between water companies through EU Development Aid*
 - *To enshrine the “water is not a commodity” principle of the Water Framework Directive in all EU water and water-related policies.*
 - *To define that protecting our water environment (sustainable development) will prevail over commercial policies*
 - *Not to disconnect users that can not pay their bill*

- *To ensure that private water companies operating water services provide complete transparency and openness regarding their contracts (no role for commercial confidentiality in this public service)*
 - *To promote citizens participation in the running of water services (through municipal councils, citizens' boards or other mechanisms)*
6. Although we can ask for water services to return into public hands, this is not a competence of the European Commission (see appendix III A attached).
 7. Regarding the *mechanism* by which the European Commission should act – this should be through an amendment to the Fundamental Rights Charter, or through a Protocol rather than a Directive (to prepare for this, EPSU should seek legal advice, and first contacts have been made with a lawyer). As there will be an Commission initiative, the Council of Ministers and European Parliament will have to approve it at some stage. Changes of a more constitutional nature will require unanimity and hence strong local action in a large majority of EU Member States.

Argumentation

8. EPSU will have to develop the accompanying argumentation. Regarding the human rights angle this should not be problematic as much work has been done (see appendix III B attached). This aspect of the campaign and the collection of signatures will be important to increase pressure on all European governments to act, and also support the right to water and sanitation at the level of the UN. The UN is considering water as a human right, has adopted a resolution to this effect and appointed a special rapporteur. Building support for this right in all countries in the geographic area of EPSU will give a boost to the campaign to get the UN and governments to adopt this right.

The human right to water entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses.”
 General Comment 15 on the right to water, adopted in November 2002 by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, sets the criteria for the full enjoyment of the right to water - <http://www.righttowater.info/code/No15.asp>

9. While it this a European campaign to force the Commission to act through a Citizens' Campaign, the campaign also needs a strong national dimension – it will be national governments that have to act in the Council to support the right to water – and implement it in their legislation. It can be linked to national or local struggles around water issues – to prevent privatisation of local water companies for example, or to demand a return to public ownership in some cases.
 The human rights angle will receive popular support and in campaign terms, it will be interesting for the unions to get popular national figures from NGOs, media, culture, politics to endorse this.
10. EPSU will have to develop what we see as implications of the right to water. Again much work has been done on this, and it is here that opinions start to differ, as in the World Water Forum in Istanbul March 2009 where the European Commission intervened with certain delegations to prevent them from supporting water as a human right. How the right to water is interpreted links with the next angle.
11. The public water angle is more problematic. First, very practically, while we can demand a return to public ownership, or an end to privatization, the EU Commission will rule this

outside of its competencies. It cannot act. However, it is a great campaign slogan and will receive support from many. Therefore, it is suggested to link this with demands over which the Commission does have competencies (see paragraphs 8, 9 & 10 above). These demands like keeping water out of WTO / GATS – water not for sale - have been EPSU policy and have had a mobilizing effect.

12. Second, we are confronted with the established policies of promoting competition, including through the EU legal instruments. It is difficult to frame these demands in a Directive and asking for a Communication on this looks “silly” for such a Citizens’ initiative. Linking it to Services of General Interest (SGI), SGEI, or Social Services of General Interest, leads us into a quagmire.
13. On the other hand, with PSIRU, PSI and the Reclaiming Public Water Network much documentation is available including on positive aspects such as Public Public partnerships (PUPS), and progressive public water principles.
14. Hence the reference to obtaining a commitment to promote public water policies.
15. On the negative side: the newly elected conservative European Commission President Barroso has made the case for the completion of the internal market, amongst others, in environmental services in his political guidelines (September 2009). We are aware that the Commission has initiatives towards this end in its drawers.
16. It seems important for the broader appeal of the campaign to link it to environmental issues – hence the reference to sustainable development and that price should not be a determining issue in water policies.
17. It is more complicated is to find a direct link with workplace and working condition issues. An indirect link focused on our members across sectors is to link it with having sufficient drinking water in the work place. Some unions have already work carried out around this.
18. EPSU will have to develop a Key Concepts Paper and Frequently Asked Questions list.
19. National right and issues. For most countries, the campaign can be linked to obtaining water as a fundamental human right in national legislation and getting a commitment from the government, as well as opposing liberalisation / privatisation in the national context, or with issues of more governmental control, citizens’ participation
20. Political support. EPSU should also work with a group of Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) around this issue, especially those that have signed the EPSU Public Services Pledge. Apart from the political endorsement this gives, it will also build a group of MEPs in the European Parliament that will be more attentive to water issues, and that can be relied on to follow up the petition when introduced to the European Commission.

Broader implications of the campaign

21. The campaign has a broader implication: will it be possible for citizens’ to influence, shape and give a different direction to EU policies. Can it be a way to change even the Treaty? Is it a way of laying the ground work for a different political direction in 5 years time (next elections) and link it with the positive European project of the trade unions? The experience we will gain will be a valuable asset to EPSU and affiliated organizations and if we are successful, provide a boost to Europe’s public service unions.

Budget

Legal opinion	5000 €
Development of Logo; Symbols; Argumentation paper	20.000 – 30.000 €
Assistance for meetings of campaign group	30.000 €
Dedicated campaign staff in EPSU;	35.000 € (1/2 time person, 1/2 to 3/4 year)
We should explore possibility to work with students/ stagiaires and activists from the water movement	10.000 € to contribute to costs of transport and accommodation
Total budget	Approx. 100.000 €

22. It is proposed that the above resources be financed through the EPSU budget, for example through provisions we have not used in past years. As part of the campaign we would ask affiliated unions to assist with financing specific actions, possibly contribute staff resources. Yet another possibility is that we open an account to ask for individual donations to the campaign.

Launch of the campaign and major action moments

23. The suggestion is for the campaign to be launched at – World Water Day 22 March 2010. It could run for a year (see also the reference to a year in the EP guidance on such initiatives in appendix III A attached.) The Congress resolution provides for specific campaign actions in May 2010. This would generate more publicity than when unions act on their own. It allows for positive feedback of each others' experiences. It also focuses the action in a specific period, rather than a long, dragged out process.

24. The suggestion is further to make the campaign visible in Europe's towns and cities through collecting the signatures not just electronically but also physically through canvassing the "markets." Everywhere from big cities to small towns and villages, markets are held (weekly) which are visited by Europe's citizens. Concentrating in one month (4 Saturdays?) could generate the signatures. If we do not realize the million then, such an action could be repeated in autumn and/or on 10 December 2010 (Human Rights Day)

25. Final date (22 March 2011)

Campaign Steering Group

26. To accompany the campaign it is suggested that a Campaign Steering Group is established. This is open to all unions that are playing an active part in their country. A number of unions have taken a strong interest in water issues and we would expect them to play a role.

The below table provides an indication but is by no means complete, nor claims to be accurate. It is an overview of the unions that have indicated a strong interest in water related issues and which have participated in various activities that the EPSU Secretariat is aware of. The table no doubt does injustice to many activists and their unions that have been active as well but whose activities are not known or who have not participated in our work yet...

Country	Union
Austria	GdG
Belgium	CGSP and CSC- Services Publics
Finland	JHL
France	CGT-SP and CFDT-Interco
Germany	Verdi
Hungary	VdSzSz
Ireland	Impact SIPTU
Iceland	BRSB
Italy	CGIL-FP
Lithuania	LVPF
Luxembourg	CGT-L/OGB-L
Netherlands	AbvaKabo
Norway	Fagforbundet
Portugal	STAL
Roumania	Sigol
Russia	Local municipal services union
Spain	CCOO-FSC
Sweden	Kommunal and SKTF
Turkey	Several unions GENEL-Is
Ukraine	Local municipal services union
UK	Unison and GMB
- Northern Ireland	NIPSA, Unison, GMB, UNITE

27. While the meetings of the campaign group would be in English it is proposed a small budget is made available to assist with meetings, languages and financial assistance to some unions. 35.000 Euro, 5 meetings of 1 day, with whispered interpretation and some financial assistance. As a working method and to prepare well, we would suggest regular telephone conferences for colleagues to consider problematic issues and exchange positive experiences and ideas. Both the telephone conferences and the meetings could be opened to representatives from water activist groups.
28. An earnest assessment of our capabilities requires us also to consider our weak spots, countries where the unions lack in strength, where there is limited contact with EPSU. For example, regarding water trade unions, weak spots are Estonia (none), Poland (organizational issues), Greece (small). It means that a coordinating role will have to be played by other unions.

Targets

29. Attached is a break down of the one million target. Based on the experience with the ETUC campaign it seems important to give each country a specific target to work towards. This will increase commitment and responsibility. We should understand - *if the unions in a country miss realizing the target they pass the responsibility to compensate for the short fall to other unions in other countries.* The individual country targets also provide an indication of what will be required in particular in the case of the bigger numbers. To say it provocatively - A simple petition list at the desk of a national union office will not do in such cases.

30. The national target can possibly be broken down across different unions, so that each union has a target. Within the campaign there could be separate moments – like campaigning together in the 27 capitals of the EU-27 (and more capitals in the larger European neighborhood) on the same day. This probably will allow for greater publicity and media attention
31. The campaign allows us to use creative ways – internet and youtube, VIPs, politicians and others that support us, etc.
32. Some unions might use it as well to mobilize their young workers around this issue?

The broader water movement

33. J.W. Goudriaan has had a number of discussions with water activist groups over the past weeks, including with Corporate Europe Observatory/Transnational Institute (part of the Reclaiming Public Water Network), Aqua Publica Europea (public water operators), Aquattac (the water activist network of Attac). There is sufficient interest in the idea and support, promoting of the initiative will be forthcoming.
34. It will make sense to establish a broader campaign group to promote the initiative when decided. Several NGOs have good contacts with VIPs, celebrities and politicians to be an asset.
35. As argued in paragraph 25, unions could be working together with the water movement groups to give visibility to the campaign especially “at the market places”. This will also provide confidence to also fight privatisation at national and local level.