

AquaFed

THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF
PRIVATE WATER OPERATORS

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PRESS RELEASE

Enhancing the Citizens human right to water and access to information

04 June 2018

The EU institutions must deliver an ambitious framework to improve access to quality drinking water and sanitation and ensure citizens can access essential information on these services.

A few days before a crucial debate in the European Parliament on the recast of the Drinking Water Directive, AquaFed, the private water operators, is calling on Members of the EU Parliament to strengthen measures improving access for all, and transparency of water services.

Through the recast, the European Commission encourages use of tap water and sets a framework to improve public access (proposed Article 13), and improve consumers' confidence in water by providing more information on quality, production, management, costs and volumes consumed (article 14).

AquaFed supports the Commission's intentions because they enhance EU citizens' human rights and strengthen democracy.

Neil Dhot, Executive Director, AquaFed, said: "Access to drinking water is a human right so the opportunity to guarantee this right to more EU citizens simply must be confirmed.

"Information on how water services are operated, including costs and performance of the provider, must be made transparent to users via indicators standardised at Member State level.

"We believe that overall no one owns the right to water, we can only serve it. The European Commission's proposals address the real needs."

The recast of the Drinking Water Directive also aligns with the necessity to take into account the principles of cost recovery and polluter pays in water policy. These principles are crucial elements in providing safe water remains affordable in both the short and long-term.

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Background

AquaFed, Fédération Internationale des Opérateurs Privés de Services d'Eau
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About AquaFed

AquaFed is the international federation of private water operators. We bring together more than 300 water companies operating in more than 40 countries including European member states. Collectively our members serve around 100 million people in the EU. We are a UN accredited body and are in the EU transparency register.

EC proposals on Drinking Water Directive (DWD) and our response

In February 2018 the Commission published proposals to amend the DWD. We focused our response mostly in two key areas – access (Article 13) and transparency (Article 14).

Access

AquaFed welcomed the Commission's initiative to guarantee the fundamental right of access to drinking water and to improve its quality, and the flexibility given to member states on how to meet these responsibilities.

AquaFed also stated that it is essential that the EU legislative bodies make more specific provisions on the outcomes and measures it intends for access to water. Equally, some member states are not sufficiently resourced to extend their main centralised water supply and will need specific support measures from the EU.

Information

AquaFed said the Commission's proposals are a positive step forward for the promotion of transparency on the data of water services in the EU.

Globally, private operators have encouraged the publishing, to date, of more than 100,000 performance indicators. The transparency and the accountability of water services would be enhanced significantly if all public water systems, all public water authorities and all their operators, whatever their status, have to disclose regularly through the internet and other appropriate means, comparable data on key economic, human rights and other performance indicators.

The obligation to make data available must fall to the public authorities organising the water services. Then, water-users and citizens can scrutinise their water suppliers' performance and academics can process the data to identify promising solutions for progress.

Why this issue is so important for citizens and for AquaFed

AquaFed has a long history of campaigning for water and sanitation to be recognised as human rights. Both public and private water operators turn the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation into reality. That is their job. They do it daily in Europe

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and the other parts of the world. Greater transparency of water service data is a key component of fulfilling these rights.

We welcomed the European Citizens Initiative and ahead of the Parliamentary debate in 2014, we called for the Commission to answer the call of citizens in key areas. Our position then, and now, is that the EU must:

- include the Human Right to Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights
- organise regular reporting on human right to water indicators like sufficiency, safety and acceptability, affordability and physical accessibility
- increase transparency and accountability of water services through transparent benchmarking for all water operators, both public and private.