

## Declaration nr. 7

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**On behalf of the party:** Patrie Furlane

**Title:** Water and Europe

The right to water is a European Citizens' Initiative [ECI] launched to ensure that water remains a public service and a public good, in particular, almost two million citizens 5 years ago asked the European Commission that:

- there should be no liberalisation of water services;
- water and sanitation should be guaranteed for everyone in Europe;
- access to water and sanitation should be universal.

It is urgent that:

- EU institutions and Member States should guarantee that all inhabitants have the right to water and sanitation;
- water supply and water management should be not subject to "internal market rules" and water services should be excluded from liberalisation;
- the EU will make greater efforts to achieve universal access to water and sanitation.

Five years after the IECI on water, the Drinking Water Directive [DWD] voted by the European Parliament on 24 October 2018, could not be more disappointing.

Although the Commission's timid effort to include provisions on universal access to water and the emphasis on minorities and vulnerable groups was appreciated, this text has nothing to do with the human right to water recognised by the United Nations and demanded by citizens.

The human right to water, as defined by the United Nations, means that water must be accessible, safe, acceptable, sufficient and affordable. The Drinking Water Directive responds only to the first three aspects.

The Commission's proposal simply ignores the most difficult challenge for the Human Right to Water in the European context: the accessibility. With thousands of families having their water cut off in recent years because they cannot pay their bills, ensuring access to water is not enough. Commission should be courageous to question the management of private companies that profit from water management in order to really improve this human right in Europe.

The Directive includes provisions to promote free access to water in public spaces, including public buildings but forgets to specify that it should be drinking water.

The Drinking Water Directive should be consistent with the efforts to eliminate plastics at European level, such as the Plastics Strategy and the Circular Economy Package, in order to complain this unacceptable and environmentally damaging industrial production.

The consultation process for the new Water Framework Directive [WFD] was recently launched; it is important that it prioritises the protection of water and complies with the UN approved principles on the human right to water and with what European citizens demanded with the 2013 ECI.

In particular:

1. water is not a commodity, but a common good and a universal right. Like other natural elements, it is fundamental for the balance of ecosystems and for the survival of the planet and therefore its management must take into account the rights of Mother Nature;
2. ownership and management of water and infrastructure must remain public and should include forms of participation and social control;

3. the principle of Full Recovery Cost, as a guiding principle in the system of financing Europe's integrated water services, must be changed ensuring access to water and the necessary funds for infrastructure investments through tax revenues;

4. the participation of citizens and workers in the management of services is a necessary condition for a new model of management of common goods.

Exclusion of water from international treaties such as CETA and JEFTA

JEFTA is the largest trade agreement ever concluded by the European Union with a country whose GDP is three times that of Canada – CETA was the counterpart of the previous agreement, which served as a model for the European Commission for JEFTA.

While CETA contained lacks in the provisions on water resources, public water and wastewater management, the measures of JEFTA are even worse than CETA. In addition, a considerable amount of power will be transferred from the EU Parliament to non-transparent committees.

Unlike the CETA Agreement [Article 1.9], there is no article in the JEFTA agreement on "water rights and obligations". This article, although not sufficiently, excludes water "in its natural state" from becoming a market commodity and preserves the rights of the authorities to decide for themselves how to allocate water resources.

Due to the inefficient water provisions of the CETA, some member states had insisted on including clarifications about water in the legally non-binding CETA Common Interpretative Tool (No 11, page 8). Slovenia, in particular, highlighted the shortcomings of CETA and underlined Slovenia's right to limit or cancel acquired rights on water. This is missing from the JEFTA agreement.

The approval of JEFTA in the context of a general worsening of water availability, also due to climate change, was a highly irresponsible act.

The consent to JEFTA meant the delivery of a considerable amount of power entrusted by the European Parliament to a JEFTA committee that was completely non-transparent! The mandate to the European Parliament did not include permission for such a transfer!

On all this, the European Free Alliance declares that:

1. water is not a commodity, but a common good and a universal right. Like other natural elements, it is fundamental for the balance of ecosystems and for the survival of the planet and therefore its management must take into account the rights of Mother Nature;

2. ownership and management of water and infrastructure must remain public and should include forms of participation and social control;

3. the principle of Full Recovery Cost, as the guiding principle in the system of financing Europe's integrated water services, must be changed ensuring access to water and the necessary funds for infrastructure investment through tax revenues;

4. the participation of citizens and workers in the management of services is a necessary condition for a new model of management of common goods;

5. the renegotiation of the International Treaties CETA and JEFTA with the exclusion of water as a "commodity market" and the maintenance by local authorities of autonomous decision-making power on the management of water resources.