



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DIRECTORATE GENERAL
ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS
Economies of the Member States II
The Director

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ECFIN/Dir G/MM Ares (2013)

Ms Gabriella Zanzanaini
Food & Water Privatisation
Rue d-Edimbourg 26
B-1050 Brussels

Dear Ms Zanzanaini,

Thank you for your letter regarding water privatisation. I would like to inform you that we consider that the statement¹ issued on 22 February 2013, by Commissioners Potočnik and Barnier provides an answer to your previous question dated 17 October 2012.

Let me reiterate that the European Commission does not have a policy of forcing Member States to privatise water services. The Commission recognizes that water is a public good which is vital to citizens and that the management of water resources is a matter for Member States, and therefore has a neutral position on the public or private ownership of water resources, in accordance with Article 345 of the TFEU. For cases where a public authority decides to provide services through a private economic operator, the Commission has proposed rules that will contribute to transparency and effectiveness in the spending of public money by enabling public authorities to make better choices.

Acknowledging the importance of water, the Commission made sure that its proposal for a Directive on the award of concession contracts fully recognises and supports the autonomy of local authorities regarding the provision and organisation of services of general economic interest, including water.

Public authorities will, at all times, remain free to choose whether they provide the services directly or via a third party, notably a private economic operator.

¹ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-131_en.htm

The proposed Directive will therefore not lead, under any circumstances, to imposed privatisation of water services.

You further request to make public correspondence between the European Commission, the Greek government and other members of the Troika (ECB & IMF) on this matter. We have not identified any relevant documents concerning the privatization of public water companies of Athens and Thessaloniki as per your request.

Let me conclude by stressing that under the EU Treaties there is no obligation for Member States, including programme countries, to privatise the water sector and the Commission is certainly not asking or pressuring Portugal, Greece or other countries to do so.

Yours sincerely,



Matthias Mors