

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

GREEK NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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PRESS RELEASE

THE RIGHT TO WATER

GNCHR Recommendations for its effective protection

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The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR) weighing, on the one hand, the progress made towards the guaranteeing of the right to water at the European and international level, and on the other hand, the dangers posed to its enjoyment by growing pressure for the privatization of its providers, regards addressing recommendations to the State for the protection of the right to water as crucial.

The urgency of such a project stems from the need to consolidate **the status of water as a “public good” and not as a commercial commodity**, as well as to treat water **as a natural commodity in shortage**.

Beyond its timeless importance, the right to water becomes especially crucial in times of crisis. The recognition of a right to water in Greece is rendered still more crucial, given that there is a heightened possibility that water supply companies will be privatized despite the social and economic consequences of the financial crisis. As an overall recommendation, *the GNCHR, therefore, recommends that water's status both as a public good and a universal right be enshrined in the constitution.*

Moreover, based on the regulatory content of the right to water, the GNCHR addresses some recommendations, both general and more specialized.

As far as the **general framework** of the protection of the right to water is concerned, the GNCHR issues the following recommendations:

- Legally recognizing the right to water as a public good. Recognition of the link between the right to water on the one hand and sewerage and irrigation on the other.
- Preserving the public character and oversight of the bodies responsible for water and sewerage; precluding the possibility of their being conceded to private actors.
- Ensuring the right of access to safe drinking water for every inhabitant of the country.
- Ensuring universal access to administrative and judicial procedures whereby members of the public can express their complaints relating to acts or omissions on the part of actors public or private, natural or legal that violate the right to water.
- Monitoring compliance with obligations relating to the right to water, mainly via independent authorities, on the basis of the specified GNCHR recommendations.
- Adopting, implementing and evaluating a National Action Plan for the full implementation of the right to water. It would be very useful to include a specific chapter on water in the National Action Plan for Human Rights.

Lastly, the GNCHR addresses more **specific recommendations**, which are organized into four main pillars and concern:

- a. The adequacy of water, b. the availability of water, c. the quality of water, d. the accessibility of water (Physical accessibility-Affordability-Equal and non-discriminatory access), and e. public participation in issues relevant to water.