

## **EPSU Utilities Sanding Committee: role of the public sector and a just transition for workers must be at the core of the EU Green Deal**



(27 February 2020) On 26th February, EPSU held its biannual Standing Committee (SC) on Utilities, bringing together EPSU affiliates from across Europe. The key elements addressed during this meeting were the European Green Deal, especially the social dimension and Just Transition Mechanism, the Sectoral Social Dialogues in the gas and electricity sectors, and the occupational health and safety issues of workers in the waste and water sectors.

The EU Green Deal is the new European Commission's promise to transform the EU into a climate neutral and carbon free era by 2050. The members of the standing committee committed once again to continue their activities to fight climate change breakdown and the negative consequences of digitalisation, while ensuring a just transition for workers and their communities.

Special focus was given to the development of European Social Dialogue in the electricity and gas sector. Social dialogue in the electricity sector is expected to conclude an agreement in the coming weeks on digitalisation and its consequences on workers (i.e. the Right to Disconnect). Social dialogue in the gas sector was successfully relaunched and had its first meeting on matters of the Green Deal and the future role of gas in the transition into a carbon-free economy.

The SC will closely monitor the occupational health and safety (OHS) of workers in the waste and water sectors throughout the transition to a circular economy. To this end, a report on OHS in the circular economy was commissioned by EPSU and will be published by June.

EPSU has continued to work to fight energy poverty as a member of the Right to Energy Coalition and promote the Right2Water campaign as well as assess the impact of Brexit on utilities and European Work Councils.

The Standing Committee was preceded by a meeting of the European Works Council and a Company Policy Network meeting, during which affiliates went into in-depth discussions about recent developments of EWCs in the energy sector. Matters of due diligence and responsible business conduct, democracy at work and Workers' Information and Consultation were also discussed.

EPSU will continue its effort to establish EWCs in health and social services companies.

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