

The Impact of Global Warming on Europe's Public Services

(24 October 2011) Based on current scenarios of the International Panel on Climate Change, average global temperature will likely rise with 2 degrees if we can achieve drastic CO2 cuts in 2100. Taking account of current scenarios and commitments made by large countries to reduce CO2 emissions global warming cannot be contained and temperatures might rise with 3-4% in 2100. This will have drastic consequences for bio-diversity, food production, water etc. and could trigger more human conflict and suffering. To obtain an overview of the impact of climate change on different public services including health care, local government, utilities and central administration in Europe, **EPSU commissioned a study '[Climate Change and its Impact on Public Services](#)'**. It is believed to be one of the few studies that bring together information on these impacts for all public services.

The study underlines how public services can be affected and how they contribute to the prevention of CO2 emissions. Even more important is how public services will be essential for societies to adapt to climate change. While not explicitly examined in the study the coordinated austerity programmes of governments will affect public investment and hence the ability of governments to prepare for climate change.

Following a detailed discussion in the EPSU Standing Committees and a debate in the EPSU Executive Committee, the Executive adopted a set of conclusions on the recommendations of the study and determined a series of areas for further exploration, 13-14 April 2011.

These are:

- To bring the study to the attention of European institutions and affiliated organisations. We wish to draw the attention to the implications for public services of climate change and to stimulate discussion. The study underlines the importance of investment in public service and public infrastructure and hence might be useful also in the context of the discussions on the austerity packages
- To work on alternatives to the current profit-driven approach to global warming

captured in “Moving Beyond GDP”

- EPSU supports binding energy efficiency targets and linking this with addressing energy poverty. This is a key debate as the European Commission has published the [Energy Efficiency Directive 22 June 2011](#)
- EPSU underlines the importance of Integrating social and environmental criteria in public procurement. We are pursuing this in our discussions with the coalition Network for Sustainable Development in Public Procurement and [have demanded the Commission to include this more clearly in the legislation.](#)
- An important area to develop further is with regard to carbon tax (in light of the problematic emission trading scheme) and taxes on environmental polluting products and processes - EPSU should continue further reflection and discussion on the appropriate targets for reduction of CO2 for 2020 till 2050. The Commission has introduced the [Roadmap for Moving to a Low Carbon Economy in 2050](#) which foresees drastic cuts in CO2 emissions especially for the power sector but also for transport and buildings for example
- Corporate and economic policy remain focused on profit-making and economic growth independent if the profits and growth contribute to realizing societal and environmental objectives and independent if these activities destroy or not human health, the environment etc. EPSU will participate in the discussion on Beyond GDP, as an element in exploring a different basis for economic policy and exploring the implications of smart, sustainable or even less growth for workers, unions and our communities. We will be working with the European Trade Union Institute to develop this further. For an overview of the European discussions see [here](#).
- Last but not least, EPSU is to Assist work place representatives by making information available on how environmental and climate change can be addressed at workplace level and collective bargaining.

EPSU is supporting a project of the ETUC on Green Work Places and also the [trade union linked organization [Sustain Labour](#) has made available examples of how workplaces can be made greener and the role workplace representatives can play in that process. If you have examples of how the union or your workplace colleagues are addressing this please let us know.

EPSU also recently produced a [brochure on Environmental Services->art7938] underlining that many affiliated unions organize workers directly involved in meeting the challenges of protecting the environment. These workers do the so-

called green jobs and many of these jobs will be in public services. It remains an important area for recruitment and organizing of workers. The study and EPSU position, the brochure and work being done by many affiliated unions underline the importance of addressing global warming and environmental issues for public service workers, their families and communities. Public services will be key to bring our societies on a path of sustainable development. The EPSU position provides a basis for EPSU policy and positioning including regarding sectoral policies. The EPSU Standing Committees will play a key role in developing more detailed positions based on the overall recommendations and where appropriate address this in the sectoral social dialogue and sectoral policies. The study was done by Sophie Dupressoir, former advisor to the ETUC.

- **EPSU also adopted a set of detailed conclusions on the recommendations of the study. [These are available here together with the study](#)**
- [Log in](#) to post comments
- [Printer-friendly version](#)

Policies

[Energy](#)

[Environment/Climate Change](#)

Networks

[Public Services](#)