

Future of Energy in Europe - implications for unions and bargaining

(Brussels, 4 February 2011) EPSU's affiliate [Verdi](#) organised a conference to discuss with works council members, trade union activists and union officers the developments in Germany and Europe's energy sector.

An interesting presentation was made by Professor Uwe Leprich of [IZES](#). He described different developments including the prospects for different resources (coal, nuclear, renewables, energy efficiency...) on the way to a de-carbonised European energy system in 2050.

A major question for Germany and other countries will be if we have a decentralised renewables or a centralised renewables system in which large offshore wind and thermal solar ([Desertec](#)) and hydro power become the backbone. According to some estimates Germany is close to having a large enough baseload of renewables to be moderated with hydro and some gas. Other speakers drew attention to the role of municipal energy companies and a tendency towards remunicipalisation.

Frank Bsirske, Verdi's president, commented in his speech on the recent government's decisions regarding the energy concept for the future. He also underlined the increase in temporary agency work including in the energy sector which is used by companies to undermine collective agreements and push workers into poverty wages. The union is committed to fight this and demands that temporary agency workers get paid the same wage as the workers in the industry or service they are delegated to. Verdi will be organising a series of workshops for its members to consider the future developments and what the implications are for the union's energy policies. Sven Bergelin the president of the EPSU Standing Committee Utilities

The conference was followed by the energy group's [collective bargaining conference](#). EPSU Deputy General Secretary expressed the Federation's solidarity with the workers in Vattenfall Germany which have been out [on strike](#).

The main theme as the demographic changes facing the sector. Verdi colleague

Silke Skrabe presented research which made clear that while there is a problem of many workers not participating in the labour market, the solution to increase the pension age to 67 does do nothing to bring these workers to the labour market or improve workers pay and conditions to allow them to retire healthy. The participants entered into a critical discussion with the Arbeitsdirektoren of several companies, questioning the high profit targets companies set themselves which are not linked with reality but when not met lead to restructuring, social dumping and job losses. This theme was also picked up by Professor [Rudolf Hickel](#). He lambasted the current government's policy of austerity which endanger's the economic up turn.

An increase in internal demand and consumption is needed in Germany and with wage increases and minimum wages being the appropriate way forward. He noted that German's unions have had a very responsible attitude during the crisis agreeing reduced working hours and pay and that with the return to economic growth workers should profit. Verdi used the conference to exchange information on recent pay developments. The meetings took place 1-3 February 2011, Hannover. EPSU Deputy General Secretary participated.

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