

New report underlines challenges for Europe's energy companies, the trade unions and European Works Councils

(Brussels, 7 September 2012 - Press Release) A new report from the Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU), University of Greenwich explores ongoing developments in the European energy market since the opening of the electricity and gas markets. The report shows the challenges for workers, unions and European Works Council of dealing with reduction of emissions, problems with nuclear developments and continued merger and takeover activities including of networks and by private equity and sovereign wealth funds. Europe's companies have gone through many changes including take-overs and mergers, international expansion and restructuring. These developments have had a significant impact on the workforce as companies prepared for competition through cost-cutting, job reduction and outsourcing.

These processes are still continuing while new challenges have been added as energy companies need to reduce CO2 emissions (including renewables and nuclear), modernise to prepare for smart networks, and invest in new infrastructure in a time of economic crisis that also forces a process of consolidation and reduces the indebtedness of companies.

These developments are also regular themes for the European Works Councils of Europe's major companies such as CEZ, Delta, EON, EDF, ENEL, EVN, Fortum, GdfSuez, and Vattenfall.

This new report *European Works Councils in the energy sector: 2012* written by Professor of Energy Policy Steve Thomas of the Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU), University of Greenwich, gives an overview of company developments in recent years. It also addresses a number of major developments such as:

- Company policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The report gives a sobering assessment of the prospects for nuclear new builds. An example is the

problems French company EDF is encountering in several markets including US and UK while recent problems with reactor vessels create unrest in Belgium

- Policies on indebtedness and credit rating;
 - Divestment and acquisition of assets particularly in Russia Social issues arising from increases in energy costs and from the introduction of 'smart meters' ; Who pays for the meters and is privacy protected remain huge issues in the UK e.g and made the Flemish government decide against a roll-out of meters
 - Implications if elements of the UK's Electricity Market Reforms are adopted more widely ;
 - [The increase and influence of non-European investors, such as investment funds such as from China, particularly in networks like in Portugal and](#)
 - [Changes in ownership of the transmission and distribution networks including the emergence of international network companies and private equity/sovereign wealth funds](#)
- [The report will assist European Works Councils with an overview of what is happening in energy companies and help the understanding of the challenges facing workers and their unions.](#)

The report can be downloaded at: [www.epsu.org/a/8937]

- [PR 2012.09.10 New report EWC energy companies](#)

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