

## Earth Day 2021: Let's put workers, people and the planet before profits



(22 April 2021) 22nd April is Earth Day, a day which reminds us more than ever of the need to adopt bold actions to protect our Earth and its inhabitants from climate change, both in the present and in the future.

Our planet is in urgent need of widespread action to tackle climate change and the loss of biodiversity. Nature is hurting, and the extreme weather events we are already facing, such as floods, wildfires, droughts and extreme heat, will only be exacerbated in the coming decades. The Covid-19 pandemic is also linked to the breakdown of biodiversity and climate change may accelerate the spread of other viruses and pandemics.

The effects of climate change have a significant impact on workers. Public service workers, such as firefighters, health professional and civil protection staff, who are always on the front line whenever emergencies rise, will be faced with more and more dangerous situations and will see a big increase in their workload. Energy and environmental service workers are also going through challenging transitions. It is crucial that we ensure good working conditions and a decent future to all.

Climate change also affects the EU economy. Without mitigation and adaptation measures, there will be a 3° C increase in global warming that would cause the current EU economy an annual loss of 170 billion of euros (1.36% of EU GDP).

For all these reasons, Europe needs to implement bold mitigation and adaptation strategies to minimise damage. The 2015 Paris Agreement's objective to limit the increase of global warming to 1.5°, as well as the European Commission Green Deal's objective to reach a carbon-neutral economy by 2050, are of utmost importance and must be fully implemented across the EU.

While fully supporting these objectives, EPSU is further advocating for recognition of the role played by the public sector in this effort. Policy planning, public investments and public ownership of utilities are needed in both mitigation and adaptation efforts, rather than solely relying on market-based mechanisms and the private sector.

We need to ensure an ambitious, socially just transition strategy towards a more sustainable society for workers and local communities. Protecting our environment shouldn't lead to social exclusion. Universal and affordable access to drinking water and clean energy should also be a priority. Preserving our Earth also means ensuring universal decent living conditions.

This special day reminds us of the urgent need to move toward a more sustainable and inclusive society in which workers, local communities and the planet are put before profits. Earth day is everybody's day. This is our planet, this our fight!

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