

## EPSU joins EU Blue Deal event to advocate for Right to Water



(26 September 2023) Amid growing concerns about water scarcity and the urgent need for sustainable water management, EPSU participated in a recent event titled 'EU Blue Deal — a plan for the future of our water.'

Hosted by the Brussels Office of the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB European Office), the Brussels Office of the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour (AK EUROPA) and the Daseinsgewerkschaft (Younion), the event brought together experts, policymakers, and stakeholders to discuss the challenges facing water resources in Europe.

Keynote speaker Marthe Wens, Assistant Professor at the Institute for Environmental Studies, VU Amsterdam, provided valuable insights into the decreasing Water Index (WEI) in Europe, emphasising the risks posed by the climate crisis, including droughts and their impact on water and energy supply. The event also addressed the concept of virtual water and its implications for trade agreements, calling for proactive rather than reactive water management. Wens is the author of a forthcoming report on drought risk, commissioned by the European Parliament and due for release in the coming weeks.

Jan Willem Goudriaan, General Secretary of EPSU, highlighted the importance of recognising water as a fundamental human right in any 'Blue Deal'. He emphasised the need to take a human rights and public service approach to water management. EPSU's work on water, including its involvement in the first successful European Citizens Initiative Right2water, should be crucial in forming the Blue Deal and in realising the European Pillar of Social Rights. Goudriaan stressed the need to ensure that all water policies begin with a human rights approach and should not be used to promote PPPs and further liberalisation.

The event served as a platform for valuable discussions among the panellists and audience, including Thomas Kattinig, EESC, Youunion and Vice-President of EPSU; Claudia Olazábal, DG Environment, European Commission; Ben Lennon, ETUC; and Gudrun Winkler, Hamburg Wasser.

Read EPSU's position on the EU Blue Deal [here](#).

Read the European Economic and Social Committee's opinions on an EU Blue Deal and EU Water Agenda [here](#).

Read more on the Right to Water European Citizens' Initiative [here](#).

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