

EPSU submission to the Energy Community on the Social Strategy for the energy sector

EPSU response to the Consultation Paper on the Outline of the Social Strategy of the Energy Community

(30 January 2013) This response is on behalf of EPSU, the European Federation of Public Service Trade Unions. EPSU is a recognized European level social partner and a Member of ETUC.

Main points:

- The Memorandum of Understanding on the Social issues is to remain the backbone, and including the national social working groups, social plans and Social Forum, of the Social energy strategy. The binding character should be strengthened and the Energy Community Secretariat provided with more resources to monitor its implementation. The Ministerial Council should work with deadlines as is done with regard to the energy acquis.
- Ensure that the regional energy strategy and the selection of the Projects of Energy Community Interest is subject to regional democratic control as a counterweight to the Ministerial Council. Reinforce the control of the European Parliament over the regional strategy. A concrete way could be to establish an Energy Community parliamentary group with MEPs and MPs from the Energy Community countries. It is recommended that a socio-economic council for energy is established which will also contribute to the democratic control over the regional energy strategy and its implementation.
- The Ministerial Council committed to transparency and consultation of civil society over the regional energy strategy. It is important that the Energy Community works on concrete mechanisms for such consultation following EU rules and the Aarhus Convention. The consultations should be comprehensive and include all social actors.
- Keep the essential infrastructure for the electricity and gas industry in public hands
- The national consultation on the social strategy needs to be monitored by the Energy Secretariat to ensure that trade unions, employers and other social organisations are consulted.

- Elements of the regional social strategy are:
 - a. Protection of users and developing an anti-poverty strategy. Regulated prices are the best protection for small and domestic users in what will be a fluctuating market. The regulators should control this and have a role for the trade unions to advise.
 - b. Regional labour market and social dialogue;
 - c. Criteria and Consultation on the Projects of Energy Community Interests. Transparency, social and environmental obligations, oversight of selection and implementation involving representatives of civil society.

These elements should be kept together in the social strategy. It should be considered to create social economic councils for energy based on the example of Slovenia.

- A social dialogue for the region on the basis of the European social dialogue should be promoted by the European Commission and the Energy Community Secretariat. This social dialogue would allow the employers and trade unions, and where required with the governments, to agree basic positions that would guide the development of the social dimension in the region.

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