

Regional social dialogue in energy sector a priority say EPSU unions

(16 September 2013) The energy unions of the energy community disagree with the recommendations of their government representatives on the social strategy for the Energy Community. These government representatives argue that there is no need for a regional social strategy, neither for a regional social dialogue encompassing the employers and trade unions of the region. The unions will seek to convince the employers and their ministers who will be meeting on 24 October. A proposal for a working group on the promotion of the social dialogue in the electricity sector in the countries of the Energy Community and which will be considered by the [electricity social dialogue committee (13 September)->art9775] is supported. The unions further agreed to argue for changes to the Energy Community Treaty if Ministers decide to prolong it. The social dimension of the Treaty needs to be reinforced and the Memorandum of Understanding on the Social Aspects integrated. It is a binding text signed between the Commission and the governments. Integration in the Treaty would clarify its status. Other issues considered included: - Precarious work and the use of agency work by the companies. Unions reported that this is increasing and that employers seek to circumvent the legislation. - Energy policy and especially investment. Improving and strengthening the infrastructure of networks and powerplants while keeping electricity affordable is a big challenge for all countries concerned. A representative of the Macedonian energy regulator explained the progress with regard to addressing energy poverty and the implementation of the internal market for electricity and gas. Next steps in the Energy Community are the full opening of the market for domestic households so they can choose their supplier. This will cause an increase in energy poverty it was noted and regulators struggle to ensure people can get electricity. He also informed the group of unions on the subsidies now available for renewable energies. One aim is to make the countries less dependent on electricity imports which drive prices up. He was followed by a representative of the Ministry of the economy. She informed the participants of the progress with the social action plan and the consultations with the social partners in Macedonia. EPSU Deputy General Secretary participated in the meeting which took place in Ohrid, Macedonia, 11-12 September 2013. - [For more information->rub239] on the activities of EPSU in the Energy Community.

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