

Public Service Workers and Climate Crisis

EPSU Pan European Conference

Agenda

Where do we stand?

Why do we need to tackle climate crisis?

The role of cities and municipalities

What can the local level do?

A possible way forward

Where do we stand?

Climate crisis is progressing too fast

IPCC: "If emissions remain at current levels, global warming will rise to 2°C by 2050."

Extreme weather events are on the rise

In Europe more than 60.000 heat-related deaths were recorded in the summer of 2022

Where do we stand?

Paris climate agreement as framework

European Union responds in December 2019 with the Green Deal:

"The goal: to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions in the European Union to zero by 2050, becoming the first continent to become climate neutral."

Why do we need to tackle climate crisis?

Climate policy measures often ignore workers

Occupational groups that primarily perform their duties outdoors, including many workers in the public sector, experience higher stress levels as a result of rising temperatures

The climate crisis is also putting increased strain on occupational groups in the social and health services. They are the ones who have to cushion the health consequences for employees and the population in general. Higher work pressure and stress are the result

The increased occurrence of disasters such as floods, avalanches and mudslides also leads to a higher workload for people working in disaster services

Why do we need to tackle climate crisis?

Climate policy measures often ignore workers

Climate crisis needs massive economic restructuring. This will change our working world and affect all jobs.

On the one hand, these changes will create numerous new jobs.

On the other hand, some jobs will also be lost.

In order to protect existing jobs and create new, good jobs, **active trade union work and targeted public investments** are needed.

Why do we need to tackle climate crisis?

Everyone is affected by the climate crisis, but not everyone equally

[Studies](#) show that wealthy people have a considerably larger CO2-footprint

“The bottom 50% of the world population emitted 12% of global emissions in 2019, whereas the top 10% emitted 48% of the total. Since 1990 the top 1% has been responsible for 23% of the total.”

Why do we need to tackle climate crisis?

The cheapest thing to do is to act now!

If we do not set enough measures:

- Harvest losses and losses in forestry, tourism will rise
- Hydropower plants can be used less due to lack of water resources
- In the future also higher losses due to catastrophes
- Higher health costs
- Higher costs for climate change adaptation

The role of cities and municipalities

Cities and municipalities need more resources

"70% of all climate action and 90% of adaptation action happens at the regional and local level."

Climate protection affects the decisions and actions of municipalities in nearly all of their jurisdictions.

Numerous intertwined responsibilities make it difficult for municipalities to act, as do a lack of legal frameworks or insufficient financial resources.

The role of cities and municipalities

Public and especially local investment:

1/3 of public investment happens on the local level

Researchers have calculated that for Austria public investment of around 68 billion euros is needed to transform our economy

A large part of this investment will have to be borne by the municipal level for instance in the sectors energy, buildings and mobility

What can the local level do?

Work

The local level as employer

Public sector has important role here, e.g. in the sectors waste management, waste water, public transport, etc.

Education and training: "Green Skills" are becoming more and more important, policy must take measures against shortage of skilled workers, also many "traditional" skills are lacking

Role of the municipality: Promoting green jobs as an employer, as a shaper in the context of spatial planning (which companies settle?) and decide through public procurement companies foster

What can the local level do?

Work

Protection of employees

People who work outdoors are, for example, involved in road maintenance, urban gardens, green space maintenance, or garbage collection

These people are sometimes exposed to **extreme heat and UV** and require special attention

At high temperatures, the quality of work suffers; the frequency of errors and the risk of accidents increase. Employers must therefore **adapt working conditions** (e.g. by adjusting working hours and break regulations).

What can the local level do?

Work



Examples from the city of Vienna

Heat prevention for kindergartens, toddler groups

Preventive measures against heat are continuously set in kindergartens and toddler groups to protect children and infants

Decisions on which measures to take (e.g. water play areas, allowing night ventilation, sunshades, fans, shades, etc.) are made locally

What can the local level do?

Work



Examples from the city of Vienna

Heat standards for hospitals, residential and nursing care facilities.

Heat standards are introduced in hospitals, residential and nursing care facilities, day centers for senior citizens and mobile services to deal with heat days or heat waves

Concrete measures can be: Procedures for cooling room and body temperatures, ensuring hydration, changing menus to light foods, protecting caregivers from heat stress, etc.

What can the local level do?

Work



Examples from the city of Vienna

Heat protection for people working outdoors (project of Vienna's Social Fund)

Employers can provide skin protection, sunglasses with UV protection, headgear, drinks or (protective) clothing, adapt break offers or the canteen food offer as well as first aid skills

Information and awareness-raising among employees should ensure that precautions are taken on heat days. An obligation to take additional heat protection measures (in addition to existing legal obligations) should also be considered.

What can the local level do?

Energy

Sector with most greenhouse gas emissions

Energy saving: Lower room temperature, Led lighting systems, thermal refurbishment

Promote Renewable energies: Especially wind power, hydropower and solar, geothermal

Energy space planning: Reservation of areas for renewable energy sources

Energy communities: Participative approach

What can the local level do?

Mobility

Continuing increase in emissions

Measures to reduce and slow down traffic needed

Municipalities have room for maneuver, e.g. through access and transit restrictions as well as the limitation of parking space

Municipalities can intervene via parking space management

Car sharing/ridesharing as well as promotion of alternative drives (e.g. e-charging stations, benefits for e-cars in urban traffic, etc.)

What can the local level do?

Mobility

Continuing increase in emissions

Public transport: Financing responsibility and distribution of competences complex, attractive tariff design can increase attractiveness, however massive underfunding

Local mobility: Cycling, walking, scootering, etc., can be made more attractive by redesigning public space; expansion of cycle paths and other cycling infrastructure is necessary

Public procurement: Municipalities can also pay attention to environmentally friendly vehicles in their own vehicle fleets, but often insufficient funds are available for purchase

What can the local level do?

Housing and buildings

Develop green and sustainable cities

Zoning is an important leverage - ecological urban and settlement planning
important: Austria is the European champion in soil sealing

Settlement development: Stronger planning of settlement areas to achieve climate friendly cities

Building management: Energy-efficient construction and renovation in municipal housing but also incentives for private sector

Public buildings: Municipalities can implement non-investment and low-investment measures as well as investment measures to save energy

What can the local level do?

Economy and tourism

Promotion of the circular economy

Sharing economy e.g. car sharing, energy communities etc.

Promotion of recycling initiatives and repair cafés

Waste: Municipalities do have competencies (setting fees, own ordinances)

Promotion of so-called **soft tourism**, e.g. through awareness raising, capacity limits, etc.

A possible way forward

Possible pathways

- ✓ Clear federal government strategy for social and just transition
- ✓ Decarbonization plans for companies
- ✓ Sufficient funding for public services
- ✓ Linking public investment to social and environmental standards
- ✓ Introduction of a golden rule for investment = more leeway
- ✓ Training and awareness raising for employees

A possible way forward

Possible pathways

- ✓ Improvement of working conditions and expansion of training positions
- ✓ Expansion of public passenger transport
- ✓ Securing democratic co-determination and social dialog from company to European level
- ✓ Creation of new occupational profiles for a low-emission economy
- ✓ Long-term strategies for energy and raw materials supply [youunion](#)

Thank you!