



European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)

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Commission recognizes importance of trained and skilled workforce – more action needed

The European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) demands to the European Commission to change its strategy towards the training of the workforce in the energy sector.

The European Commission published its [new Energy Strategy 2020](#), 11 November and its [Infrastructure Package](#) yesterday. This Energy strategy was published following a process of consultation earlier this year. The results are disappointing. The Commission strategy paper lacks a vision how to deal with Europe's energy workforce ensuring Europe will have a sufficient and qualified labour force to implement the strategy and build and operate the sustainable power stations and smart grids of the future. While the Commission likes to toy with incredible investment needs (of up to 1 trillion Euros) not a penny is needed to build a work force for the future. The energy infrastructure package however recognizes the problem. It agrees with EPSU that a *"possible lack of skilled workforce that would be ready to operate the complex smart grid system is another, non-negligible challenge."* It calls on Member States *"to address seriously possible negative social consequences and launch programmes to retrain workers and support the acquisition of new skills."*

EPSU's Deputy General Secretary and the Federations' energy spokesperson commented: *"I am pleased that the Commission finally recognizes that Europe's future energy infrastructure needs a skilled and qualified work force. The problem of the ageing work force in gas and in electricity and a possible lack of a skilled workforce has been neglected too long"*. While almost all resources and angles of Europe's energy policy are touched upon in the Energy strategy 2020, it ignores that the proposals can have an impact on the men and women in the industry. *"If you are a meter reader and the Commission argues for a fast roll-out of smart meters your job is on the line. And if the Commission argues that nuclear power is needed, how to align this with a rapidly aging workforce and the long periods needed for training to ensure security standards are met?"*

Europe's future energy policy is built on thin air if it is not recognized that workers have to carry out the programme. EPSU expects the Commission to play its role of awareness raising, organizing cooperation and taking initiatives with the European social partners concerned to address the future energy workforce. **Jan Willem Goudriaan** added: *"We expect also Member States have to play their part with the national social partners."*

While EPSU is pleased that the issue of the future work force is picked up, it is only done so with reference to smart grids. The issues are broader and touch on other parts of the energy infrastructure as well such as managing gas infrastructure following unbundling. The 2020 energy strategy raises also questions about the value of consultations by the Commission. EPSU expects that the implementation of the strategy will include more attention other concerns including respect for Human rights in the external policies. Public contracts should ensure social and environmental criteria and companies should only receive EU public funding if they have solid Corporate Social Responsibility policies. EPSU's [contribution to the Consultation](#).

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EPSU is the European Federation of Public Service Unions. It is the largest federation of the ETUC and comprises 8 million public service workers from over 250 trade unions; EPSU organises workers in the energy, water and waste sectors, health and social services and local and national administration, in all European countries including in the EU's Eastern Neighborhood. EPSU is the recognized regional organization of Public Services International (PSI).