

EPSU fights for Just Transition at COP24

December 2018



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Between 6-9 December 2018, the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) participated in the COP24 of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Katowice, Poland. This year's negotiations are particularly important because the party states need to agree on a rule-book on how to deliver on their commitments to the COP21 known as the Paris Agreement.

EPSU participated in the COP24 as part of the International Trade Union Delegation, which brought together unionists from all over the world under the umbrella of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). Together we called for a just transition for workers and local communities, as we actively participated in numerous events to transmit our message to all relevant stakeholders.

The trade union delegation's first success at the COP24 came on the first day of the event. In our article (see [here](#)) we reported on the adoption of the "[Solidarity and Just Transition Silesia Declaration](#)" presented by Poland, following an intense trade unions advocacy effort to ensure a just transition that leaves nobody behind.

EPSU participated in a number of events organized by different allies and relevant stakeholders, including the ones organized by Trade Unions for Energy Democracy (TUED), the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations (IDDIRI) on coal transition, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) and the ITUC. EPSU also participated on an informal basis in several side-events during which it raised the issue of just transition, public ownership and energy democracy.

EPSU calls for:

- Net-zero emissions by 2050 through a just transition for workers and local communities that leaves nobody behind;
- An energy democracy approach that is based on the public ownership of energy production, transmission and distribution;
- Solid public investments with an objective of quality public services;
- A just transition that puts people over profits and addresses inequalities through a strong role for public services;
- A right to energy for all European inhabitants and the ban of disconnections.

Below is an exhaustive report of the events we attended in Katowice.



Trade Unions for Energy Democracy's (TUED) Roundtable:

The meeting was attended by around 50 participants, including trade union representatives from Workers' Commissions (CCOO), Public and Commercial Service Union (PCS), Confederation of Public Workers' Unions (KESK), industriAll Europe, Kadra, Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA), International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) etc.

TUED presented their latest research which exposes the failures of profit-driven climate policy. The study shows the failures of the past decades of liberalisation policies and "green growth" approaches to deliver on their promises of steering the necessary investments into clean energy.

Afterwards, representatives of unions from different global regions gave an update on the situation in Latin America, the Philippines, Canada, the UK, Poland and the US.

EPSU reported on the recent policy developments on European level, highlighting the state of play in the EU's Clean Energy package and the long-term emissions reduction strategy (see our position [here](#)). EPSU highlighted the failures of the past 20 years of liberalisation policies in terms of delivering more affordable and clean energy (see [here](#)). We explained that much of our current advocacy activity in the energy sector is based on limiting as much as possible the damages of liberalisation. We argue for maintaining regulated electricity prices in EU Member States and for a different model of electricity production, transmission and distribution as a public service. We need a model based on public ownership and energy democracy in order to deliver safe, reliable, affordable and sustainable electricity for all citizens.

Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations' event on "Implementing coal transition to raise climate ambition":

The event presented research results on feasible trajectories and policy guidance for coal transitions in six coal-producing countries, including Germany, Poland and Spain.

Workers' Commissions (CCOO) presented the Spanish best-practice of implementing a just transition in the national strategy of coal phase-out which foresees the closure of most of the coalmines by the end of the year. Spanish unions concluded an agreement with the government which will fund the transition and includes early retirement schemes for miners over 48, environmental restoration work in coal mining communities and re-skilling schemes workers.



International Labour Organization's (ILO) event on "Powering a just transition to climate-resilient economies and societies for all":

The panel discussion brought together representatives from Jordan, Uganda, Philippines, the B Team and the Canadian Labour Congress.

The ILO highlighted that the transition is only possible with an empowered workforce, because workers are enablers of ambitious mitigation measures. Climate change is not a job killer and jobs are no obstacles to climate change mitigation effort, if these are conducted through effective just transition regulatory frameworks. The ILO outlined the need for social protection in mitigation and adaptation efforts in order to support the ones most affected and to ensure a just transition.

The Philippines reported on their special law on just transition and green jobs. The law is operationalized through a list of environmental standards that include security measures for workers, for example through skill plans and different forms of insurance and social benefits for losses in case of climate induced displacement.

The B Team, an organization of companies committed to net-zero emissions by 2050, highlighted that employers and trade unions need to work together in ensuring a just transition through social dialogue.

The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) said that the national determined contributions (NDC) of governments need to contemplate the impact on employment. CLC presented the Canadian best practice of just transition for coal-power plants. The Canadian government has set up a Task Force made up of a broad range of experts, which will provide advice on how to make the transition away from coal a fair one for workers and communities.

The German Trade Union Confederation's (DGB) event on "Innovation through Co-Determination":

The event addressed the role of employees in climate protection. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Just Transition Centre presented their position on this issue and emphasized the need to involve workers in the transformation processes. They highlighted that information and consultation bodies and co-determination will be key to ensure a socially just transformation.



International Trade Union Confederation's (ITUC) Climate Ambition Strategy Day for All Unions:

The aim of the event was to jointly define the union strategy for climate ambition through a just transition for the upcoming year.

The first panel brought together representatives from the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Friends of the Earth International (FOE), Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) and the UN Principles for Responsible Investment. The key message of the panellists was that climate ambition needs to be done at home.

FOE highlighted that the neoliberal market approach is not delivering the results we need to see and that the necessary ambitious climate action cannot happen as long as companies are only seeking profit.

The second panel brought together union representatives from the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA), Indonesian Workers Welfare Union (KSBSI), International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and Kadra (Poland).

TUCA called for a global day of action on climate change and just transition and for national awareness-raising campaigns on just transition in all countries.

The ITF highlighted the importance of public ownership of transportation services, emphasizing that public transport is a public good which should not be under corporate ownership.

The ETUC gave an update on its recent activities and mentioned that it is pushing for the inclusion of a Just Transition Fund of 4.8 billion Euros in the new Multiannual Financial Framework. The ETUC also referred to the inclusion of the social dimension in the Commission's proposal of the EU's long-term emissions reduction strategy and to the EU's Platform for Coal Regions in Transition as a good practice of just transition.

The Polish union Kadra highlighted their wish to be active participants in the transition, but emphasized that without coal it is not possible to ensure the necessary amount of energy. Therefore, modernizing the current mines and coal power plants with the latest available technology is essential. In Poland, people are afraid of the transition because in regions where coal extraction has stopped and mines have been shut down unemployment reached 45% of the local population. Energy poverty is also a huge issue, affecting 12% of the Polish population.

In the discussions EPSU mentioned the need to build alliances and collaborate with other relevant stakeholders on key issues, mentioning the Right to Energy Coalition as a good practice. EPSU also explained that transnational company agreements can be a practical tool to ensure just transition within multinational companies.





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