

## **12. Utilities (PUT): a key driver for sustainable development**

1. The Utilities sector faces many structural changes due to global developments, regulatory decisions and technological innovation and also the way public authorities and employers react to these changes. They affect work places and impact on workers, their families and communities. EPSU re-affirms that infrastructure for public services should be publicly funded and operated. Public authorities should monitor and evaluate the performance of public service operators. EPSU calls for existing collective bargaining, social and environmental standards to be maintained when remunicipalisation or privatisation takes place. Changes in ownership must not lead to cuts in jobs and training places, pay and working conditions must not deteriorate and company pension schemes must be protected. Workplace or company-based schemes for representation of interests must not be adversely affected. The economic viability of existing undertakings that have proved their worth must be secured.
2. EPSU will work to ensure that public service principles and values are part of European policies on environmental services, such as water, waste and energy. Tracking company policies, mergers and take-overs and establishing further European work councils in cooperation with affiliated unions will be important to promote and defend workers interests in multinational corporations. Climate change and access to energy remains a key issue and a particular challenge for the sector. Utilities play a prominent role to achieve a sustainable society.

### **Energy**

3. Recent evidence indicates that global warming is developing faster than predicted by the International Panel on Climate Change. EPSU supports the zero emission target for the European power sector by 2050 with legally binding intermediate targets for 2030 and 2040. EPSU will work with the affiliates in non-EU/EEA countries, such as Russia, Ukraine and others on global warming and climate change to ensure that all European governments commit to a global agreement for CO<sub>2</sub> reductions.

### **Action points:**

- Campaign for “just transition”. European governments and the EU should adopt a “just transition roadmap” to accompany the process of restructuring in the energy sector. Companies and governments should make more funding available for workers in fossil fuel sectors to provide training, assist in finding other jobs, and to further the creation of green jobs. Changes in production and especially concerning the energy mix, necessary to reduce greenhouse gases, need to be anticipated (research, training of workers) to support the development of workers.
- Further strengthen arguments for the role and missions of public services (including ownership), in the energy sector as a whole, including renewables and networks, to protect households in relation to profit-maximising businesses and private equity.
- Engage in further work, in cooperation with ETUC, on the emission trading scheme and energy/ carbon taxes, preventing negative impacts on low-income households.
- Continue work on fuel/energy poverty in alliance with other organisations striving for

more binding targets to reduce energy poverty and to ensure the right to energy for all, which is a societal responsibility.

- Take action to improve working conditions, health and safety for workers in the renewables, such as wind power, solar industries (production), energy efficiency/savings services but also in subcontracted areas of infrastructure (networks). All workers in the energy sector should benefit from decent conditions of work and pay.
- Develop policies on smart networks/grids and their implications for the sector and its workers and promoting (municipal) public infrastructure for electric cars powered by renewables.
- Monitor and respond to the growing integration of the electricity and gas markets and increasing importance of the European regulator (ACER) and bodies, such as ENTSO-E and ENTSO-G (transmission operators) to ensure that the interests of workers and citizens are protected. Develop proposals for a new Energy Treaty and European Energy Agency to consider demand and supply of energy in Europe and a coherent energy policy.
- Develop a general bargaining agenda for the energy unions, improving regional and EU-wide coordination in view of the European energy market.
- Improve the quality of the sectoral social dialogue and dialogue with multinational companies. Priorities will be combating subcontracting, low pay, gender equality, training and skills, corporate social responsibility, young workers and improving union strength, in particular in the growing service sector of the energy industry.
- Build on the achievements regarding a social dimension of the Energy Community for South East Europe, now joined by Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, with Armenia and Turkey as observers.
- Work and exchange experiences with the affiliated unions in CIS countries (Russia and Central Asia) as liberalisation of energy services moves up the agenda and to ensure a social dimension in energy policies.
- Overcome the problems in the gas social dialogue where employers have stepped back. These problems can be overcome if affiliated organisations exert pressure on the relevant employers and industry organisations. EPSU Secretariat will coordinate further work to have a vibrant social dialogue in this sector.

## **Water**

4. EPSU defends water as a public service and supports demands for water as global commons, belonging to everybody requiring protection and management in the interest of all. The European Citizens Initiative on the Human Right to Water is a success. The demands of the ECI will be further pursued, in particular in relation to execution by the Parliament, Council and Commission. EPSU continues to build relations with water activist groups. Affiliates in European countries outside the EU are invited to lobby their governments to sign up to the right to water principles of the UN and implement these.

## **Action points:**

- Support affiliates by raising awareness of the key role of public water services for society and support affiliates that oppose privatisation of water services.
- Oppose the creation of a market for water rights as well as any EU attempts to liberalise water services, including opening up hydraulic concessions to competition.
- Analyse the development of the smart meter market.
- Move towards establishing a social dialogue in the water and sanitation sector. The unions of the water and sanitation sector of the EPSU will discuss the terms, problems, strategy to be followed and the resources to be assigned for this purpose.

- Ensure cooperation with the Spanish unions in order that the Spanish multinational water/ waste companies are covered by a European Works Council.

Support and encourage initiatives to remunicipalise services water distribution services.

## **Waste**

5. The waste sector is part of environmental services and an area of employment growth. It is confronted with many challenges, including cut throat competition on the basis of pay and working conditions. EPSU aims to represent the whole chain, i.e. collection, transport, sorting, recycling, incineration in public and private companies.

### **Action points:**

- Update the Basic Principles for EPSU's Waste Policy and advocacy of the public service dimension of waste policies to be adhered to by companies.
- Support resource efficiency, which remains high on the agenda. In the transition towards a resource efficient society, EPSU will advocate employment creation, green jobs, skills/ training, health and safety as major topics for the waste sector and which should be reflected in EU Waste policies.
- Make progress towards the objective of establishing a social dialogue in waste. EPSU waste unions will discuss the modalities, issues, what strategy to follow and which resources to dedicate.
- Establish European works councils in major multinational waste companies not yet covered, especially relevant for major German and Spanish companies.