



European Federation of Public Service Unions
Press release – 18 March 2005

First European Works Council in municipal company

The German Leipzig municipal company bought three municipal district heating companies in Poland in 2004. The trade unions in the companies (Gdansk, Starograd, Tczew), including EPSU affiliated union the Public Services Secretariat of Solidarnosc, the works council of the Leipzig company and Verdi negotiated a European Works Council agreement. The agreement was finalised during a seminar 16-18 March 2005, Gdansk. It is the first European Works Council for a municipal company. Leipzig joins other public companies such as state-owned Vattenfall (Sweden) and EdF (France).

Remarkable points in the agreement are:

- A mandate for a Polish and a German trade union officer to participate in the meetings of the EWC;
- 8 days of training for the EWC in the first year and 5 days for the years thereafter. The EWC decides who will provide the training;
- Recognition of the right to conclude collective agreements;
- 2 meetings per year of the EWC;
- Majority of members of the EWC can call for an extra meeting;
- The EWC should also be informed and consulted on: equality policies, environmental issues, health and safety;
- The EWC can use an expert of its choice to consider the financial accounts.

The EPSU Deputy General Secretary participated and discussed with the unions EPSU policy in the energy sector, the practice of EWCs and ongoing restructuring.

“A big challenge for the EWC will be to resist ill-conceived proposals for unbundling and outsourcing that will have negative consequences for workers and citizens. EPSU continues to resist ideologically driven attempts to break up municipal companies in corporate attempts to roll back public services and replace democracy by market forces”, Jan Willem Goudriaan, EPSU Deputy General Secretary said on this occasion, “It is part of a broader debate to defend public services in Europe and over the future direction of EU policies”.

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EPSU the European Federation of Public Service Unions is a member of the ETUC. 8 million workers organised in their 195 trade unions are members of EPSU. These workers deliver services to the public in health and social services, local, regional and central government, and the utilities in energy, water and waste. EPSU organises workers in both public and private companies including large transnational companies.