

The electricity sector and future challenges – Ensuring the right qualifications and good working conditions for young workers

A European social partners' Roadmap

26/07/18

Background

The European social partners in the Electricity Sector – industriAll Europe and EPSU representing the trade unions and Eurelectric, representing the employers – have been engaged in a two-year project reviewing the skills needs in the industry. This has been done in light of the structural changes arising from global developments, regulatory decisions and technological innovation as well as the commitment to decarbonise the sector and the impact of digitalisation on workplaces and workers.

Climate change is one of the biggest global challenges our generation faces. It is shaping the way the power industry operates now and in decades to come. Along with its regulatory, financial and technological effects – e.g. investment in low-carbon technologies – the mitigation of climate change coupled with digitalisation, have serious implications for employment in our sector. Measures to address these changes need to take account of the interests of workers and companies in the transition process and assist in anticipating and managing the adverse effects on our industry in the short term. These effects concern employment and employment shifts, as well as the employability of workers. A massive effort is urgently needed to develop skills and qualifications so that the sector can adapt to these new challenges.

While we have to stress the need for a genuine, comprehensive and sustainable industrial policy that promotes jobs and growth in the EU it is of utmost importance to focus on the skills and qualifications of workers and the relevant programmes offered by education systems to ensure we can deliver a Just Transition to a clean digitalised energy system.

In order to enhance the competitiveness of the electricity sector, we need to make it attractive to the young workers and provide them with the right skills, qualifications and good working conditions and environment. At the same time the social partners are concerned about the change of job profiles and what these mean for the workforce and the need to adapt its skills and competences to match new requirements.

Furthermore, Vocational Education and Training is considered as a leverage of access to employment for young people (countries with a strong VET and apprenticeship system have lower levels of youth unemployment).

In this Roadmap industriAll Europe, EPSU and Eurelectric commit to address the following six priorities within the next four to six years:

Priorities

1. *Strengthening the role of the social partners in the interaction with vocational education and training (VET) systems and skills providers*

a. *Application for a follow-up project: “Capacity building to build skills intelligence at national level in the electricity sector”*

The European social partners in the Electricity Sector have put training and education at the centre of their activities for the coming 6 years with a specific objective of anticipating change and ensuring that workers have the right qualifications for an electricity sector in transition.

They commit to analyse these developments and their implications for job types and profiles as well as the qualifications that are needed in the future. This is especially the case in terms of the application of new technologies, new business models and processes, energy efficiency and demand management, with the need to compare the skills needed for the energy transition with the training offered by VET providers.

In the light of this, the European social partners will apply for a new project “Capacity building to build skills intelligence at national level in the electricity sector” which will focus on capacity building at the national level in order to encourage regular exchanges between national stakeholders such as industry, VET providers, social partners and the relevant public authorities, to facilitate local agreements on youth employment and apprenticeship.

b. *Joining the European Alliance for Apprenticeships*

The European social partners will join the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA), a multi-stakeholder platform that aims to promote and strengthen the quality, supply, image and mobility of apprenticeships in Europe through national commitments and a voluntary pledge.

The Alliance has effectively mobilised EU Member States and a large number of stakeholders to engage in quality apprenticeships. It will facilitate networking, cooperation and sharing of good practices further strengthening the role of the social partners in the interaction with VET systems and skills providers. By committing to the different priorities in this roadmap, we promote their being taken up on a national level as a genuine contribution towards implementing our EAfA pledge.

2. *Maintaining and updating sectoral intelligence on skills needs in order to periodically revise strategies and actions*

Ensuring that young workers have the right qualifications and good working conditions requires a deep understanding of the current and future skills needs. The European social partners, due to their holistic view of the sector, play a key role in this forecasting exercise.

The European social partners commit to regularly update each other on current and future sector skills needs as well as closely collaborating with European actors such as Cedefop, Esco and Ecvet.



With the European Commission's support

The skills forecasting exercise will also be carried out in the framework of the joint project “Capacity building to build skills intelligence at national level in the electricity sector” as there is a need to update the information collected by the previous project, “The electricity sector and future challenges - Ensuring the right qualifications and good working conditions for young workers/trainees”.

3. Negotiating a Quality Framework for Apprenticeships

On 15 March 2018 the European Council adopted a Recommendation on a [Framework for quality and effective apprenticeships](#). With the Recommendation the EU, by addressing the effectiveness and quality of apprenticeships, aims to develop a highly skilled and qualified workforce that responds to labour market demands. In its Recommendation the Council acknowledges that:

“Well-designed apprenticeship schemes benefit both employers and learners as well as reinforce the link between the world of work and the world of education and training. High quality standards avoid that apprenticeships are geared towards low-skilled jobs and poor training that damage their reputation.”

Having adopted a Quality Framework for Traineeships for the European Electricity Sector in 2016 in which industriAll Europe, EPSU and Eurelectric agreed on quality standards for trainees in the electricity sector, the European Social Partners aim to set quality standards for apprenticeships as part of our Work Programme for 2019-2020. Only with good quality apprenticeships can we guarantee the attractiveness of the sector for young people as well as high quality learning outcomes and qualifications.

4. Defining and implementing a systematic strategy to improve the attractiveness of the sector to potential employees and develop a diverse workforce through a European project

There should be a systematic approach to attracting skilled young workers, with a focus on female young workers, in order to compete with sectors that already have strategies in place.

The amount of time required to train new workers is a major challenge for the electricity sector. According to the results of our project “Analysis and background study on skills developments and Vocational Education and Training systems”, the workforce is educated through a variety of means but apprenticeships have proven to be the most effective approach to learning and training. The European social partners aim to establish common comprehensive education frameworks for apprenticeship contracts.

The attractiveness of the sector is determined first of all by the situation of the labour market and employment opportunities, but also very importantly by good quality working and employment conditions that are ensured through collective bargaining or legislation. Hence, the demand for highly skilled employees should be matched with high quality employment and working conditions, particularly in new professions (e.g. newly established renewables installations). The European social partners will monitor developments, exchange good practices and promote good working conditions in line with their Just Transition statement. **A special attention will be given to attracting female workers in order to tackle the gender imbalance in the sector.**



5. Ensuring mobile and transferable of skills in the electricity sector

The technological transition resulting from decarbonisation and digitalisation involves the development of new business models. This means continuous changes in terms of job profiles and the need to offer employees the opportunity for continuous training and lifelong learning in order to maintain a qualified workforce. At the same time all employees should have the right to continuous training and lifelong learning to pursue their personal development. A comprehensive, high quality continuous training and lifelong learning system will allow the European electricity sector to create a culture that promotes the mobility of employees inside companies as well as between companies, sectors and countries. The transferability of skills is therefore of utmost importance and needs to be guaranteed through the proper validation and recognition of competences and qualifications gained throughout a worker's career.

To that end, industriAll Europe, EPSU and Eurelectric will aim to collect good practices from national/sectoral or company level, potentially resulting in social partner recommendations or guidelines of good practices of skills mobility.

6. Anticipating skills needs for workers in a context of decarbonisation and digitalisation of the electricity sector

Anticipating skills needs and providing workers, especially those entering the sector, with a skills up-date/grade is therefore crucial to guarantee a well-functioning electricity industry and to ensure workers' employability.

The European social partners commit to continue advocating for a just transition whilst the sector undergoes decarbonisation, since providing the workers affected with quality job alternatives and adequate skills will be necessary to ensure a smooth transition.

The European social partners also commit to give a strong skills angle to their Framework of Actions on digitalisation - "Challenges and opportunities of the digitalisation of the workforce in the European Electricity Sector" - which is to be finalised by early 2019.

Implementation and follow-up

This Road Map outlines future activities, European projects and agreements for the next six years, focussing on the key priorities identified above.

The European social partners commit to implement all these activities by 2024 and in the meantime to regularly take stock of the results.

They also commit to take stock, evaluate and update the Road Map in 4 years' time in order to assess the implementation of these priorities as well as the emergence of new potential and relevant fields of action. This evaluation will be an appropriate point to plan the implementation of any outstanding activities.



Jan Willem Goudriaan
General secretary
EPSU

Luc Triangle
General secretary
IndustriAll European Trade Union

Kristian Ruby
Secretary General
Eurelectric

***EURELECTRIC** represents the common interests of the electricity industry at pan-European level. Our current members represent the electricity industry in over 30 European countries. We also have affiliates and associations on several other continents*

***industriAll European Trade Union** is the voice of industrial workers all over Europe. It represents 6.9 million workers across supply chains in manufacturing, mining and energy sectors on the European level*

***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 across Europe. EPSU organises workers in the energy, water and waste sectors, health and social services and local, regional and central government, in all European countries including the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood. It is the recognised regional organisation of Public Services International (PSI).*



With the European Commission's support