

CONCLUSIONS OF THE 3RD ENERGY COMMUNITY SOCIAL FORUM

Skopje 10 -11June 2010

1. Mr. Fatmir Besimi, Minister of Economy, Presidency in Office of the Energy Community, Mr. Xhelal Bajrami, Minister of Labour and Social Policy, Mr. Fernando Vasquez representing the European Commission, and Mr. Slavtcho Neykov, Director of the Energy Community Secretariat welcomed the participants at the 3rd Social Forum and wished them success.
2. The Forum welcomed participants from the Contracting Parties and expressed regret that not all social partners from the Contracting Parties could attend the meeting, mainly due to financial constraints.
3. The main aim of the Forum was to discuss the progress made with respect to the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on Social Issues in the context of the Energy Community.
4. The Forum welcomed the presentations on the progress in implementation of the SAP made by Bosnia and Herzegovina, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia.
5. The European Commission highlighted that developing the social dimension of the Energy Community is important not only in the current context of financial crises, but also in the context of challenges brought by technological development and climate change policies.
6. The Forum welcomed the submission of all the Social Action Plans, even though the progress was slower than expected.
7. The Forum called for full implementation of the Social Action Plans. It encouraged the Contracting Parties to establish tripartite working groups (or to extend the mandate of the SAP working groups) to monitor the process, and exchange their practice in this respect.
8. The European Commission and European Social Partners asked the Contracting Parties to pay more attention to the management of change and invited them to use tools developed at the EU level.
9. The European Commission underlined the need to specify actions included in the SAPs and strengthen provisions on the follow-up and monitoring.
10. The European Commission pledged to organize one TAIEX financed seminar on the practical dimension of implementation of labor law provisions and issues connected to management change.
11. The Forum invited all Contracting Parties to submit yearly progress reports to the ECS a month ahead of each Forum.
12. The Forum called on the working groups to pay special attention to preparing and monitoring the restructuring process resulting from the development of the Energy Community, the energy sector privatization processes, as well as the technological development. Social Partners from the region also called for better recognition of social dialogue contribution to the social dimension of the Energy Community.

13. The Forum requested the national authorities to further develop social dialogue and information of Social Partners in accordance with the requirements of the Memorandum of Understanding on Social Issues
14. The Forum welcomed the presentation of the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies on the preliminary findings of the “Study on employment in the gas and electricity sectors in the Contracting Parties to the Energy Community”. The Forum asked to be informed on the final results of the study.
15. EPSU presented the toolkits of European Social Partners on restructuring, demographic change and equality. The Contracting parties were encouraged to use them in the implementation of their Social Action Plans.
16. The representative of the European Commission presented a case study on “The emerging competences and future skills needs in electricity and gas sector”, and highlighted its relevance for the Contracting Parties, when undertaking restructuring of the energy sector.
17. The Forum expressed its concerns about the access of all citizens to affordable energy. It welcomed the work undertaken by the ECRB Customer Working Group on protection of household customers with special emphasis on vulnerable categories and recommended that this is pursued further.
18. The Forum welcomed the presentation by ERGEG on the approach to consumers’ rights, and handling their complaints and encouraged the Contracting Parties to further develop this area in their legislation and business practice, building on the experience of the EU Members States. It also recommended the Contracting Parties to pay due attention to these issues when implementing their Social Action Plans.
19. The Forum welcomed the initiative of former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to develop a program for reduction of the energy poverty and encouraged the other Contracting Parties to use the lessons learned from its implementation when engaging a similar activity.
20. The Forum thanked USAID for its continuous engagement in developing models for social safety nets using energy efficiency in social housing, and welcomed the presentation of the project under implementation in former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; stressed the importance of the involvement of all stakeholders and the employment and training aspects of the project. Contracting Parties were invited to exchange best practices with similar initiatives and learn from each other in the implementation phase.
21. The Forum acknowledged the state of play with public service obligations, and invited Contracting Parties to build on existing best practices.
22. The Forum encouraged participants to develop internal communication and exchange of information and experiences also in-between the formal meetings. It also agreed that further cooperation at regional level as well as with EU social partners and other stakeholders is needed for strengthening the social dimension. The European Commission is expected to contribute to this cooperation.
23. The Forum welcomed Moldova’s accession to the Energy Community and invited it to sign the Memorandum of Understanding on Social Issues. Likewise, the Forum encouraged the Observer Countries and their social partners to take part in its activities.
24. The Energy Community thanked the European Commission for its support in the organization of the 3rd Social Forum. It also thanked the Presidency in Office for hosting the Social Forum and for the valuable contribution to its success.