

## PRESS RELEASE

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European  
Partners for the  
Environment

### EU GREEN JOBS AGENDA GAINING MOMENTUM AT EUSEW

**European Partners for the Environment (EPE) welcomes the outcomes of the workshop on: "Green Jobs" Creation through Buildings Retrofitting in the EU<sup>1</sup> organized in partnership with ETUC, ADEME and ILO in the framework of the EU Sustainable Energy Week (EUSEW).**

The EU must create an extra three million green jobs within a decade, European Commission president José Manuel Barroso told the European Parliament on 7 September 2010 in his first "state of the union" speech. Following Mr Barroso's speech, the European Parliament has asked the EU executive to develop by 2011 a strategy to encourage the creation of green jobs in Europe, according to a non-legislative resolution which also included support for decent working conditions and pay.

The promotion of "Green Jobs"<sup>2</sup> is central in the transition towards a greener economy and buildings renovation will have a great impact on that. The main purpose of the workshop was to investigate the extent to which the possible refurbishment of the existing building stock for the purposes of energy efficiency and renewable energy could lead to the creation of employment and improvement of working conditions and of workers' skills in the EU. The workshop collected policy options and industry best practices, which were essential to trigger a move towards the combined benefits of energy efficiency improvements for the building stock and quality job creation in the EU.

Commenting on the workshop proceeding, Mr Peter Poschen, Director of the ILO Job Creation and Enterprise Development Department, observed: *"renovation of buildings for better energy efficiency is one of the major win-win-win opportunities for the economy, for jobs and social inclusion and for the environment. Europe has an enormous stock of inefficient buildings. Renovation can save 50-80% of the energy they consume. Examples like the German or French retrofitting programmes show that this can directly create or maintain hundreds of thousand of jobs in a sector hard hit by the 'Great Recession'. It creates many additional jobs in building supply firms and by redirecting consumption to more employment intensive goods and services. Government incentives for renovation are recouped by higher taxes and social insurance contributions and the cost to owners is recovered by savings on fuel bills. It can also help social inclusion: the renovation of social housing shelters poor families from rising energy cost."*

Ms Elisabeth Schroedter, Vice-President and rapporteur of the EP report "Developing EU Job Potential of a New Sustainable EU Economy", stated: *"The workshop underlined the huge potential for job creation and safeguarding of jobs in crises the*

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*renovation of buildings across the EU offers. It is key that we act now and set in place the right framework conditions and training programmes to exploit the potential." Ms Anne Panneels, speaking as ETUC representative, said: "It is crucial to implement a renovation program for the complete European housing stock as part of a sustainable strategy, and therefore to reinforce social dialogue, bargaining and collective agreements to help develop quality jobs in the sectors involved." Dr Edmundo Werna, Senior Construction Specialist at the Sectoral Activities Department of the ILO, emphasized that: "It was important that the social sustainability aspect of building retrofitting activities be given due attention and that efforts be made to ensure that the jobs which are being created in the process meet the criteria of decent work".*

The workshop concluded that buildings renovation (to include double glazing, insulation, sustainable building materials, energy control systems, efficient heating and ventilation systems) is one of the areas with the highest potential to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions and to create jobs in the process. Some 4 million direct green jobs based on improving energy efficiency already exist across the economy in certain European countries. Buildings currently account for less than one million of this total but could represent a future source of many more green jobs. Buildings are responsible for 30–40 per cent of all energy use and waste generation. The construction and renovation of buildings also represents the sector with the highest technical and economic potential for reducing emissions. Using current technology, high-performance buildings have the potential to cut energy costs by at least 80 per cent compared with traditional building construction. Jobs in this sector are likely to be performed by people who already work in the building sector, but will be redefined in terms of new skills, training and certification requirements.

However, according to the partners organizing the workshop, in order to fully realize the potential of green jobs creation in the building renovation sector, a number of objectives need to be realized. The EU needs to promote a labor market and social policies that are coherent with the green economy, while anticipating the need for new skills, better working conditions and scaling up investments in sustainable sectors. As far as new skills are concerned and according to a new report by ILO and the European Center for the Development of Vocational Training<sup>3</sup>, Europe needs to focus on adding to existing competences and placing emphasis on core skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematic (STEM), where shortcomings have been recorded.

The workshop will feed into a set of further recommendations to the EU Commission which has been asked to propose by 2011, a European job strategy for a sustainable economy as part of the EU 2020 strategy, aiming at optimising job potential in the building sector whilst paying attention to decent work, skills needed and a socially just transition<sup>4</sup>. In addition, the workshop will provide adequate feedback to the UN

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system in the practical deployment of the principles highlighted in the ILO/UNEP report: "Green Jobs: Towards Decent Work in a Sustainable, Low Carbon World<sup>5</sup>".

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## Note to the Editor

<sup>1</sup> The workshop was organized on 12 April 2011 as part of the official program of the EU Sustainable Energy Week: [www.eusew.eu](http://www.eusew.eu)

<sup>2</sup> The following definition from the ILO has been used to refer to "green jobs":

*"A green job is one which significantly reduces negative impacts on the environment relative to the status quo, while providing productive and decent work, thus ultimately leading to environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable enterprises and economies. Green Jobs reduce consumption of energy and raw materials, limit greenhouse gas emissions, minimize waste and pollution and protect or restore ecosystems. Green jobs contribute to sustainable development when they provide decent work,<sup>6</sup>"*

<sup>3</sup> Green Jobs: Towards Decent Work in a Sustainable, Low-Carbon World (Full report): [http://www.ilo.org/global/resources/WCMS\\_098503/lang--en/index.html](http://www.ilo.org/global/resources/WCMS_098503/lang--en/index.html)

<sup>4</sup> Draft Report on Developing the Job Potential of a Sustainable Economy. Committee on Employment and Social Affairs. Rapporteur: Elisabeth Schroedter.

<sup>5</sup> Skills for Green Jobs European Synthesis Report:  
[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/---ifp\\_skills/documents/publication/wcms\\_143855.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---ifp_skills/documents/publication/wcms_143855.pdf)

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