

walq  
ing

# Green and Decent? Working Conditions in the Waste sector in Europe and Implication for the Trade Union policy

Work and Life Quality  
in New & Growing Jobs

Dr. Vassil Kirov, ISSK, BAS  
Jerry Vand Den Berge, EPSU

GURN. A Green Economy that Works for Social Progress  
24-25 October 2011



walq  
ing

# Structure of the presentation

Work and Life Quality  
in New & Growing Jobs



Somewhere in Bulgaria

- WALQING Research
- Investigating processes – greening, Europeanization, privatisation
- Situating actors and analysing strategies
- Implications for trade unions policy





# The aims of walqing: to investigate

---

- Growing jobs in Europe with
  - Problematic working conditions,
  - Precarious employment,
  - Low wages,
  - and/or lack of social integration.



## The design

---

- Sectors selected by analysis of European employment and quality of work and life data:
    - **Cleaning, Catering, Construction, Elderly Care, Waste Management**
  - Stakeholder policies sector x country
  - Company case studies (theory-led selection)
  - Individuals' careers and perspectives
- 





# The aims of walqing: to influence policies and practices by ...

---

- ... identifying the conditions of **favourable** “new and growing job” **configurations**;
  - ... involving **stakeholders** in this assessment (**HERE & NOW!**);
  - ... developing small-scale **interventions** (action research)
  - ... transferring examples of **good practice** in Europe and exploring the **limitations** of such transfers;
  - ... identifying **gaps** in stakeholder, national and European **policies**.
- 





# The Waste sector: Research

---

- **National sectoral analyses** – AT, BU, DK, IT, EU level (ca 30 interviews)
- Case studies in progress in 4 countries – 10 Cases, 100+ interviews (results Sep 2012)
  - Stakeholders' seminar held in Brussels with sectoral actors Sept 29, 2011
- **National reports** – see **walqing** Social Partnership Series (<http://www.walqing.eu/index.php?id=64>)
- **Integrated report** forthcoming end Nov 2011 ([www.walqing.eu](http://www.walqing.eu))



On a Greek Island...

## ... a heterogeneous sector ...

---

- **Stakeholders** less structured and more diverse compared to industry
  - Traditional public sector (municipalities)
  - Traditional private sector (B2B, construction, logistics ...)
  - More or less privatised utilities (MNCs, regional, local players)
  - Hybrids: PPPs
  - **Unions**
  - Public sector
  - Private sector (manufacturing, construction ....)
  - Large, merged unions (coordination across departments)
-



# Multiple processes that shape the context...

- EU and national environmental policies,
- Public sector privatisation,
- Changing consumption patterns,
- MNCs and internationalisation



The Waste Crisis in Italy  
<http://news.nationalpost.com/2010/11/22/photos-the-garbage-crisis-in-naples-italy/>

Generic «dirty work and masculine pride»  
(Billerbeck 1996) → pressurised, fragmented,  
ethnically and functionally diverse work; «smarter»?



# ... and considerable variation within Europe



Somewhere in Bulgaria

- annual household waste per person: CZ 294 kg, DK 801 kg
- 90+% landfill: BU, RO, LT, MT, PL
- Recycling or Compost 59+%: AT, DE, BE, NL
- Incineration 47+%: DK, LU, SE

# The waste sector: transition to a recycling society?



*“In the 1980s, the picture was, here’s the bin, that gets emptied into a truck, then brought to the waste site, tipped out, that’s it, that’s how it started. And nowadays, waste management is about management. You divide up these material flows and consider at the collection point what gets collected separately and so on, and then these flows go through particular treatment routines.” (Expert, Austria)*

<http://www.tsv-unterriexingen.de/files/images/altpapier091.JPG>



# Greening on the European Agenda (A resource-efficient Europe )

---

- By 2020, waste is managed as a resource. Waste generated per capita is in absolute decline.
  - Recycling and re-use of waste are economically attractive options for public and private actors due to widespread separate collection and the development of functional markets for secondary raw materials.
  - Waste legislation is fully implemented. Illegal shipments of waste have been eradicated.
  - Energy recovery is limited to non recyclable materials, landfilling is virtually eliminated and high quality recycling is ensured.
- 





## European trends

---

1. Greening: environmental legislation → quality of work (skill upgrading vs low quality jobs...)
2. Privatisation: ownership and value chain restructuring → quality of work
3. Internationalisation of regulation and business: Professionalisation, downgrading, CSR?





# Greening: The hierarchy of waste and the EC strategy for 2020

---

- Prevention
  - Re-use
  - Recycling
  
  - Recovery
  
  - Landfilling
- Waste per capita in decline
  - Separate collection & stimulation of secondary materials market
  - Restrict energy recovery to non-recyclable materials
  - Virtually eliminated



# „New jobs“ through greening?

---

- Employment growth throughout Europe
  - New functions: sorting, consulting, high-tech and engineering
  - Sorting: a problem zone of fast-paced, low-wage, risky conveyor belt work
  - Some secondary labour market in recycling (IT)
  - Skill upgrading (environmental consulting) limited (IT, DK)
-

# Privatisation: variation in EU

---

- Traditional B2B → redrawing of boundaries between public and private (hybrids, PPP, MNCs)
- IT: management of public utilities by joint stock companies with some public shareholding, in 2009 mandatory increase of private shares to 40%; notorious criminal sector involvement and waste crisis in the South
- DK: since 1990s outsourcing to private contractors 80%, after 1st round, departure from use of „transfer of undertakings“ rules (Council Directive 98/50/EC of 29 June 1998)



# Privatisation: variation in EU

---

- AT: packaging directive 1992, incremental change on level of municipalities, regional syndicates, federal states; expansion of (semi-)private companies to CEE
- BU: outsourcing since 1990, re-municipalisation in small communities, 2004 63.5% of 17837 employees in public sector, 2009 24.5% of 11447. Strong presence of Austrian-based smaller MNCs

# Impact on the quality of work

---

- Workload intensification (also in public sector)
- Uneven and difficult representation and social partnership
- Limited time of contracts → losses of tenure with new contract
- Unequal working conditions for new entrants = fragmentation of workforce

# Europeanisation

---

- Impact of European directives notable (environmental, also health & safety)
- Largest MNCs (Veolia Environment FR, Suez FR, Remondis DE) 2-3x sales of followers
- So far, no EU Social Dialogue set up (EPSU working on it)
- some transnational collective agreements with largest MNCs



# Initiatives to address quality of work

---

- collective bargaining still strong in some countries but weak in others
- Role of clients and public procurement
- Health and Safety on the agenda (at some cost to workers, DK)
- Training initiatives are developed (BUT perception of generic low-skill sector, AT!)
- Integration of vulnerable groups, Roma in BU
- BUT social economy in some contradiction with quality of work amelioration (IT) ...



The right position?  
Denmark





# Summary: greening and privatisation

## — Greening:

- no automatism for “good jobs”
- Political focus on job creation and skills rather than quality
- “Greening” as a focus for attention

## — Privatisation:

- Fragmentation and work intensification
- Role of public procurement (most advantageous offer vs cost cutting)





# Summary: Europeanisation

---

## — Europeanisation

- EPSU lead, focus on largest MNCs
- Needs establishment of social dialogue
- ways to tackle diversity in a very heterogeneous sector
- Transfer of good practices



The future? Somewhere in Denmark





# European union (ESPU) priorities in the Waste sector

---

- Social Dialogue
- Health and Safety
- Skills development
- Environmental services – valorisation of waste must be valorisation of workers
- European Day for Waste workers







# Questions for discussions

---

- What perspectives?
- Are initiatives transferrable?
- Is integration of vulnerable groups through the social economy good thing for quality of work?
- How to fill 'institutional gaps' in the NMS?



The future? Somewhere in Denmark





# Implications for Trade Union Strategy

---

- Need to critically analyse greening effects
- The exchange of practices initiatives transferrable
- Filling 'institutional gaps' (in the NMS)
- Working with 'clients'
- Health and safety challenges
- Coordinating actions – e.g. through EWC...



The future? Somewhere in Denmark



The logo consists of a dark teal speech bubble shape containing the word "walqing" in white lowercase letters. The bubble is positioned on the left side of the slide, overlapping a light blue curved background element.

walq  
ing

Work and Life Quality  
in New & Growing Jobs

Thank you and watch this space:

[www.walqing.eu](http://www.walqing.eu)

[www.epsu.org/](http://www.epsu.org/)

Contact:

[vassil.kirov@gmail.com](mailto:vassil.kirov@gmail.com)

[jvandenberge@epsu.org](mailto:jvandenberge@epsu.org)

