

Motion for a resolution

Submission to the NPF on Democratic Public Ownership

Brussels Labour International Branch is composed of Labour Party members living in Belgium.

The Branch welcomes

- the opportunity to comment on the consultation document “Democratic Public Ownership”;
- the commitment to bring the utilities and railways into public ownership and
- the determination to ensure democratic forms of management of the nationalised enterprises.

We endorse the logic of the consultation document which sets out the benefits of democratic public ownership in terms of:

- the societal and economic benefits of involving workers, the public and other stakeholders in decision making;
- the enhanced efficiency from tapping into the knowledge of employees and users of public services;
- the place of economic democracy as a cornerstone of genuine political democracy;
- the empowerment of groups that are otherwise excluded.

The Branch believes:

- that no single model of democratic management fits every industry or service. What works for railways may not be best for water or energy enterprises.
- The mix of worker representation, user representation, community and environmental interests will depend on the specific form of the industry.
- Pluralism in democratic forms of management should be seen as a strength. We should not be afraid of experimentation and we should draw lessons from experience across the publicly owned sector to improve performance.
- that economic democracy should not be limited to state owned enterprises, but that lessons from democratic management should inform the revision of corporate norms and practice in the private sector as well.
- Wherever possible existing structures of local representation, Councils and Mayors should be used to represent the community interests. These structures are already familiar with reconciling competing aims in the development of their localities.

The Branch proposes:

- that each state owned enterprise should be required to publish a Charter setting out a statement of its business purpose, the principles of governance, the responsibilities of its governing and representative bodies, its guidelines for transparency and inclusion, and its processes for accountability.
- that the existing regulators should be replaced by an independent Quality Council, with the task of assisting state owned enterprises to improve their responsiveness to the needs of users of services and other stakeholders through periodic quality audits.
- that each state owned enterprise should be required to publish and keep up to date its targets for contributing to a zero carbon economy at the earliest date possible.