



## **EPSU Collective Bargaining Conference 2004**

### **Collective bargaining workplan 2004-2009**

The collective bargaining resolution agreed at this year's Congress commits EPSU to continue its work and develop new policy in a number of areas. The resolutions on gender equality, pensions and public services in an enlarged European Union also have implications for our work in collective bargaining. We set out briefly below the main issues and suggest how these can be taken forward between now and the next EPSU Congress in 2009.

#### **Economic governance**

The collective bargaining resolution argues that the European Union should adopt a different approach to economic governance. Modernisation of labour markets should be based on negotiations between unions and employers not unilateral action that focuses only on the kinds of restructuring and flexibility that suit employers.

The focus of the Stability and Growth Pact should be shifted to investigate how investment in public services can create jobs. The spotlight should be on a demand-oriented policy that stimulates growth rather than the tight limits of the current Pact that can contribute to unemployment and recession.

*Action: EPSU will support ETUC efforts to improve economic governance and is in discussions with the European Trade Union Institute over potential research that could help set out a clear alternative economic policy.*

#### **Co-ordinated wage policy**

The aim is that collective bargaining should help regulate the market and contribute to growth and social cohesion. EPSU along with the ETUC and other industry federations has adopted a wage coordination guideline that aims to ensure that pay increases compensate for inflation and provide workers with a share of the increase in national average labour productivity. Pay in the public and private sectors should develop in parallel with a view to avoiding pay gaps between the two sectors.

*Action: EPSU will continue to monitor pay developments. The development of database and the epsucob@ network should help this process and encourage affiliated organisations to provide up-to-date information on the progress and results of their collective negotiations.*

#### **Specific policies**

The collective bargaining resolution lists six areas where new policies should be developed. We look at each of these below and outline how we could take them forward.

##### **Low pay**

The discussion on low pay on the first day of the collective bargaining conference considered some of the initiatives being taken to tackle low pay through collective bargaining around Europe. It was clear that this is an important part of affiliates' work and there was scope for EPSU to make an useful contribution to this by potentially

looking at benchmarking of minimum pay rates in collective agreements and possibly also potential targets for national minimum wage rates where they exist or where unions are calling for their introduction.

*Action: EPSU will develop this area of work over the next 12 months using a working group next spring to help formulate a policy to be discussed at the collective bargaining conference in December 2005..*

### **Corporate restructuring**

The conference discussed how outsourcing as a common element of corporate restructuring can undermine collective bargaining arrangements. The EPSU public utilities standing committee has begun to look at examples of best practice in dealing with outsourcing and early next year will decide whether to go ahead with promoting a draft agreement and code of practice on outsourcing that could be discussed with the social dialogue and taken up by European works councils.

*Action: The Public Utilities Standing Committee meeting early in 2005 should provide clear guidance on how EPSU will make progress on outsourcing policy. Results of this work and the extent to which it can be followed in other sectors will be reported to next year's conference.*

### **Young workers and migrant workers**

Most unions have recognised the urgent need to recruit more young workers and focussing collective bargaining policies on their needs will be vital to this. To some extent this can be linked to initiatives around low pay and lifelong learning. These areas also have a bearing on developing policies on migrant workers. A number of EPSU affiliates have already taken initiatives on tackling discrimination against migrant workers.

*Action: An initial discussion on the key issues in these for EPSU and its affiliates in these two areas could take place at next year's conference with a view to more detailed work being carried out in the following year.*

### **Older workers and sustainable development and quality of jobs**

Recruitment and retention of older workers have become more important for negotiators as pension reforms have led to reduced pensions and higher retirement ages. The Lisbon strategy also demands increasing employment rates for older workers. With the need to increase employment unions need to be wary that this isn't employment at any cost and sustainability and quality are vital factors.

*Action: EPSU can begin to investigate some of the main initiatives in these areas during 2006 for initial debate at the collective bargaining conference that year and development of fuller policy during 2007.*