



**Collective Bargaining and
Social Dialogue
in the Public Services**

4th EPSU Collective Bargaining Conference
12-13 December 2005

Co-ordinating Collective Bargaining

An outline of current EPSU collective bargaining policy and
proposals for future developments

EPSU collective bargaining policy

Co-ordination

EPSU policies on collective bargaining are drawn up with a view that it is possible and valuable to co-ordinate policy in key areas.

The aim of co-ordination is to establish some common and/or minimum standards in the public services across Europe. A coordinated strategy should ensure that collective agreements converge upwards and do not undermine each other.

This does not mean that EPSU policy will replace that of affiliated unions . As stated clearly in the policy statement at the 2000 General Assembly: “EPSU affiliated unions are autonomous in collective bargaining.”

Below are the main points, including some specific targets, that have been established by resolutions at the General Assembly in Lisbon in 2000, the 2004 Congress in Stockholm and by policy statements agreed by the Executive Committee. They are the core of the EPSU collective bargaining policies unions have agreed to implement and monitor.

Also outlined below are key policy areas that are currently being developed or where policy is due to be considered and formulated between now and the next EPSU Congress in 2009.

The main areas of collective bargaining policy:

- Pay
- Equal pay and equal treatment
- Working time
- Lifelong learning
- Pensions

Currently developing policy on:

- Low pay
- Outsourcing

Next focus will be on:

- Young workers
- Migrant workers

Future areas will cover:

- Older workers
- Sustainable development and quality of jobs

Main areas of policy

Pay

- Pay increases should aim to compensate for inflation and provide workers with an appropriate share of productivity increases.

- As productivity increases are difficult to measure in many public sector activities, the relevant measure should be increases in average (national) labour productivity.
- The link to average labour productivity should help prevent public sector wages falling behind the private sector, with negative consequences for attracting qualified staff and social and gender implication.
- Public and private sector wages should generally develop in a parallel manner.

Equal pay and treatment

Equal pay is an integral part of EPSU's collective bargaining policy and the central aim is to reduce the pay gap by between 2% and 5% by 2007. Specific measures that can help achieve this include:

- campaigning to ascertain the value of women's jobs;
- Improving job protection;
- ensuring equal protection and pro rata rights for atypical employment;
- mainstreaming gender issues in collective bargaining policy with regular monitoring;
- ensuring equality in recruitment, career advancement, training and education for women in the public sector;
- taking measures to avoid discrimination against women in collective dismissals; and
- developing active labour market policies that benefit both women and men.

Equal treatment raises wider questions and particularly the need to tackle women's health and safety and sexual harassment. Women's work environment and typically female work-related injuries and illnesses must be given more attention.

Equality agreements and affirmative action plans should cover every workplace with concrete goals and timetables

Working time

- All forms of working time patterns have to be based on proper negotiations between employers and trade unions.
- The 35-hour working week through negotiations at appropriate levels remains a priority demand for EPSU affiliates.
- Other forms of reducing working time should be explored, such as paid and unpaid leave, parental and family leave.
- Working people should have more choices to move between full-time and part-time work, with adequate compensation, taking account, in particular, of the needs of lower paid workers.
- Compliance with legal and/or collectively agreed working time reductions needs to be monitored with a view to reducing overtime and creating jobs
- Innovative methods of work organisation should be negotiated by the social partners at the appropriate levels to reconcile citizens' needs for quality public services and workers' preferences for the division of time between work, leisure, education and family life.
- Reduced working hours need to be based on adequate staffing levels to also facilitate leave arrangements for training or parental responsibilities, equal

treatment and equal opportunities, and the encouragement of the sharing of family and work responsibilities.

- Fair treatment of part-time workers should include the option to work be able to work full time if they want to.
- On-call duty in the workplace should be calculated as normal working time.

Lifelong learning

EPSU believes that lifelong learning should be an essential part of the collective bargaining agenda.

EPSU affiliates should aim for a target of 10 days' leave per year for personal development.

The following principles of lifelong learning should be achieved through collective agreements between representative employers' and trade union organisations, at local, regional, national and European levels:

- lifelong learning should be the subject of collective agreements.
- workers should have the right to receive individual learning accounts and access to continuous education, training and lifelong learning. This should include task specific or job-related training, transferable skills training and personal development training.
- employers must give proper investment in terms of time and resources for learning. This should include health and safety training for all employees.
- lifelong learning should be rooted in principles of inclusion, equal opportunities and participation for all. Elderly workers should have equal access to life-long learning possibilities.
- existing learning programmes, both individual and those for organisations, should be regularly assessed.

Pensions

EPSU's main pension priorities cover:

- defending and developing quality, well-funded and sustainable pensions systems,
- addressing the gender pensions gap,
- ensuring that pensions rise in line with earnings so that pensioners share in the rising national income,
- developing benefits that take account of the trend to flexible working and changing family and work patterns,
- making pension rights fully portable to allow for the free movement of workers from country to country,
- recognising that occupational pensions are deferred wages and schemes should be the subject of collective bargaining,
- ensuring that schemes are open to all workers,

Developing policy

Low pay

The public services generally have a good record on pay. Pay inequality tends to be less pronounced than the private sector and collectively agreed minimum rates are often higher than equivalent jobs in the private sector.

However, there are still large numbers of low-paid workers in the public services and privatisation and management attempts to introduce more market-based pay structures mean that there is pressure for change.

The EPSU collective bargaining conference in December 2005 will be discussing a draft policy document on low pay. This will assess how EPSU can co-ordinate collective bargaining across Europe to establish decent minimum levels of pay. It will also examine how EPSU can contribute to broader campaigns to ensure that statutory minimum wages also reach decent levels, with targets set relative to the level of average pay and standard of living in each country.

Outsourcing

Outsourcing is affecting all the public services. Public sector employees are being transferred to private companies where new collective agreements apply or where unionisation and collective bargaining are weak or non-existent.

Starting with the utilities, EPSU is investigating the extent to which this process can be regulated through agreements with employers and codes of practice agreed at sector level. Progress will be reviewed at the collective bargaining conference in December 2005.

Next steps

Young workers

Both trade unions and the public services face major challenges in dealing with demographic change. Collective bargaining policy can be important in protecting young workers and ensuring they have the decent pay levels and training opportunities that can make the public services an attractive place to work.

Migrant workers

The increased employment of migrant workers is also important for the public services and trade unions have a vital role to play in negotiating policies, particularly on language learning and training, that can ensure that they are fully integrated into public service employment.

Future developments

Older workers

There is increasing pressure to cut back on early retirement and even to increase retirement ages in the public services. Unions need to respond to this and ensure that the needs of older workers on pay, working time and re-training are properly taken into account.

Sustainable development and quality of jobs

Ensuring sustainable development is becoming an ever more urgent demand upon employers and trade unions alike. Collective bargaining has a role to play here with agreements on transport to work, for example, an important way for trade unions to negotiate environmentally sound policies.

Jobs are not just about basic pay and conditions. The nature of work and the potential for personal and career development are essential to create quality jobs and there are many ways in which these can be implemented through collective bargaining

References:

Resolution R.2. Collective bargaining, 7th EPSU Congress, Stockholm, 2004

Resolution R.3. Pensions, 7th EPSU Congress, Stockholm, 2004

Resolution R.4. Gender equality, 7th EPSU Congress, Stockholm, 2004

EPSU policy statement: Public service trade unions and collective bargaining in a European environment, 6th General Assembly, Lisbon, 2000

EPSU policy statement: An active working time policy: for employment, time sovereignty and equal opportunities, 6th General Assembly, Lisbon, 2000

EPSU policy statement: Gender equality, 6th General Assembly, Lisbon, 2000