

No to further liberalisation says EPSU on the occasion of 4th Railway Package

What is next ? Water services? Healthcare ?

(19 February 2013) EPSU, Europe's Public Service Workers Trade Union Federation is alarmed that the European Commission with its 4th railway package continues its ideological push to liberalise public services in the European Union. EPSU is concerned that the same arguments will be applied to other public services such as healthcare and water and sanitation.

The Commission is proposing a template for all Member States independent of their situation. It uses arguments about innovation and cost savings that do not stand up to scrutiny if we look at the experience in other sectors. While there are cross-border services in passenger rail, this is a small proportion of the overall traffic and does not justify such measures. The railway package also sheds new light on the attempts of the European Commission to legislate on concessions. This is clearly a piece in a puzzle to make it easier to privatise public services such as rail transport, water services and healthcare. EPSU recalls that former EU Commissioner for the internal market, Mr. Fritz Bolkestein, had argued that water services needed to be liberalised. He used similar arguments and compared unlike situations, comparable to the Commission now.

Jan Willem Goudriaan, EPSU's Deputy General Secretary stated: *EU Commissioners may argue that they are not about the privatisation of public services but by putting corporate interests above citizens' rights their actions only go in this direction. Europe needs practical, objective-led policies that support Member States to make public services even better, not lead to more failed privatisation."*

EPSU notes that its sister Federation - the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) has rejected major parts of the fourth Railway Package. It denounces the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering for all rail public passenger transport services and the liberalisation of all other domestic rail passenger

services, the so-called open access competition. The ETF decisively rejects as well the total separation of infrastructure management and operations. The Commission disregards the Treaty by ignoring Protocol 26 of the Lisbon Treaty which sets out that Member States remain responsible for organising their markets.

EPSU supports the European campaign for the Human Right to Water www.right2water.eu that has been signed by well over a million citizens now. The campaign argues that water should be excluded from internal market rules and should not be liberalised. The response of citizens has been overwhelming. Clearly many EU citizens do not want their water services to be liberalised. Many individual responses have indicated that they are concerned that the EU will seek to force competition and privatisation. The railway package reinforces these concerns.

- [Log in](#) to post comments
- [Printer-friendly version](#)

Networks

[Public Services](#)