

Council set to ignore attack on public services and plight of public sector workers

EPSU Press communication

(28 February 2012) As Greece submits to further austerity measures and deep cuts in public spending continue to be imposed by other governments around Europe, the European Council meets this week to conclude the first phase of the European Semester.

[A new report](#) for the European Federation of Public Service Unions and by the European Trade union Institute (ETUI) exposes the major gaps and inconsistencies in this process and why it is failing to provide an adequate response to the challenges facing Europe. The European Semester begins with publication of the Annual Growth Survey and involves governments in producing National Reform Programmes (NRP) and then responding to the European Council's country-specific recommendations.

The EPSU-ETUI report reveals that countries are, in fact, faced with a “bewildering mix of often overlapping targets and guidelines” and it is questionable whether the “measures identified in each NRP are really connected to European goals.” More worrying is the selective reporting of the NRPs with little or no mention of “major cuts to public services, the freezing or cutting of public sector workers’ pay and the reduction in employment and/or freezing of recruitment.”

EPSU General Secretary, **Carola Fischbach-Pyttel** says: *“It is deeply worrying that European policy makers are continuing to endorse attacks on public services and public service workers in the face of mounting evidence that their co-ordinated austerity will lead to another recession.”* Adding *“EPSU, along with the ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation) and other progressive civil and political voices have been calling for an alternative to austerity – measures to tackle poverty and inequality and to invest to create green jobs. However, as our report shows there is still little scope to get our arguments across because of the restricted democratic debate allowed for in the European Semester.”*

The Annual Growth Survey – the second published unexpectedly early last November – and then followed through to the country-specific recommendations with limited opportunities for intervention by the European Parliament, let alone the social partners.

EPSU is supporting the ETUC's co-ordinated day of action on 29 February as an important initiative in trying to influence the debate and shifting the focus away from the austerity measures that are undermining the recovery.

For more information contact: Pablo Sanchez, psanchez@epsu.org , 00 32 474 62 66 33

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