To all EPSU affiliated unions in Belgium

Ref.: JWG/cb

Brussels, 23 March 2016

EPSU message of condolence and sympathy to the Belgian affiliates

Dear Colleagues, Comrades, Friends,

On behalf of the EPSU affiliates and their members please accept our condolences. Our solidarity is with you, your members and the Belgian people at this dark moment.

We are shocked by the attacks against the people that took place yesterday in Brussels, 23 March 2016. A very black day. These barbaric acts were aimed at workers going to their jobs in the heart of Belgium, the heart of Europe. They were aimed at travelers, at women, children. They targeted people of all cultures, religions and beliefs. They leave families, friends, co-workers and our communities behind with grief and pain. So imprinted in our memories still are the horrors of Paris, Ankara... And so many other places outside of Europe, in Tunis, in Kenya and Nigeria, the downing of the Russian plane in Egypt. It is a sad list. We condemn these acts.

These latest terror attacks were very close to us in Belgium. EPSU staff were preparing for the World Water Day action. Some were witness of the horror at the metro-station. The same is true for the activists of the CGSP/ACOD and CSC-ACV Services Publics who were on their way to join us in the action planned for World Water Day. Irish unionists and others were to meet with us as well. We had Belgian and European colleagues joining us for a social dialogue meeting in Central Administration. I myself was in the ETUC Executive Committee nearby having passed the metro station minutes before. Several foreign union colleagues were at the airport. We understand all our direct colleagues are safe. Our thoughts are with the families and communities of those who have been killed or injured.

I witnessed the work of many workers operating in these dangerous circumstances around our offices. I walked from the ETUC meeting back to our office. The ambulance drivers, the police and security forces, medical staff and fire-fighters to mention some were working hard everywhere. Our societies call upon them to go where others leave. They deserve our respect for the services they provide. Respect which is often denied to these workers when they seek improvements to their working conditions, recognition for their skills and resources for their work.

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European Federation of Public Service Unions
EPSU and PSI, the ETUC Executive Committee and many other organisations have adopted statements condemning the attacks and expressing solidarity with the Belgian people and our trade union colleagues. We received countless messages of sympathy for the victims, their families and our communities. They come from French and Turkish unions, from trade unions large and small. Trade union staff and activists from across Europe and the world express their concern and support for you and the Belgian people. Many workers in European Works Councils express their sympathy and concerns. These messages came to EPSU staff who live and work in Brussels (our office is in Rue Joseph II very near to the metro exit Maelbeek) but they are equally for you, the Belgian unions, trade unionists and workers.

These are terrible days.

We have and will stand up for and defend the open and democratic societies against these attacks. And we see great acts of defiance and solidarity. I am convinced that one of the responses to these attacks is to work together to bring about a more socially just and equitable society. And we can do this by standing together across borders, cultures and religions. Together to say No to the discrimination and to the hatred these terrorists seek to spread. We will not give in to fear.

With my sincere greetings of solidarity,

Jan Willem Goudriaan
EPSU General Secretary.