



Health European Network – EPSU – PHM – Alter Summit – Plate-forme d'action Santé & Solidarité
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Press Communication

European Action Day against the marketisation, commercialisation and privatisation of health care on World Health Day (7 April)

Political leaders must halt the rising tide of commercialisation of healthcare services in Europe, says a network of trade unionists, citizen collectives, NGOs and social movements in a series of actions planned in several European cities this World Health Day (Thursday 7 April 2016).

A rallying cry will be heard from activists in Madrid, Barcelona, Zaragoza, Paris, Lille, Brussels, Milan and beyond. Their message is a simple one: Invest in quality healthcare for all and end the treatment of health as a commodity.

In Brussels, a series of actions will shine a spotlight on the damaging consequences to citizens and workers of the increasing commercialisation of healthcare services by governments across the continent. Following a morning press conference and seminar, an action next to Schuman roundabout will invite participants for treatment at one of two temporary hospitals: one for those that can afford to pay for treatment and one for everyone else. This will highlight the two-tier healthcare system that commercialisation creates.

The recent trade negotiations on agreements such as TTIP, TISA and CETA could further open up healthcare for competition and hand a bigger role to private commercial providers, financial investors and insurance companies.

Jan Willem Goudriaan, General Secretary of EPSU, said: *"In a time of rapidly ageing populations and rising multimorbidities and dementia, public health and social care services need a vital injection of investment in order to meet complex needs. Instead, they are being stretched to the brink by the austerity, outsourcing and marketisation policies of governments up and down Europe. These governments do so at the risk of reduced quality of care, deteriorating working conditions and a two-tier health system in which lower risk and paying patients are "cherry picked" by commercial providers and receive better and faster care.*

"The pursuit of profit margins must never trump the duty of care to patients; our health and wellbeing is not a commodity to be sold to the lowest bidder. On World Health Day 2016 we call on governments to reverse this dangerous trend and give healthcare the support and investment it desperately needs."

Sebastian Franco, coordinator of the European Network Against the Commercialisation of Health, added: *"By holding this action on World Health Day, we reinforce our struggle against the commercialisation of health happening all over Europe.*

"In every country, we face the same threat: the boundless appetite of large enterprises which view the health sector as an opportunity to make them lots of money. These enterprises are unfortunately pushed by various governments and European institutions that have for decades built a European health market in which competition and competitiveness are becoming more important than access to health for all.



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"Patients and healthcare workers will unite and take coordinated action because this affects us all. We will do this every year on 7th April because unfortunately this commercialisation trend shows no sign of stopping soon."

Chiara Bodini, coordinator of the People's Health Movement in Europe, said *"The economic crisis - and the austerity measures meant to address it - are increasing the needs of social and health care by the population. Poverty, inequality, job instability, etc. are all determinants of health, and when they increase we expect an increase in ill health outcomes, particularly among the more vulnerable population groups. This is a time where investments in health and social services should increase rather than being cut, as studies have shown that the response of governments to the crisis is a key determinant of the people's health outcomes. Social movements such as the PHM are here to say that people's voices must be heard when they demand that their right to a healthy and safe life is prioritised over the economic interests of a few."*

Note to editors:

- The European action has been initiated by a team of four activist networks: European Public Service Union (EPSU), European Network Against Privatisation and Commercialisation of Health and Social Protection, People's Health Movement in Europe and Alter Summit.
- The hospital action in Brussels has been supported by organisations including: Plate-forme d'action Santé & Solidarité, CSC and FGTB, CNE-CSCSP and Setca-CGSP-CG, Mutualité Chrétienne, Solidaris, Fédération des maisons médicales, CNCD-11.11.11 (and the campaign "Protection Sociale"), CBCS, FOS, Medecine pour le peuple, M3M, Femmes et Sante, Trade and Health Network, Memisa, LUSS and Medecins du Monde.

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