

EPSU Congress 2009

R.1. Quality Public Services – Quality of Life

A. The EPSU affiliates meeting at their 8th Congress in Brussels from 8-11 June 2009 affirm that:

1. The public sector is a vigorous and essential part of the European social model by contributing to social cohesion and the fulfilment of fundamental rights of European citizens, because:
 - ✓ Quality public services are of paramount importance for all members of society: citizens, workers, businesses, and including vulnerable groups, such as migrants and poor people;
 - ✓ Public services contribute to the shared values of solidarity, gender equality and non-discrimination, as well as to competitiveness, sustainable economic development and social and territorial cohesion;
 - ✓ Public services, and a responsive public sector, are fundamental to meeting the major challenges posed by demographic change and climate change.
2. The development of quality public services is essential in the EPSU area. Public authorities at all levels need to take responsibility for the funding, organisation and provision of public services based on solidarity, respecting shared principles and values of equal access, universality, continuity, adaptability, affordability, proximity, social partnership and democratic control.
3. A positive European agenda must counteract the marketisation of public services, both within and outside the EU. EPSU will continue to oppose privatisation, outsourcing, and various forms of the marketisation of the public sector, including Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) which have a negative impact on the quality of services for citizens and their employees. We cannot accept changes in the way public services are provided that weaken solidarity in society and universal access to these services. A positive European agenda must also prevent further EU sectoral liberalisation, notably of health and social services as well as water.
4. The public sector needs sufficient, well-trained, motivated and well-paid staff. This demands good and transparent management and trade union rights to information, consultation and negotiation. It also demands measures to support the reconciliation of professional and family life, as well as an end to all forms of insecure and precarious employment in both the public and private sectors.

B. The 8th Congress calls on EPSU and affiliates to:

5. Continue to call for horizontal legal provisions at EU level for public services, while also demanding an EU Action Programme on 'quality public services' based on the public services Protocol agreed by the 27 EU governments in 2008. The Programme should set out concrete objectives and targets for improving public services at different levels, based on the public services values and principles of solidarity-based funding, quality standards and criteria, participation of workers and citizens, and evaluation. The Programme should be extended to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) countries and also be taken into account in the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). It should be accompanied with monitoring and support instruments that encourage public authorities to develop solidarity-based public services.

6. Press for regulation and/or agreements on specific issues, in order for example to:
 - ✓ Broaden the definition of what counts in case law as ‘in-house’ provision of public services;
 - ✓ Encourage public-public cooperation, such as inter-communal cooperation;
 - ✓ Give more scope for the inclusion of social criteria, including collective bargaining agreements and environmental criteria in public procurement contracts;
 - ✓ Tackle corruption and underpin good administration, transparency, democratic control, and the participation of workers and their representatives as well as users in the organisation, delivery and evaluation of quality public services;
 - ✓ Ensure that general interest criteria apply to eGovernment;
 - ✓ Underpin the responsibility of governments to uphold universal and fundamental rights, for example the right for every child to have access to quality childcare;
 - ✓ Improve the quality of work, for example through life-long learning and competence development, measures to support gender equality and equality of opportunities for all;
 - ✓ Develop productivity indicators that take into account quality and not only economic performance.
7. It is necessary to mainstream public services principles and values across EU policies and activities. All policies should be assessed on their contribution to the development of quality public services, including macro-economic policy, European Structural Funds (ESF), and external policy (for example, regarding the ENP, the EU-Russia dialogue, the Balkans Stability Pact, the EPA, or the General Agreement on Trade and Services, (GATS).
8. Press for sufficient public spending on public services and the public sector – as an investment and not a cost - through the maintenance and development of solidarity-based systems of financing. EPSU should do work on issues related to the funding of public services, such as taxation, transparency and the fair distribution of wealth.
9. Take action so that migrants, including those without documents, are protected from exploitation and have access to the services that they need.
10. Continue to provide resources for research, training, information-exchange, awareness-raising, alliance-building with civil society organisations and campaigning activities in the fight for investment in quality public services and against various forms of marketisation, including PPPs.
11. Develop a coordinated strategy to ensure that the non-profit sector (charities, cooperatives, social enterprises) complements, and does not substitute, for the public sector; and to improve the employment conditions of workers in private sector companies delivering public services.
12. Integrate the quality public service dimension into EPSU’s sectoral work and the social dialogue. EPSU will work towards more structured cooperation on public services issues with relevant European trade union federations, for example to promote joint positions on public contracts and concessions.

Adopted 10 June 2009