

EPSU Executive Committee addresses Tax Justice, Brexit, situation in Turkey, CETA, elects new leadership and much more



(16 November 2016) We have a [new President in EPSU](#). Isolde Kunkel-Weber from the German union Ver.di was elected and will take over from Annelie Nordstrom. Mette Nord from the Norwegian union Fagforbundet was elected vice-President. The Executive had a full agenda. The Members discussed the [Future of Europe](#) with ETUC General Secretary Luca Visentini. Luca stressed the importance that the European Union develops its social model, ends austerity and invests in sustainable growth and jobs. ETUC has made several proposals how this can be done including a comprehensive investment plan going beyond the limited Juncker plan. One part of a strategy to grow out of the enduring economic crisis is to ensure Europe's workers get a well-deserved pay increase. This is certainly true for many public service workers who have seen their wages frozen for many years bearing the brunt of austerity policies. Ending austerity is to be a key element of the pay

campaign as well as improving low pay and closing the gender pay gap. ETUC further is influencing the discussion over the [EU pillar of social rights](#). Concrete proposals are needed to improve workers' rights and our working and living conditions. The response of the European cross-sectoral employers to the social pillar is disappointing. They keep on playing the old and worn-out record of improving competitiveness and demanding more flexibility from workers and families. The employer groups refuse to negotiate on how Work-Life Balance can be improved. ETUC has made [concrete proposals](#) addressing paid parental leave, paternity and careers' leave for example. It is now to the European Commission to follow up on the problems it also identified with clear actions and legislative proposals. Gloria Mills, the President of the EPSU Women and Gender Equality and of the ETUC Women's Committee presented the work done in the EPSU and ETUC and we will focus on Work life balance issues in 2017. Our Executive in April 2017 will consider the broader attack on women's rights as experienced for example by women over abortion in Poland. EPSU continues to support the ETUC Women's Committee position for gender parity in the ETUC Executive. The amendments to the ETUC constitution proposed so far are disappointing.

The EPSU executive committee adopted a number of positions.

[On Brexit](#) We stand with UK and Europe's workers that we should not pay the price of decisions like Brexit. We continue to fight for better pay and conditions defending the right of EU citizens to stay in the UK and for UK citizens to be in the EU. We condemn the xenophobic and racist attacks that followed the referendum vote.

[Regarding the coup and the purge in Turkey](#) A Turkish colleague told Members of the crackdown on independent and critical media, on elected mayors and politicians, on Kurdish organisations and on the unions. Over 110.000 public service workers have been dismissed or suspended. And more and more union members are among them.

[Our opposition to CETA](#) We discussed the work of EPSU at EU and national level including the many actions unions have taken on CETA. Progress has been made, the importance of trade agreements and their negative impact for public service workers is well understood. The text of the agreement has not changed despite additional declarations that explain specific points. The EPSU Executive Committee agreed to continue campaigning for change and if not possible for rejection of the text.

Tax, whistleblower protection The European Commission has come forward with several proposals to address tax avoidance, yielding to the pressure of EPSU and others following many scandals such as Luxleaks and billions of unpaid taxes by multinational companies like [McDonalds](#). Affiliates in the EU and outside are asked to demand support from their government for [public country by country reporting](#) to ensure transparency of the taxes paid by companies. EPSU also supports the [petition](#) on whistleblower protection. Many Members signed up during the Executive, which asked members and workers to do the same. It is through solid protection of the right to whistleblow that scandals like Luxleaks have been revealed. Alas whistleblowers are often punished for their public acts like [Antoine Deltour](#).

Migrants EPSU will support the ETUC action to draw attention to the situation of undocumented migrants on International Migrants Day 18 December. The scale of the undocumented migrant workers, the exploitation they face and what unions are doing to assist them is not broadly known. Affiliates have been asked to provide examples of their actions which confront employers that engage in exploiting the vulnerable position these workers find themselves in. Following a proposal of the EPSU women's committee a [statement](#) on the gender dimension of migration was adopted. Women need to be protected before, during and after their flight from their home countries. They also need to be able to access services which enable them to integrate into the labour market. The EU institutions and Member States should take gender into account in migration and integration policies. The chronic underfunding of public services, in particular migration asylum processing services and understaffing in this area risks further undermining the equal treatment of refugees and migrants.

Other subjects discussed included:

- Our continuation of the work on **organising and recruitment**. The downward

trend of membership loss in several sectors and countries needs to be reversed. This requires targets, staff support and other resources in affiliates to be focus on gaining membership and making members active in the unions. Members of the Executive Committee looked at the longer term objectives and how to improve our understanding of trade union density.

- We adopted the **priorities** for our work and the **budget** for 2017. The Finance Working Group will meet 22 March 2017 (Brussels) Constituencies are to nominate the representatives.
- [PSI World Congress](#) (31 October-3 November 2017, Geneva) will address the priorities of work. It is our time to lead and make sure people go before profits. Members made several comments on the draft programme. It also considered the amendments to the PSI constitution on which there was large consensus. Deadline for resolutions of affiliates will be 28 March 2017.
- **The follow up of the work programmes and social dialogues** in utilities, national and European administration, local and regional government and health and social services. The sectors cover an extensive body of work. EPSU seeks to influence European discussions on issues such as: Digitalisation and e-government, exposure of firefighters to carcinogens, EU energy market design and liberalization, working conditions of trainees in electricity companies, climate change and just transition, energy poverty, circular economy, Right2Water, our critique on the standardization of care services, continuous professional development and life-long learning for health workers, the revision of the EWC Directive, multinational companies active in our sectors and including in social services, health and safety and information and consultation rights for workers in public administrations, privatization and outsourcing of services and the commercialization of care, addressing problems of prison service workers, remunicipalisation, socially responsible procurement, We considered promoting social dialogue at national and European level in the social services sector and endorsed guidelines to support this.
- **Economic governance** remains a core area of work as the European semester with its Annual Growth Survey and Country Specific Recommendations becomes more embedded. Ending the policies of austerity is crucial for public service workers. EPSU stresses the need for public investment and especially in health and social services. There is more recognition that this is now key to restore sustainable growth and just societies. EPSU continues its work with the Semester Alliance, a group of social movement organisations that seek to influence the priorities in the

Commission's Annual Growth Survey.

- **EU level social dialogue** The negotiations to come to an agreement on active ageing and intergenerational solidarity are almost finished. We will organize a [conference on the quality of employment 10 and 11 January 2017](#).
- **New affiliates** We welcome the Turkish union Enerji-Sen/DISK and the culture workers of the Croatian trade union of Education, Media and Culture (SOMK) into our membership. The unions strengthen EPSU's presence in these sectors and we look forward to work with our colleagues.

We said goodbye to a number of colleagues that have been very active in EPSU's work and have contributed to its development like Dan Nielsen (Vision, Sweden) in local government and Didier Baur (CGT-FNME, France) in the utilities. Richard Holzer, the longest serving member of the Executive, chair of the EPSU Standing Orders Committee for Congress, active in many functions including the Finance Working Group received a warm applause for his contributions. Richard was the President of the social-democratic group in the Austrian union GÖD. These 3 colleagues retire.

The EPSU executive committee took place on the 8 and 9 November 2016, in Brussels. It was initially chaired by acting President Dave Prentis (Unison, UK), EPSU's senior vice-president and then, following the elections by Isolde, the new President of EPSU.

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