

## 2018: a challenging year of action and negotiation across the public services



This year has seen some important negotiating successes for public service unions but also continuing struggles in some countries where austerity is still having an impact. EPSU unions have been in action, locally, regionally and nationally across all sectors of public services from [eldercare in France](#) to [prisons in Spain](#) and from the [waste sector in Germany](#) to [health workers in Romania](#).

EPSU plays a key in coordinating European **solidarity** and there were several important examples of this during the year. There was a major effort to show [support](#) for the **Danish unions** whose plans for targeted strike action to strengthen their negotiating position were met with the threat of a massive lockout by public service employers. Many affiliates responded to the call for solidarity, giving a real

boost to the 10000-strong [meeting](#) of shop stewards who gathered in Copenhagen to debate the unions' strategy. The strike and lockout were avoided and unions were happy with the end [result](#) worth 8.1% over three years.

EPSU has created a strong [network](#) of affiliates across the **Orpea** social care multinational and this paid off in the [solidarity](#) and support given to the ver.di trade union in Germany facing a difficult [dispute](#) with a local operation of Orpea's Celenus subsidiary.

In November, EPSU affiliates responded enthusiastically to a call for solidarity with the UNISON and GMB unions and their 8000 local government members in **Glasgow** in the [UK](#) taking strike action in support of their longstanding equal pay claims.

In addition to the positive outcome in Denmark, there have been significant **pay settlements** for federal and local government workers in [Germany](#), civil servants in the [Netherlands](#), public sector workers in [Spain](#), private sector health workers in [Austria](#) and local government workers in [Finland](#). News on other pay deals can be found in the [pay settlements](#) section of the EPSU website.

Public service unions have been negotiating and taking action not just over pay but over a broad range of employment and working conditions as well as their basic rights. **Health and safety** and **surveillance** have been taken up by EPSU affiliates in the waste sector in [Italy](#), [France](#) and the [UK](#) while prison unions have focused on **violence** as well as **staffing** and the **right to strike** in [Austria](#), [Belgium](#), [France](#), [Italy](#), [Netherlands](#), [Spain](#) and the [UK](#).

**Gender equality** is a priority for EPSU and affiliates continue to take initiatives to close the gender pay gap. As well as the action in Glasgow, there were also initiatives in [Iceland](#), [Switzerland](#), [Sweden](#), [Denmark](#), [Norway](#) and [Spain](#), where there was a major mobilisation by trade unions on International Women's Day.

**Staffing levels** have been a focus of union action and concern in health and social services, particularly in [Germany](#) but also in [Austria](#), [Denmark](#), [France](#), [Italy](#), [Netherlands](#) and [Sweden](#). EPSU affiliates' successful negotiations on pay in the health sector in [Bulgaria](#), [Czech Republic](#) and [Romania](#) should contribute to attempts by the unions in those countries to tackle the major staff shortages created by emigration.

**Pensions** - and particularly pension age increases - have been an issue in [Belgium](#), [Croatia](#), [Norway](#), [Portugal](#) and [Russia](#) and increases to **working time** have met with resistance in [Austria](#) and [France](#).

EPSU affiliates in [Greece](#) and [Portugal](#) are still countering the effects of austerity while trade unions in [Turkey](#) continue to take industrial action despite the repression meted out by the authoritarian government there. Anti-trade union governments pose problems for EPSU affiliates in other countries, including in the [Ukraine](#) where the unions are active in defending their trade union rights and [Hungary](#) where unions have been taking action on pay and attacks on fringe benefits.

All these developments have been reported in EPSU's collective bargaining newsletter. This year has covered news of negotiations on pay and conditions in over 30 countries with more than 300 articles that have also included information from surveys and reports at European and national level.

There are still plenty of gaps in our coverage and so please ensure we are kept up-to-date by sending your collective bargaining news to [rpond@epsu.org](mailto:rpond@epsu.org).

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