

## **Never mind the bollocks (of BJ), here is the trade union movement**

Date

Friday, January 31, 2020 - 12:00

29 January was an emotional one in the European Parliament with the vote to approve the UK withdrawal agreement. Despite of what the likes of Boris Johnson and others say, the story is not over and will never be over. The UK is very much part and parcel of Europe. Workers and unions in the UK are part of Europe's union movement and all of us share a proud and inspiring history. Our origins as European public service unions go back to 1907 when municipal workers came together in Stuttgart to establish PSI. Many of these were workers in gas companies. And they in turn had learned from the Beckton (East London) gas workers who, through organising and striking, achieved one of the first 8 hour days in Europe in 1889.

We will fight together for trade union rights and for high quality public services. In the most immediate future, we will work together for so-called regulatory alignment. And more... we want to see UK trade unionists keeping their representation on European works councils; we'll support the peace agreement in Northern Ireland, and deal with employers that violate workers' rights.

And there are plenty of employers that put profits above everything else. EPSU is supporting [a campaign of Verdi against AMEOS](#), a private health care company that has dismissed 14 trade unionists. They have been organising actions and demanding negotiations over a collective agreement. We want to help them get their jobs back and achieve good agreement. Please sign the petition and help send a strong message.

Thanks to the many unions who have sent letters to the Ukrainian government in support of the workers fighting off the attack on their union rights. Organising solidarity is one way to strengthen our collective bargaining. In the EPSU working group 30 January we discussed what else we can do together, what European measures would help and how wages can be improved. We focused on the European Commission's consultation on minimum wages and the trade union response. Building strong unions and our Federation is essential in squaring up to

employers. As Will Thorne, leader of the Beckton gas workers learned: “It is easy to break one stick, but when fifty sticks are together in one bundle it is a much more difficult job”. Together we are stronger.

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