

# **2021 - Renewing the fight for a better future for all**

Date

Monday, December 21, 2020 - 12:00

Nobody will forget 2020. We have shared the same experiences of the pandemic in all corners of Europe and beyond. It has swept through our workplaces and impacted on our lives. The images of health and care workers trying to cope is deeply ingrained in our memories. Some of us have lost loved ones and will have bitter regrets with the thought that many deaths could have been avoided.

Unions have been fighting for the health and safety of workers and many measures now in place are the result of the work of union representatives at the workplace. The impact on young people will be huge. This is not just about education and the weeks of lost teaching, compounded by the digital divide that prevents online schooling for many, but also the longer term effects on mental health.

However, there are reasons to be hopeful. Governments have recognized that certain jobs are essential, vital and crucial and many of these are carried out by our members, public service workers on the frontline. But they also include truckers, food-workers and many more. In contrast, few will defend the bankers who destroy jobs with their speculation or the marketeers trying to sell us expensive products – the kind of useless and parasitic jobs associated with the neo-liberal values of egoism, competition and putting profits before everything else. These recent months have shown us that this is not what drives us as people. And although we will be confronted with parties of the extreme right, none of their solutions are attractive, workable or offer a perspective for a brighter future. We can move forward to something better than division, discrimination and exclusion.

We have experienced what collaboration and care can do for all. In fighting the pandemic, the values of public service and of cooperation have prevailed. These are the same values needed for social justice, to reduce inequality and to stop the degradation of our environment and global warming. Economically the fight against the pandemic has been backed up with government policies, pushed by trade unions, that have massively supported jobs through short-term work and increased social protection. States have invested massively in vaccines which will be rolled out in the coming months. At national and EU level huge amounts of public funding are now being made available to invest in the recovery of our economies – again as unions have demanded. This offers great opportunities to realise a green and social deal and for transformation of our societies in the interests of all. And shows how it can be done by welfare states.

However, private companies are queuing up to get a share of the pie. I don't see why we should agree to companies receiving public money if their bosses and shareholders allow exploitation of workers and oppose collective bargaining. Why should taxpayers' money go to companies that avoid paying their fair share of taxes, that pollute the environment, that fail to move towards carbon neutrality while giving their CEOs insane pay packages hundreds of times the average salary of their employees? Our municipal and other public companies are the alternative and can shape a fairer future for all.

Our work to achieve a better future for all will be opposed by those who want that better future only for themselves. The many stories in this newsletter over the past year show us the way forward. I thank you all for your contributions to the work of EPSU and the trade union movement.

On behalf of the EPSU team and our President and Vice-Presidents – Mette, Françoise, Liz, Mikhail, and Thomas – we wish you festive greetings and good health. And we look forward to seeing you back in the New Year to make the difference for public service workers and for our communities that are so urgently in need of the fundamental change to realise a Future for All. Join the Fight.

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