EPSU meets Czech Health Presidency of the EU

Meeting with Czech Deputy Health Minister Josef Pavlovic and Ivana Brenkova, Czech Health and Social Services Workers union and EPSU GS, 11 July 2022, Prague

(12 July 2022) The Czech Presidency of the EU has a full agenda regarding health and care this autumn. To raise some of the EPSU concerns we met the Deputy Health Minister Josef Pavlovic. We discussed:

- The rising numbers of COVID19 infections, new variants and the impact on workers and the need to address Long Covid as many workers especially in health and care still suffer the consequences. They were in the frontline for all of us.
- The EU Health Data Space. The CZ presidency wants to make progress with the proposals. Key questions will be around ownership of data, ownership of the infrastructure, data clouds etc, impact on workers in the health system, need for training and more.

- Addressing staff shortages and how the EU should assist the trade unions and employers promoting and implementing the framework of actions on recruitment and retention
- The Future of Europe Conference and what Europe's citizens think of health and care. They do not want those services to be opened up for competition, and they do not want public funds being used for private companies gains. No commercialisation and no liberalisation of those services.

The meeting took place 11 July in the Ministry of Health in Prague. The EPSU General Secretary and Ivana Brenkova, of the CZ health and social services union met Mr. Pavlovic.

The EPSU General Secretary met the Czech affiliates to discuss the Czech Presidency and the priorities of the unions. Addressing inflation and the need for pay rises, improving health and safety, solving staff shortages, opposition to austerity are amongst the issues that workers and the unions want answers to. They are however not part of the CZ presidency priorities. The unions are preparing actions to increase the minimum wage as many workers are suffering from high prices for energy. The government is unwilling to do all it takes to regulate the prices. We looked at the energy situation, the agenda for just transition and the impact on the energy companies. Other issues including right to organise for military, the undermining of fire-safety through high work pressures and lack of workers, changes in the organisation of the culture sector and how it would impact on salaries of cultural workers.

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