European health workers must not be the scapegoats of the crisis. Decent work is needed to improve Europe's health

(19 October 2011- Press Communication) The European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) held the biggest gathering in 2011 of health workers in Europe to discuss the effects of the crisis on health and Social Services workers. EPSU is the biggest organization of workers in Europe in the health sector. About 100 people from more than 27 European countries attended the event.

The conference discussed the challenges that the crisis is putting on the different health systems of Europe. Health worker are particularly affected by the austerity measures that are being imposed across Europe, inside and outside the EU.

Issues such the Europeanisation of National Health Care Systems and Services to how health care is affected is of much concern for EPSU affiliates. To achieve better working and occupational health and safety and successful social dialogue at all levels is needed. At this stage many governments in European countries are having deaf ears to such dialogue.

European health workers are facing huge workloads, low pay and stress so there is a trend of workers leaving the profession. The retention and recruitment in the sector will be a key part of the trade union strategy to tackle existing and future staff shortages. This is specially important as in many countries health workers face an ageing population with a negative impact on the patients and the service. For such objectives Europe needs alternative and innovative sources of funding

"*The FTT as an alternative for financing national health systems will be a very positive step. We hope that the EU will take the lead and use some of the money raised for funding a sustainable European health system*" **Carola Fischbach-Pyttel** , General Secretary of EPSU stated.

Another major issue for the health workers in Europe is the Cross-border mobility and migration in the sector, EPSU affiliates will increase the cooperation amongst

themselves to ensure that mobility is not used to push downwards wages and conditions and to ensure that professional qualifications are properly recognized and valued across Europe.

Cristina Iftimescu, vice-President of the SANITAS trade union (Romania) declared that "*in our country the health reform meant hospital closures, low wages (an average nurses wage is 300 euros and doctors earn in average 900) and the departure of thousands of health workers each year, in 2011 so far more than 16000 have already left the country. Mobility on such basis will be a disaster for Romanian people and the health of the country. This is the policy pursued by our government".*

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