

European Committee launched in the hospital sector - "Social Partners committed to full role in defining EU health policy"

European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)
European Hospital and Healthcare Employers' Association (HOSPEEM)

Press Communication: Brussels - Embargo Friday 17 March 11.00am

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"Social Partners committed to full role in defining EU health policy"

(For release 11.00am 17 March, 2006) The European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) and the European Hospital and Healthcare Employers' Association (HOSPEEM) today jointly announce the creation of a European Sectoral Social Dialogue committee for the hospital sector.

At the Conference organised to launch this development, **HOSPEEM General Secretary Godfrey Perera** stated that; *"this committee will allow the key actors, workers and employers together, to contribute to the positive development of the hospital sector. The challenges being faced in the sector are the same throughout the EU. This process will allow us to share information, to highlight best practice, and to make common responses to upcoming EU initiatives"*.

EPSU General Secretary, Ms. Carola Fischbach-Pyttel added that *"the hospital sector is one of the most sensitive and strategically important sectors. In a European Union context this is particularly the case, as there is increasing ambiguity as to how much the hospital sector is influenced by EU policy, while officially remaining strictly a Member State concern. We welcome this initiative and are fully committed to playing a constructive role"*.

The establishment of the committee represents the first occasion that there will be formal recognition of social partners in the hospital sector at the European level.

This is an extremely significant step as it allows the workers and employers to have a direct formal input on EU policies affecting the hospital sector.

Over the last 5 years, as the social partners for the hospital sector at European level, EPSU and HOSPEEM have been working, with European Commission support, to formalise sectoral social dialogue at the European level. The successful agreement to establish a committee marks the end of the 'informal stage' and the beginning of genuine social partner engagement at the European level for the sector.

The social dialogue process is supported by the Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs of the European Commission. The formal committee will consist of trade union and employer representatives from all over the 25 EU Member States.

The social partners have agreed a work programme for 2006-2007 that will concentrate on:

- Recruitment and retention of personnel in the hospital sector
- The age profile of the hospital workforce
- The new skill requirements for the workforce in the sector.

These items will be linked to items, which are high on the political agenda.

If you want to arrange interviews with EPSU or HOSPEEM leadership or with delegations from one of the countries, please call EPSU press officer Brian Synnott, + 32 474 98 96 75.

For information please contact Tamara Goosens or Brian Synnott, + 32 2 2501080 or send an email to epsu@epsu.org

EPSU is the European Federation of Public Service Unions. It is the largest federation of the ETUC. 8 million public service workers and their 213 trade unions are members. They organise workers in health and social services, local and national administration, energy, water, waste. In the health and social services sector EPSU organises 3.5 million members.

HOSPEEM is the European Hospital and Healthcare Employers Association. It regroups at European level national employers' associations operating in the

hospital and health care sector and delivering services of general interest, in order to co-ordinate their views and actions with regard to a sector and a market in constant evolution.

HOSPEEM is an individual member of CEEP.

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