

Our message spreads: No to commercialization of health and other care say unions in Central European constituency

(Dubrovnik, 10 March 2016) Close to 60 leaders of trade unions in Central Europe spoke up for publicly funded health and other care. Workers, families and communities are confronted with advocates for private care. Policy prescriptions of World Bank and IMF continue to favour commercialization of care. And the unions do not agree. They discussed examples of how such private care is expensive and excludes many people from having access. Unions report how it undermines national public health systems. And they joined behind the banners: No to commercialization of health care; Our health is not for sale. The unions participated in the action that will sound forceful on World Health Day 7 April in Brussels. Unions and other organisations will underline our demands for:

- Quality care, and against austerity policies that cut in funding for health and other care.
- Public investment to have sustainable care and social security systems. Cuts in public funding make these systems more fragile and work more precarious. Whereas every Euro invested in health care delivers many more in growth and quality of life.
- Decent pay and conditions. Austerity policies have led to cuts in staff in some countries. This increases the workload. Governments have sought to impose wages freezes leaving nurses, doctors, medical and other staff behind. Homecarers, those delivering elderly care, health care assistants, nurses, junior and other doctors, cleaners are standing up for better pay and recognition of skills and qualifications.
- Health, social and other public services out of trade agreements like CETA, TTIP and TISA. Keeping those services in will lead to cut-throat competition over the backs of patients and workers.

The union leaders participated in the annual Central European constituency meeting. A large number of issues were discussed:

- Social and economic developments in their countries. The situation is difficult. Hungarian unions reported the continuous actions of workers as the Hungarian government of Orban continues to ignore their demands. Culture workers and childcares have not seen wage increases for many years. Half of workers in these sectors are now earning less than the national minimum wage. Unions in Serbia reported that actions and support of EPSU had resulted in new dialogue and agreements. Other positive examples were given of effective union work to defend pay and conditions including from Macedonia. The election results of Slovakia were disturbing with extreme-rightwing parties now in parliament.
- Government are seeking changes to labour codes in this region. Some governments abuse the need to update labour codes to make the candidate countries fit for EU membership. More exchange between the unions is important.
- The next PSI Congress in October 2017 in Geneva. The unions considered what can be done to make us more effective as European and global unions. This includes changes to the constitution of the PSI and first ideas for the priorities for the next Congress period. Not surprisingly unions in this region believe it is important to address the situation of refugees. One emphasis should be on the inclusion of refugees in the labour market.
- EPSU priorities for 2016 and forthcoming actions and events. EPSU's work on trade and taxation was commented upon. Slovak and Czech unions underlined how they work with Austrian unions to inform members and politicians of the negative aspects of trade.

Like their colleagues in North East Europe, the unions expressed their solidarity for the junior doctors in the UK. [The doctors participated again in the strike 9 March](#)

The meeting took place in Dubrovnik, Croatia, 9-10 March 2016. The meeting brought together leaders of close to 60 public service unions from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Macedonia, Montenegro, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia. Colleagues from Slovenia were presented due to preparations of strike actions. The EPSU General Secretary attended the meeting.

The documents of the EPSU Central Europe and Western Balkans Constituency Meeting, 9-10 March 2016, Dubrovnik, Croatia are available [here](#) (password protected area)

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