

EPSU Constituency South Eastern Europe: "Our health is not for sale"

(29 March 2016) The attacks on the airport and metro of Brussels affected the trade union colleagues that attended the South East European constituency meeting. The Turkish representatives recalled vividly the attacks in Ankara in October. And there have been new attacks in Istanbul and Ankara since. The union leaders stood in silence. They expressed their sympathy with the families, friends and co-workers of those killed and injured. We expressed our determination to stand for the values of democracy, tolerance and social justice.

The unions shared experiences and information about recent trends in their countries. Priorities for the unions continue to be austerity policies and attacks on trade union right. Concerns about corruption are raised in many countries. Bela Galgoczi of the European Trade Union Institute presented the findings of the impact of austerity on the countries of the EU. Workers in several countries have seen a decline in real wages. He explained that the root cause of the economic crisis is not a debt problem. Adjustments are forced through wage reduction. Policies of the ECB and the European Commission favour decentralized wage bargaining. They undermine collective bargaining. The ETUC is arguing for public investment and wage growth as a way out of the crisis.

The unions discussed the [EPSU action on World Health Day, 7 April 2016](#). The action is focused to draw attention to the negative consequences of the commercialisation of health and other care. The union leaders considered which actions they would be taking in their countries. An important slogan for the actions will be: "Our health is not for sale". 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. Home carers, 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 President of the Romanian confederation Alfa-Cartel Bogdan Iuliu Hossu addressed the meeting about the issues migrant workers are facing. The Romanian unions have established cooperation projects with unions in many other countries such as Italy. It has a large number of workers that come from Romania and also Moldova. Gonca Acaray of Genel-Is reported on the visit she paid to the refugees camps near Gaziantep. She reported on the problems the cities face with the increase in refugees and lack of funding for the municipal and other public services. It added to the testimonies at the [EPSU-PSI-ETUI seminar](#). [The study](#) published by PSI on the reception of Syrian refugees in Turkey reports how (inadequate) the Turkish authorities are dealing with the refugees. Especially the (lack of) integration in the labour market is noted.

The EPSU General Secretary addressed the EPSU priorities for 2016 and forthcoming actions and events. EPSU's work on trade and taxation was commented upon. The focus of regional work on organizing and recruitment was welcomed. He also discussed with the union representatives the next PSI Congress in October 2017 in Geneva. The focus on the region remains important and a budget for youth activities should be available. Trade union rights and migration are important issues. The unions welcomed the inclusion of PSI in the new high level panel on health workforce of the UN.

Finally the unions supported the EPSU demands concerning Right2Water. The Commission should act and propose legislation. Water and other public services are to remain outside of the scope of the trade agreements. The South East European constituency meeting brings together union leaders from the close to 50 unions from Albania, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania and Turkey. It took place on 23-24 March 2016 in Sinaia.

- Presentation from B. Galgoczi, ETUI

- [B Galgoczi ETUI presentation](#)

The other meeting documents are available [here](#) (members only area).

- Message of support for Belgium

- [Message of support from SEE unions](#)

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