

Standing up for a pay rise for public service workers in Europe - Poland, France...

(29 June 2017) Referring to the proud history of the actions of the Polish trade union of nurses and midwives, EPSU General Secretary supported the union's continued demand for decent pay and conditions at the 20 years anniversary of **OZZPiP** of the confederation Forum. The union pioneered many innovative actions like a white village to pressure the minister of finance to make more funding available for pay and jobs. Tents were set up in front of the ministry for over a month before he caved in. The union is now fighting for better staff patient ratios and effective and mandatory staffing levels in a battle many unions are engaged in across Europe. Lack of staff undermines workers' health and safety leading to more stress, fatigue and illness. This has negative effects on the quality of care of patients. Nurses were recounting how many trained and qualified nurses were leaving the profession as pay and conditions are better in other sectors in Poland. The union decided to join the European trade union family strengthening the voice of nurses and midwives in Poland and in Europe.

The EPSU representative used the occasion to meet with the Presidents of several public service unions in particular discussing the disastrous situation in the **Polish social security administration ZUS**. Management wants workers to work much more overtime, people are leaving, stress and burn-outs are common. The new Polish government has turned back previous decisions regarding the pension age. This has been welcomed. In practical terms it will lead to around 300.000 applications for pension in October leaving an already stressed system on the brink of collapse. No additional resources are allocated. Salaries are not increased to allow for the overtime payments. Wages are among the lowest in Poland. 98% of staff are women. The union is planning further actions in a hostile climate. Meetings took place 26 June in Warsaw.

The General Secretary further attended the Congress of EPSU affiliate **Interco-CFDT**. What to expect for public service workers from the new French government was discussed in its meeting. The union considered its policies and demands in two round tables focusing on the future of the public service in France. How to address

challenges of digitalization, to relate to decentralization and what role for the social dialogue. EPSU's Nadja Salson participated underlining the links between the European and national level. She demanded the European Commission to implement the agreement reached in the European social dialogue on information and consultation rights for public service workers. They are currently excluded from these rights.

The EPSU General Secretary addressed Congress underlining the need for change in Europe and the positive agenda of the unions for social rights, investment in public services, addressing tax avoidance and demanding progressive trade. The Congress delegates participated in a photo action to underline their support for a pay increase for public service workers in France and elsewhere. During the Congress workers in a local public elderly care home in Brest staged a demonstration and announced a strike action. The main issue for the elderly care workers was the lack of staff, leading to stress and burnout. The General Secretary expressed our solidarity with the workers and our common struggle.

This Congress was the occasion to say goodbye to Stelios Tsiakkaros, vice-president of the EPSU NEA committee and European, global affairs in CFDT-Interco. The EPSU General Secretary thanked him for his contributions to the work of the Federation. Stelios retires. Other delegates at Congress included the PSI General Secretary, and representatives from unions in Belgium, Cyprus, Israel, Palestine, Portugal, Tunisia, Spain. The meetings took place 27-28 June 2017, Brest.



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