

2017 - 10-11 January

EPSU Social Dialogue and Collective Bargaining Conference

Quality Employment and Quality Public Services

10 January : 09.00-17.00

11 January : 09.00-15.00

Venue: International Trade Union House (ITUH) - Auditorium

Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 5, 1210 Brussels

The quality of employment has been the subject of debate at European level for over 15 years and this conference will explore this question in detail and how it relates to the public services and public service workers.

Some of the main themes that fit under this broad heading include: pay, health and safety, work organisation, work-life balance, gender equality, skills, lifelong learning, and career development, job security, and social dialogue and worker involvement.

In many countries the public services have been seen as model employers in relation to these elements but austerity has undermined this. Participants will be able to debate how things stand today and what can be done to tackle these issues and improve quality of employment across the public services.

Speakers

A number of speakers have already been confirmed for the conference. These include :

- **Esther Lynch**, ETUC confederal secretary, who will cover the ETUC's pay rise campaign;
- **Agnès Parent-Thirion**, Senior Programme Manager and working conditions expert at the Eurofound EU Agency;
- **Ben Egan**, Employment Advisor at the ETUC;

- **Agnieszka Piasna**, senior researcher at the ETUI who will debate issues around the definition of quality employment;
- **Anton Leppik**, Executive Secretary of the Pan-European Regional Council of the ITUC who will look at reforms to labour codes in Central and Eastern Europe;
- **Torsten Müller**, senior researcher and the ETUI who will examine issues around pay.

Other contributors, including speakers from EPSU affiliates will be confirmed shortly.

Themes

An outline agenda is attached that includes sessions on the following broad themes:

The state of play in public services: Austerity is still having an impact on collective bargaining and social dialogue in the public services and participants will have a chance to discuss the latest developments and the extent to which public service unions have been able to re-establish collective bargaining and win back some of the ground lost over the past eight years.

Weakening labour codes: For many workers in Central and Eastern Europe labour codes rather than collective agreements provide the basis for many of the terms and conditions that apply at the workplace. In recent years there has been a clear trend towards revising labour codes to remove or weaken some important elements of employment protection.

Pay: Fair pay is an important element of quality employment and the session will look in particular at sectors and occupations in the public services where low pay and the undervaluing of work is a problem. This relates in particular to jobs dominated by women in social services such as childcare and is important in affiliates' continuing attempts to close the gender pay gap.

Working time and work-life balance: These are important elements of quality employment but where there has been increased pressure for longer hours and greater flexibility from employers. This debate will also be in the context of the European Commission's review of the Working Time Directive which may propose to undermine existing rules on on-call time that are crucial in relation to health and safety and work-life balance.

Work organisation, workloads and staffing levels: With pressure to do more with less, many public services have seen significant job cuts and recruitment freezes. This can pose real challenges in terms of health and safety for workers as well as for service users.

Digitalisation: The spread of digitalisation across the public services is sometimes seen as a threat to jobs and jobs content but also as providing possibilities to move to shorter hours and improve work organisation. This will be an important element of the debate in these sessions.

Job security: The public service has been seen in many countries as a sector where there are high levels of job security. This may still be the case where civil service status exists but often the level of protection has been eroded or many services provided, directly or indirectly by workers on more precarious contracts. This session will look at how public service unions have responded to this trend.

Skills, training and career development

Austerity has often involved cuts in training provision and a block on recruitment and promotion and therefore career development. These are, again, elements associated with quality employment in the public service and the maintenance of a skilled and well qualified workforce providing quality public services.

Focus on prisons services and childcare

This conference will be the first event in a two-year project examining the issue of quality employment and quality public services. Further details of the project will be given at the conference. The project will include a particular focus on prison services and childcare and workshops for these sectors will take place later in the year (10 May for prisons and 6 December for childcare). There will be a second major conference on 6-7 June 2018.

We would particularly encourage affiliates who represent prison staff and childcare workers to attend this first conference.

Sponsorship

Funding from the European Commission will allow us to provide financial support to affiliates from EU Member States and Candidate Countries from Central and Eastern

Europe. EPSU is also providing support for at least one participant from each of the Eastern European countries outside the EU. Please see the practical details document.

Languages

There will be active interpretation in Croatian, Czech, English, French, German, Russian, Spanish and Swedish. We have asked for passive Italian, Portuguese and Norwegian so that participants will be able to speak but not listen to these languages but these are to be confirmed.

We hope that your trade union will participate and look forward to seeing you at the conference.

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- Participation form ([English](#), [Croatian](#), [Czech](#), [French](#), [German](#), [Italian](#), [Spanish](#), [Swedish](#), [Russian](#))
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MEETING DOCUMENTS

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