

Cuts in public service jobs and wages - what does it mean for women?

Press Release (22 July 2010)

EPSU'S OPEN LETTER TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

"How do the EU-wide imposed austerity plans affect women?" This is the question EPSU has raised with several members of the European Commission in an open letter. If there are negative impacts EPSU wants to know what the Commission will do about them.

On behalf of 8 million public service workers, 68% of whom are women, 7 questions are posed to EU Commissioners Reding, Andor and Rehn, charged with Fundamental Human Rights, including gender equality, Employment and Economic and Financial affairs respectively.

EPSU's starting point is that EU-wide austerity measures, as a policy option to reduce public deficits, will, in addition to reducing jobs and growth, impact disproportionately on women who make up a large part of the public sector workforce. This view is shared by the European Parliament, as expressed in a resolution adopted on 17 June.

Ahead of the Commission's new gender equality strategy 2010-2015, EPSU draws attention to the contradictions between the EU obligations on gender equality and gender mainstreaming and austerity measures, endorsed by the European Council

of 17 June last.

“The EU has been a driving force in improving equality between men and women. But it stops at the doorstep of economic and financial affairs. As the guardian of the Treaties, it is urgent the Commission carries out a gender equality impact assessment of the ongoing cuts in public services. As a human right, for the benefit of all, achieving gender equality should supersede short-term financial gains for the few. Commission’s own funded research concludes that keeping gender equality central to the responses to the crisis can make a huge difference for jobs and growth. Why isn’t the Commission making a good use of its own research funded by taxpayers? ” says Gloria Mills, chair of the EPSU Gender equality Committee (Unison, UK).

The views of the Commission are sought on the following topics:

- Integration of gender equality in EU response to the crisis in line with article 8 of the TFEU on gender mainstreaming of all EU policy areas;
- Relationship between cuts in public jobs and EU “2020” strategy for more jobs and growth;
- Relationship between cuts in public services and fighting poverty;
- Relationship between the Commission’s strategy to close the 17% gender pay gap in the EU and freezes and/or cuts in public service wages;
- Compliance with EU obligations on social dialogue;
- Guidance to member states on compliance with EU directive 2004 on equal treatment between women and men in the access to and supply of goods and services.

The response(s) of the commission will be published on the web when available.

Text of the open letter, sent on 20 July, is available here:

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