

Introduction to Gender Equality and EPSU

Gender Equality - public service workers leading the way

Find out [who is your EPSU representative for Gender Equality here](#)

What are the main issues for EPSU ?

Over 65% of public service workers in the European Union are women who deserve recognition, in terms of the role they play, and in terms of the pay they receive. Closing the gender pay gap and improving women's pay is a key issue to EPSU.

The pay gap in public services is about women getting less money than men for the same work or work of same value. It is also about women having fewer career opportunities than men.

Within the EPSU organization, we strive towards achieving gender equality in decision-making bodies and committees. Of the top 8 positions in EPSU, 4 are currently held by women, including the post of President, General Secretary, and Vice President. EPSU's Gender Equality Committee has the same constitutional standing as the Executive Committee. More efforts must be deployed to be truly representative of our membership consisting of a large majority of women.

What is the European context ?

Throughout Europe, whilst the public sector has a better record than the private sector, in terms of the pay gap, family-friendly policy, working time, ongoing reforms risk undermining earlier gains. A significant percentage of public service jobs are carried out by women working for low wages. Lack of affordable quality child and elder care infrastructures and insufficient payment for parental and paternity leave increase the barriers to equality. A concrete commitment to improve child care and dependant care provisions is long overdue.

As a core EPSU document states;

“it is unacceptable that more than fifty years following the establishment of the principle of equal pay for men and women in the Rome Treaty and 34 years after the equal pay directive, women earn on average 15% less than men in the EU”.

The care sector, for example, as one of the main employers of women, is characterised by precarious and low-wage jobs, irregular working hours and few career opportunities. Even though staff shortages and the demand for care workers are expected to accelerate in Europe, governments have failed to make the sector more attractive to both male and female workers. The EU agenda for a deregulated internal market of services worsens the situation, despite its renewed commitment to achieve gender equality throughout Europe.

What is EPSU trying to achieve ?

In cooperation with our sister organisations, the PSI and ETUC, EPSU wants to find ways of tackling value discrimination, including campaigning for improved EU legislation. Specifically, EPSU calls for better EU legislation on equal pay and maternity protection and a right to paid parental leave and paid paternity leave. We also seek a compulsory equality clause in all public contracts to avoid deterioration of women’s working conditions when services are outsourced. EPSU wants to highlight the importance of introducing or increasing minimum wage levels and specific rises for low paid jobs/grades and campaign for part-timers’ right to access/return to a full-time job. For the public sector, to earmark funds dedicated to closing the pay gap is also essential. We seek to raise awareness on the human right to gender equality and develop training for women on pay bargaining and on equality for pay negotiators.

Social dialogue at EU level is another important tool, such as the European cross-sectoral agreement on gender equality which was agreed in 2005..We need to put more pressure on the employers to better implement this agreement. As part of the ETUC delegation, we are currently pressing for a revision of the parental leave agreement.

In our sectors, we have negotiated with the employers guidelines on gender equality plans in local and regional government, an equality toolkit in the electricity sector, a Code of conduct on ethical cross-border recruitment and retention in the hospital sector, a good practice handbook in the state sector. Also EPSU is at the

forefront of promoting equality through the European Works Councils, e.g. ; in the company Suez, with a follow-up to the Agreement on equality and diversity, June 2007.

- [Log in](#) to post comments
- [Printer-friendly version](#)

Policies

[Equality](#)

Networks

[Women & Gender Equality](#)