

Strengthening collective bargaining in the public services

Europe

Collective bargaining is key to delivering quality employment and this was at the centre of the final debate at EPSU's Quality Employment conference last week. Silvia Fernández García of FSC-CCOO in Spain, Kevin Callinan of Fórsa in Ireland and Marie-Louise Knuppert of OAO in Denmark joined the panel discussion to reflect on how collective bargaining had developed in recent years in their countries. Both Silvia and Kevin described the impact of austerity and the cuts to pay and conditions faced by public services workers. However, they were also both able to describe how their unions had managed to respond with both now having negotiated important new agreements that were going a long way towards restoring those cuts. Marie-Louise said that public service unions had not faced the same degree of austerity measures but in their recent collective bargaining round it had been crucial to mobilise workers in massive numbers to face down a lockout threat by the employers. The speakers underlined that the situation was still challenging but building union power and more international solidarity could help strengthen collective bargaining in the future.

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