



European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)

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EU quality framework on social services - top priority should go to developing action plan(s) on “more and better” care services for older people.

(28 October 2010, Luxembourg) Yesterday a joint workshop organised by the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) discussed a draft report on elder care services. The report had been commissioned by EPSU from the Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU) at Greenwich University. Quality eldercare services are needed to support gender equality and women's employment as well as to meet the needs and aspirations of older people.

Care services for older people are a core part of 'social services of general interest'. The EU is currently developing new policies (*) in this area. The EPSU workshop considered action plan(s) on elder care services should be a top priority for the EU strategy. The action plans should take inspiration of previous EU initiatives to support development of qualitative and quantitative childcare services across Europe.

Care for older people is still an occupation that is mainly low paid, with a predominantly female workforce, often relying on a significant proportion of migrant workers. In that sense, European trade unions must continue to strive for reducing the existing gender pay gap, very much present in the care sector. According to **Heather Wakefield** from UNISON (UK) *“European and national actions are needed to improve training and ensure fair pay for elder care workers across Europe”*.

Moreover, there is a general wave of reforms in this sector. In some countries social care has moved from a family model to more formal, but often private provision. In other countries the shift has been from publicly funded and provided services to different kinds of privatisation. In some countries, both within and outside the EU, there is very little care provision. In the light of current EU proposals such as the patient's mobility Directive, that yesterday got a positive vote from the EP, EPSU unions raised concerns about the continuing pressures to liberalise and deregulate health and social services as if they are just like any other sectors of the economy.

The move to home-based care, whether private or public, will increase unregulated and unprotected jobs - and service users - unless accompanied with appropriate policies and resources. EPSU calls on local, regional, national and European institutions to value care work and ensure proper standards are in place. The draft report will continue to be discussed in different EPSU events but the joint workshop recommended a European action plan on care services for older people. This would involve initiatives around the development of quality services sufficient to meet growing demands and to support improvements in training, qualifications and skills. *“Older people should have access to quality care services wherever they live”* said co-chairs **Anders Hammarback** and **Liza Di Paolo Sandberg** from two of EPSU's Swedish affiliates, SKTF and Kommunal.

EPSU participants will look for comprehensive initiatives at European level to develop qualitative and quantitative standards aiming to improve care services for older people. The final EPSU report will be presented in Brussels in the coming weeks.

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(*) see 3rd Forum on Social Services of General Interest (SSGI)
<http://www.eutrio.be/3rd-forum-social-services-general-interest-ssgi>

EPSU is the European Federation of Public Service Unions. It is the largest federation of the ETUC and comprises 8 million public service workers from over 250 trade unions; EPSU organises workers in the energy, water and waste sectors, health and social services and local and national administration, in all European countries including in the EU's Eastern Neighborhood. EPSU is the recognized regional organization of Public Services International (PSI).