



European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)

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Europe's health and care workers demand action over growing staff shortage crisis

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(Brussels, 5 December 2022) Health and social care workers demand that EU's health ministers take urgent action to address the growing crisis of staff shortages across the European Union.

A delegation of health and social care workers from across Europe will march from Place Madou to Rond-Point Schuman as health ministers meet to discuss Europe's pandemic preparedness and ability to promote health. The protest is organised by the European Federation of Public Service Trade Unions (EPSU) who represent over 8 million workers in health, social care and public services. The unions are calling on policymakers take action to deal with the urgent staff shortage crisis faced by the health and social care systems. Without these workers, Europe is not prepared for another health crisis.

"These ministers are the very people who were calling health and care workers heroes and applauding from the security of their homes only two years ago," remarks **Jan Willem Goudriaan**, General Secretary, EPSU. "But talk is cheap and workers are clear that they cannot continue to deliver quality care under current circumstances with staff shortages and a growing cost-of-living crisis. Europe can't wait for its health and social care systems to collapse – policymakers need to allocate adequate public funds and remove the sectors from all austerity measures. If Europe wants to show that it's learned from the pandemic, it must listen to the workers."

"The concerns being highlighted are not new," says **Adam Rogalewski**, EPSU policy officer for health and social services. "They are long-term issues caused by a decade of commercialisation and austerity which are now being exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis. Workers, mostly women, are facing poor working conditions, increased stress and long working hours – all of which is contributing to unsafe staffing levels and difficulties in recruitment and retention. And in social care low pay contributes to Europe's gender pay gap. We're seeing unprecedented mobilisation of health and social care workers across Europe in response to these issues. It's clear that the sectors are at a breaking point. Without urgent action, the consequences could be devastating."

A delegation of worker representatives will meet with the Czech Presidency of the EU and with Nicolas Schmit, European Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights to outline their [concerns and demands](#). Stella Kyriakides, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, will unfortunately be unable to meet. EPSU will continue to defend the interests of health and social care workers and calls on the Commission to prioritise their request for the establishment of an EU level sectoral social dialogue committee in social services.

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EPSU brings together trade unions from across Europe and represents over 8 million public service workers. It is the representative European trade union organisation in the health and social services sectors. EPSU works hard to deliver better working conditions, improved health and safety and enhanced rights for its members. By sitting down with employers at European level, we improve the working lives of public service workers and ensure quality services for citizens.