In the lead up to the next Congress in June 2019, EPSU is producing a series of briefings that focus on some of the main areas of work for the next Congress period. Each briefing will provide an overview of EPSU’s recent activities and will highlight the expected developments and challenges to be faced over the next few years.
FORUM DEI MOVIMENTI PER L’ACQUA
Across Europe the quantity and quality of our public services and the pay and conditions of our members are under threat from privatisation. EPSU is committed to fighting privatisation in any of its forms whether contracting-out and sub-contracting, public-private partnerships or various processes of commercialisation or marketisation.

As shown in this briefing, this fight has been central to EPSU’s activities in recent years and will continue to be a priority over the next Congress period. Our members’ experiences and the research we publish all contribute to our arguments that the public sector delivers effective and efficient quality services, that are democratically controlled and put people first and before private profit. This is the central message we will continue to communicate in our campaigning towards national governments and international institutions.

Jan Willem Goudriaan
EPSU General Secretary
Fighting Privatisation

Main initiatives taken

- Providing information and research to counter the arguments that privatisation delivers better services and that public-private partnerships (PPPs) can solve public finance problems

- Lobbying and campaigning at European and global level to put the case for direct public provision and investment and exposing the problems with privatisation and PPPs

- Supporting affiliates in their anti-privatisation campaigning and initiatives to bring services back in-house

EPSU is in favour of the direct provision of public services by public authorities for reasons of democratic control and accountability. It is also the best way to deliver quality services and protect the pay and conditions of public service workers.

Over the past 30 years, there have been increasing pressures for privatisation in a wide range of different forms – whether through the sale of public companies, the contracting out of public services or the use of public-private partnerships (PPPs) as alternatives to direct public investment. There have also been trends to commercialise public services or subject them to marketization.

More broadly there has also been a trend of outsourcing leading to a fragmentation of service provision and a multiplication of employers and employment conditions in what were once unified public authorities or companies.

INFORMATION AND RESEARCH

Play a vital role in campaigning and lobbying against privatisation. They are important in revealing the negative impact of different forms of privatisation both to the quality of services and the pay and conditions of public service workers. With the research support
of the Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU), EPSU has produced a number of publications, including:

- **Why We Need Public Spending** which provides an invaluable source of information about the economic and social role of public services;
- an analysis of a large number of academic studies showing that there is no evidence to show that the private sector guarantees higher levels of efficiency than the public sector – **Public and private sector efficiency**.
- A briefing on PPPs, setting out why they are not a solution to public spending constraints and the problems they produce in relation to the financing and provision of public services.

Both the PPPs report and the efficiency study were highlighted in EPSU’s reaction to the European Commission’s investment plan, the initial versions of which foresaw a big role for the private sector but said little about the importance of direct public investment. The risks of PPPs were also exposed by the collapse of the UK outsourcing firm Carillion at the end of 2017 and a damning report from the European Court of Auditors in early 2018.

Key events in EPSU’s campaigning work against privatisation and marketisation have been the days of action to mark World Health Day on 7 April in 2016 and 2017 to highlight the commercialisation of healthcare. Along with an event in Brussels, activists organised many events around Europe. EPSU continues to express support for affiliates’ campaigns to block privatisation with recent actions in the energy and water sectors in Greece, for example.

Working at global level, EPSU supported the PSI campaign calling on the World Bank to stop supporting water privatisation, including water public-private partnerships. EPSU was also part of a group of global water justice organizations who co-signed a letter to the United Nations, expressing deep concerns about the strong emphasis on private financing in the implementation of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal on water and sanitation.

In February 2017, EPSU joined with Public Services International (PSI) and the Eurodad development and debt campaigning group in signing an open letter to the World Bank
calling on it to tackle the flawed accounting treatment of PPPs. In June that year we challenged the European Commission’s positive attitude towards PPPs in its New European Consensus on Development. In October 2017, EPSU signed up to a new global campaign calling on governments and international financial institutions to stop prioritising PPPs over traditional methods of funding. EPSU also challenged the European Commission on its promotion of PPPs in its international development policy.

RECLAIMING PUBLIC SERVICES
While campaigning against privatisation, EPSU is also concerned to put forward the positive case for public services and the need to bring services back in-house. A major report was published in June 2017 with data on over 800 examples of re-municipalisation and re-nationalisation as city councils and governments across the world recognise that in-house provision delivers better quality services. The research was carried out and published by the Transnational Institute (TNI) with the support of EPSU, PSI and several other organisations. EPSU will be supporting PSI plans to follow this up, in collaboration with TNI and PSIRU, with another survey and the publication of a toolkit on how trade unions can deal with the challenges arising when bringing services back in-house.

MORE INFORMATION
EPSU’s website has regularly updated sections on privatisation, PPPs and remunicipalisation as well as the overviews in the annual report.

Main priorities

- Update and add to research to counter privatisation and PPPs in all their various forms and counter arguments put forward by national governments and international institutions

- Cooperate with PSI and other organisations working on campaigns against privatisation of in favour of bringing services back under public management and control

- Support affiliates in their campaigns to defend public services against privatisation and to bring services back in-house
The European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) brings together trade unions from across Europe. Our eight million members work in local, regional and national government and European administration, health and social services and energy, waste and water.

EPSU works to influence the policies and decisions of employers, governments and European institutions that affect public service workers, their families and communities. We mobilise for action and change and are committed to achieving another, social Europe.

Improving workers’ rights and pay and conditions by strengthening collective bargaining and defending the right to strike are core to our work.

EPSU is the European region of the global public services federation PSI and is a member of the European Trade Union Confederation.

By sitting down with employers in the European social dialogue in electricity, hospitals and health services, local and regional government and central government administrations, EPSU negotiates best practice agreements that improve the working lives of public service workers and ensure quality services for citizens.

Women represent the majority of our members and gender equality is at the heart of everything we do. From negotiating with employers on women’s rights in the workplace to exposing the scandal of the gender pay gap, EPSU is taking action for real equality.

EPSU fights against tax avoidance by the wealthy and multinationals that undermines our public finances. We are making the case for cast-iron exclusions of public services from international trade deals and we stand up for the rights of migrants, both in the workplace and in the services our members deliver.

EPSU provides a platform for our members to regularly share good practices in organising, recruitment and campaigning.

We campaign for well-funded public services and our members know that the services they deliver are not a cost to society but an investment in our communities. We’re taking that message to the heart of Europe.
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 260 trade unions across Europe. EPSU organises workers in the energy, water and waste sectors, health and social services and local, regional and central government, in all European countries including the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood. It is the recognised regional organisation of Public Services International (PSI). For more information please go to: www.epsu.org