

5. BRIEFING

# Gender equality

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.









Gender equality is absolutely central to EPSU's work as we fight to defend public services for the millions of women who rely on them and to tackle inequality faced by women working in those services.

EPSU and its affiliates have focused on the need to reduce the gender pay as well as the other manifestations of gender equality in pensions and employment. An important factor in public services is the need to recognise the value of many jobs, like those in eldercare and childcare that are predominantly done by women and that have been seriously and unjustifiably undervalued for many years.

Beyond the workplace we have been defending the right to abortion and demanding action to end violence against women

This briefing gives examples of our initiatives in recent years which we know need to be continued and strengthened over the next Congress period, a fact that we have already recognised in our recently adopted Gender Roadmap.

**Jan Willem Goudriaan**  
EPSU General Secretary





# Gender equality

## Main initiatives taken

- ✓ Adoption of a new Gender Roadmap
- ✓ Coordinated action on International Women's Day
- ✓ Publication of new research on tackling low pay in sectors dominated by women and the gender pay gap in public services
- ✓ Lobbying on the work-life balance directive

With women dominating employment in many parts of the public service and making up 68% of EPSU's membership, the Federation has taken many initiatives to address discrimination in the delivery of services, inequality in pay and pensions for women workers and action to improve the representation of women in EPSU and its member organisations.

However, slow progress in some areas, prompted EPSU to draft a new Gender Roadmap which was adopted by the Executive Committee in November 2017 and endorsed by EPSU's largest ever **women's conference** in Prague in February 2018. The resulting Prague statement (#BreakingwiththePast) highlights six key areas of action related to

- economic independence for women and men;
- equal pay for equal work and work of equal value;
- equality in decision-making;
- dignity, integrity and ending gender violence;
- solidarity and support with and for women beyond the EU; and
- integrating a gender perspective into all policy fields.

**International Women's Day** has become a key date for coordinating action. Trade unions and women's organisations across Europe were particularly active in mobilising in **2018**. In previous years EPSU marked the event by focusing on the **gender pay gap** and the **impact of austerity on women** in the public services.

EPSU has a longstanding commitment to tackle the **gender pay gap** in public services and has been monitoring developments since 2014. The **latest report** not only reveals large and persistent pay gaps in many countries but also highlights the lack of consistent data for public administration.

**Low pay** in sectors dominated by women is a major contributing factor to the overall gender pay gap and an EPSU **report** analyses the extent of the problem in health and social services and highlights some of the initiatives taken by affiliates to tackle the problem. EPSU raised this as a key issue in the ETUC's #OurPayRise Campaign.

**Work-life balance** is a key policy to boost women's employment and EPSU worked closely with the European Trade Union Confederation and other organisations to successfully call for the swift adoption of a new European Union Directive providing paid paternity and parental leave (including a "fathers' quota").



EPSU has been active in European works councils, negotiating gender equality agreements in the utilities multinationals ENGIE and Suez Environment.

With **abortion rights** under threat in several countries, EPSU supported the actions by Polish women in 2016 to defend their rights and joined the demonstration in Brussels in September 2017 to mark the **International Day for Safe and Legal Abortion**. We welcomed the success of the campaign for legal abortion in **Ireland** in May 2018. In November 2017 EPSU expressed support for the global trade union demand for action on **gender-based violence** at work with a **call** for a new International Labour Organisation convention.

EPSU monitors the **representation of women** in its committees and is updating its survey of affiliates to find out how things are progressing at national level.

## MORE INFORMATION

EPSU's website has a regularly updated section that cover the work of its **Gender and Women's Equality Committee** and overviews of gender equality work can be found in the **annual report**.

### Main priorities

- ✓ implement the priorities agreed in the Gender Road Map
- ✓ improve the strength and enforcement of equal pay legislation and other measures to reduce the gender pay and pensions gaps
- ✓ highlight initiatives to improve pay and working conditions in sectors and occupations dominated by women
- ✓ turn International Women's Day and European Equal Pay Day into major events for public service workers
- ✓ support measures to end violence against women

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.





FIGHTING FOR A FUTURE  
**FOR ALL**  
10<sup>TH</sup> EPSU CONGRESS 2019  
4-7 JUNE 2019, DUBLIN

**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](http://www.epsu.org)