

EPSU General Circular Nr 8 (2020)

To all EPSU affiliates

To all EPSU Statutory Committees

Ref: JWG/cb

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**COVID-19 – Thanks to all who care for us and keep us going**

**Public service workers are doing a fantastic job to provide all kinds of care support for everyone in society.** Meanwhile, trade union representatives and our affiliates are doing what it takes to protect workers' health and safety and deal with concerns over job losses, working time, sick pay and so much more. Several unions have written to us to express their solidarity with the struggle of workers in other countries and especially with our comrades in health care in Italy and Spain. We extend those solidarity greetings to all. Our thoughts are with the families, friends, co-workers and trade unionists who have lost a loved one and comrade.

**A shout-out for the workers in the care sector, in health, elderly, home care....** You face situations of unprecedented hardship both for the people you take care of and yourselves. This is especially the case for women who have to take care of children and other family members. It is good to see so many initiatives being taken across Europe in recognition of your work. **So many public service workers and at all levels (local, regional, national and European) are working tirelessly in such a broad range of services that virtually the entire membership of EPSU are at work, maintaining those crucial, essential and vital services.**

Workers keep our utilities and childcare facilities running and our social security and justice systems functioning. You work in extreme conditions in our prisons and in migration and asylum centres. You will now be dealing with getting money from support programmes to people who have lost their jobs and incomes, assisting small and medium sized business to keep them going; in municipalities, regions and agencies, ministries, companies and institutions- and so much more. You all deserve our huge thanks and respect. We are proud to represent you.

**EPSU's top priority is the health and safety of workers and protection of jobs and wages.** We keep hammering on about the need for personal protective equipment for those in care and all those that have to continue working and are in contact with each other and the public. The lack of available equipment and preparedness is a sign of the years of underinvestment in our public services. We call on European employers to work with us and take responsible action to protect workers, wages and jobs. We call on all public authorities and governments at local, regional, national and European level to assist workers, families and communities to get through these difficult weeks, assuring decent living conditions and preventing evictions and social exclusion. No worker should face financial hardship or be deprived of social rights due to this pandemic

**We abhor the nationalist and authoritarian responses to the crisis.** Foreigners, migrant workers, and refugees are not the cause and many will be severely impacted as well. It is fundamental that we keep our democratic values, respect for the rule of law, stand up for human rights and show solidarity especially at such challenging times. We stand for an EU and a Europe of fairness and equality and will work with all of you to ensure that the lessons of this pandemic are learned, above all that our economies need to change so that wellbeing comes first.

We welcome the unprecedented response of national governments and at EU-level of the European Commission and European Central Bank, making funds available to address the crisis. More will be needed. But already the voices of austerity are rearing their ugly heads. They have been discredited but it will require the force of our arguments and the argument of force to oppose them and ensure change. This crisis has shown that we need properly funded and staffed public services.

**EPSU stressed this at our Congress last year – we are fighting for a future for all in which People and our Planet go before Profits.**

**We are united in working for a better society. Together we are stronger!**

**EPSU President  
Mette Nord**

**EPSU Vice Presidents  
Francoise Geng, Thomas Kattnig, Mikhail Kuzmenko, Liz Snape**

**EPSU General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary  
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