

Programme of Action (PoA)

Adopted at

FIGHTING FOR A FUTURE

FOR ALL

10TH EPSU CONGRESS 2019

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Introduction

This programme of action highlights the main priorities for EPSU over the next Congress period and is set out on the basis of three main themes:

- A. Future of public services
- B. Future of work in public services
- C. Future of public service trade unions

These three elements form the basis of EPSU's contribution to building a Europe where people and the environment are free from exploitation and welfare for all comes first. Our vision of work and society is shaped by our shared values. These highlight the need to protect and promote democracy, peace and civil, economic, social and cultural rights and to uphold the right for everyone to have access to quality public services to guarantee their fundamental rights and well-being.

The main challenge for EPSU is to defend, promote and strengthen what we know as Social Europe. This is a Europe where sustainable development, high quality public services, full employment, workers' rights, gender equality, citizen's well-being and a well-funded welfare state take centre stage. This is a Europe whose social model continues to set an example at global level but where this social element needs to be fostered through stronger public finances and increased public investment based on progressive taxation, a fairer distribution of income and wealth and stronger and more extensive collective bargaining and trade union rights. This is a Europe that puts its full weight behind realising the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals both in the EU, in Europe and globally and which leads on implementing the Paris Climate Agreement. Our Europe contributes to social justice, solidarity and peace on our continent and in the world. Welfare for all comes first. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, 17 goals aiming to put an end to poverty, to protect the planet and to ensure peace and prosperity, are an important benchmark and should be fully integrated into the trade agenda.

The tentative moves to a more positive social agenda in the European Union after years of austerity needs to be maintained and built upon by the new Parliament and European Commission. There is a lot of work still to do. The European Pillar of Social Rights provides a starting point and a basis to assess policies at national level but more and stronger action is needed to strengthen workers' and social rights at European level. This includes rebalancing the economic and social dimension and to ensure that EPSU's core values are properly reflected in budgets, policy and legislation in the European Union and at national level.

These values are under threat from a range of reactionary, xenophobic and nationalist forces whose growth has been fed by national and international policies that are more about markets and profit-making and say nothing about workers' and citizens' rights and well-being. EPSU fights against all forms of anti-democratic, fascist and nationalist movements. In response, it is all the more important that public service trade unions work together to vigorously restate the need for solidarity and fairness in the face of the damaging effects, both social and economic, of increasing inequalities. Our vision of an alternative Europe, with public services at its core, must be a real alternative to the current system. With its narrow focus on markets and profits, this prioritises privatisation and liberalisation over the public spending and investment needed to deliver high levels of welfare and quality employment.

Political changes are posing new questions for EPSU and its affiliates. While the United Kingdom is leaving the European Union, other countries are closer to joining and some existing member states are looking at measures to create a closer Economic and Monetary

Union. At the same time relationships with neighbouring countries also continue to throw up new challenges. The European Union, Russia and other European countries play an important role at global level and we shall act to ensure that they respect and promote all the values upheld by EPSU. EPSU must continue to respond to these developments with a clear focus on their impact on democracy, peace, public services and workers' and citizens' rights.

The legacy and persistence of austerity continues to blight many countries. Millions of people have been affected by cuts to public spending and investment. Women have been disproportionately affected, both as service users and public service workers while young people have seen job opportunities dry up as youth unemployment in some countries soared. Austerity has also adversely impacted equality policies and laws. For many workers migration has been seen as the only option, often leading to major staffing shortages in public services, particularly health and social care. There is an urgent need for progressive and fair, social and economic policies to deliver a more united Europe and radically reduce inequalities both within and between countries. Gender equality will not be achieved until women have gained the right to be in charge of their own bodies.

This programme of action will provide the basis for work developed in EPSU's different committees and working groups, covering health and social services, local and regional government (including firefighters), utilities (including company and European works council policy), central governments and EU administration (including prison services), women and gender equality and young workers.

A. Future of public services

Quality public services are at the heart of fair societies and essential in tackling the social, economic and environmental challenges that face Europe. EPSU and its affiliates have developed a range of policies and actions to defend and support universally accessible and democratically-organised public services that are responsive to citizens' needs. These include economic policies to promote social justice and equality, and fair progressive and transparent taxation allowing the financing of quality public services for the benefit of all citizens. Building support for more and better public services involves arguing for public ownership and democratic control and management and against the processes of liberalisation, privatisation and commercialisation that undermine the quality and democratic accountability of those services.

A1. Fighting for stronger public finances and tax justice

Public finance, backed up with transparent and democratic processes to ensure the best use of resources, is the most effective way of funding and delivering universal and high-quality public services. These should be accessible, affordable and based on need. Fair, solidarity-based financing should be promoted over cuts to meet arbitrary debt and deficit targets. A progressive tax policy must address both income and wealth inequality, eradicate tax fraud and close down tax havens.

Action points

- support policies to promote strong public finances and public investment
- lobby for more effective action to tackle tax fraud and evasion, especially by transnational companies, with disclosure of special tax deals between them and national governments, as part of a move to fairer and more progressive taxation and social contribution systems
- take action to ensure progress towards common taxation policies based on fair and progressive taxation principles, in Europe and in the EU, thereby avoiding tax dumping.
- ensure that the benefits of public investment are shared and support more equal societies.

A2. Arguing for an alternative economic model

EPSU calls for a radical change in economic policies to move towards a system that puts people before profit, where proper weight is given to social and environmental issues and public spending is seen not as a burden, but as playing an essential role in driving the economy. This model prioritises progressive measures for a fairer distribution of income and wealth and to prevent financial speculation and ensure the economy is not dominated by financial interests.

Action points

- promote the adoption of economic policies across Europe that recognise the role of public investment and public spending in fairly distributing economic and social well-being rather than focussing on competition, markets and profit
- support a shift in economic and budgetary policy in the European Union and beyond where social issues and the role of public services are prioritised. This should also be reflected in the European Semester and EU budget
- ensure the complementarity between public services, industrial policy and social progress goals.

A3. Getting more and better public services for all

Public finance and investment in quality public services and infrastructure are vital in ensuring they are universally available, accessible and affordable for all. This means support for all public services – including energy (especially transmission and distribution), waste and water supply, health and social services and many services provided by local, regional and national governments. All these levels of public services need to be well funded to meet the needs of an ageing society and to respond to new and existing challenges such as supporting migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers and other victims of discrimination.

Action points

- secure the fundamental right for all to quality public services, including the right to water, energy, health care and education, and affordable public transport
- campaign to ensure adequate funding for public services for migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers
- ensure that all public service users have access to quality public services and fight any discrimination whether relating to race, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics, age, religion, disability, political opinion, social or economic status, or national or ethnic origin.

A4. Defending democracy and the rule of law and fighting corruption

Democratic control over public service provision and trust in public institutions are essential in guaranteeing the fair and equitable delivery of public services. Public service workers and their trade unions play a vital role in protecting these principles and exposing those whose actions undermine the rule of law.

Action points

- support action by workers and trade unions to fight corruption and anti-democratic practices
- fight for laws to protect whistleblowers.

A5. Resisting privatisation and liberalisation to defend quality public services

Privatisation in its many forms, including damaging public-private partnerships, outsourcing, concessions and processes such as marketisation and commercialisation, has a negative impact on the quality public services. Providing research and campaigning material to prevent privatisation and advocating the return of services to public ownership and democratic control are core areas of work across all levels of government, health and social services as well as energy, waste and water.

Action points

- expose the negative effects of privatisation
- highlight the benefits of public provision and support campaigns for the return of services to public ownership and control
- support initiatives to improve the quality and quantity of publicly provided services
- strengthen the regulatory frameworks for public services, including through information and transparency rules and social partner representation in regulatory bodies
- defend domestic regulation from being undermined by trade and investment agreements
- mobilise public sector workers and social movements to defend and support public services.

A6. Getting the best from the digital transformation of public services

EPSU welcomes technological developments in the public sector that improve services and working conditions. However, it is important that these developments are conducted in a way that benefits public sector workers and user of public services. It is crucial to involve workers in the process of the technological change, in order to improve the services delivered. This requires that employers and politicians facilitate proper training. Workers need new knowledge and skills to benefit from new technology.

Digital transformations, whether in the form of artificial intelligence, automatisaton or robotisation, raise major questions about the quality of public services. They have considerable potential to increase efficiency and effectiveness and deliver positive benefits for citizens where they open up new ways of providing better services to more people. However, they also threaten to dehumanise services and make them more remote from users. Trade unions must have a role in the introduction and use of digital processes to help ensure that the benefits are fairly distributed. The same is true of measures to regulate the control of data and the right to privacy, promoting the role of public services in the provision of digital services in the face of their domination by private sector interests.

Action points

- lobby for democratic control over the digitalisation process and fair sharing of its benefits
- develop policies to ensure that the potentially positive impacts of digitalisation are fully exploited while protecting against the threat that it might reinforce inequality or impair access to public services
- press for effective protection of personal data and the right to privacy
- take action to ensure that digitalisation does not aggravate the digital divide and that it is a choice and not an obligation for users by maintaining the possibility of face-to-face contact
- work for digital services to be taxed.

A7. Demanding fair trade and investment agreements

Trade and investment agreements should not prevent countries from developing quality public services. This means ensuring that public services and the public interest take precedence over investors' rights.

Action points

- call for public services to be excluded from trade agreements
- oppose processes, like the multilateral investment court system, that give investors precedence over the rights of workers, consumers and public authorities
- monitor and influence negotiations of trade and investment agreements and react where they pose a threat to public services, environmental protection or workers' and consumers' rights
- demand full transparency, information and consultation on trade agreements
- demand that trade and investment agreements do not undermine domestic regulation to protect public services and the general interest.

A8. Tackling climate change and environmental damage

Public services play a key role in responding to climate change both in the short and long term. Public investment, particularly at the level of local and regional government, is crucial in mitigating the impact of climate change and adapting public services to deal with severe weather events, such as forest fires, flooding and their effects on the health sector and

frontline emergency workers. Climate change means major changes for the energy sector in terms of restructuring and the mix and security of energy supply. EPSU will work to prevent the exploitation of our natural environment.

Action points

- press for increased and sustained public investment to tackle climate change
- ensure involvement of trade unions in the development of policies to mitigate and adapt to climate change and not only in relation to energy
- continue to lobby for effective implementation of the Paris Agreement and deliver the environmental targets set out in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals
- promote research and development and financing to develop clean, accessible energy, public transport and a just transition
- take action to oppose further liberalisation and work towards its reversal, especially in the energy sector
- fight the causes of energy poverty
- reaffirm that companies providing public services must have social and environmental concerns as primary objectives
- work to ensure that collective bargaining agreements and other measures including public procurement and pension funds, are used to increase sustainability and ethical trade and investment
- press for large scale investment in integrated, modernised public transport networks, with cheap, affordable fares as a step to free public transport, as a major contribution to tackling pollution, climate change and poverty.

A9. Improving services for migrants and refugees

The movement of millions of migrant workers and refugees into and across Europe, as a result of conflicts and climate change, has posed major challenges for public institutions and their workers. The European and national response to asylum-seekers has often fallen pitifully short of what should be expected from the wealthiest region in the world. Public services to migrants and asylum-seekers are vital to ensure their safe and effective integration into society and these services need the appropriate funding, staffing and protection against the threat of privatisation. Migrant workers are an essential part of the public service workforce in many European countries without whom those services would not be able to function and their contribution needs to be recognised. Migrant workers contribute towards public services through taxation and refugees should be allowed to work whilst their status is being assessed to allow them to integrate into society.

Action points

- lobby for fairer treatment of migrants and asylum-seekers
- work to ensure that services to migrants and asylum-seekers are properly funded, with the appropriate levels of trained staff
- organise migrant workers in trade unions and campaign for refugees to be allowed to work
- call for action to tackle the reasons behind refugee flows relating to climate change, economic stagnation and conflict
- promote ethical recruitment
- campaign for basic human rights for refugees, including child refugees, covering access to shelter, food, water and sanitation.

B. Future of work in public services

Quality employment and quality public services should go hand-in-hand. Quality work means secure, open ended permanent contracts and no bogus self-employment or other insecure contracts. Given that we really want quality public services, we need enough well trained personnel, decent and safe working conditions. Precarious employment does not lead to quality employment or high quality services. Thanks to strong trade unions and well-established collective bargaining and social dialogue structures, working in the public services has been widely associated with good pay and pension provision, employment security and a range of other positive benefits. Public service trade unions are also at the forefront of promoting gender equality and tackling.

However, pay cuts and pay freezes, increased working time and more insecure working conditions have had a major impact on thousands of public service workers across Europe. Job cuts, recruitment freezes and blocks on promotion have also reduced employment opportunities in many public services, particularly affecting younger workers. Staff shortages mean that many workers face excessive workloads leading to increased stress and burnout. In many cases secure employment conditions have been undermined with workers facing various forms of precarious employment from fixed-term and zero-hours contracts to poor quality internships and bogus self-employment. Again it is the young who are often the worst affected.

Action point

- support affiliates in mobilising for the right to a decent job in public services that guarantees quality public services

EPSU affiliates across Europe are striving to tackle these challenges, rebuild and strengthen collective bargaining and resist moves to attack employment and trade union rights. Stronger unions and more effective collective bargaining and social dialogue also mean being prepared to address new threats or opportunities as digitalisation creates a new world of work.

B1. Defending fundamental rights at work

Public service workers and their trade unions have often faced challenges to, and restrictions on, their rights to organise, negotiate and take strike action, with some groups of public employees and civil servants still denied these basic rights. National governments continue to threaten or push for further constraints, particularly on the right to strike and to carry out trade union work.

Action points

- defend and promote the rights of all public service workers and their unions to organise, negotiate and take industrial action
- establish or strengthen workers' participation on boards of directors and supervisory boards of companies providing public services.

B2. Strengthening collective bargaining and improving pay and conditions

The right to collective bargaining in the public services has not always been fully guaranteed and has been further undermined as a result of austerity. Strengthening and extending collective bargaining is the most effective way of protecting and improving the pay and conditions of public service workers, whatever the form of their employment contract or civil service status. This covers a broad range of issues including: training, pensions – particularly for heavy work, working time, health and safety, work intensity and increasing workloads,

work organisation and supervision, safe and adequate staffing levels, career development, recognition of qualifications and permanent contracts.

Action points

- promote, defend and extend the right to collective bargaining in the public services on the basis of the broad rights promoted by ILO Convention 151 (Labour Relations (Public Services))
- support affiliates' strategies to defend and improve pay and working conditions and our working environment and to tackle unequal pay, low pay and precarious work, including in a cross-border context
- address the need for safe and adequate staffing levels as they affect different sectors
- develop working time policies that address workers' needs for a positive work-life balance that ensures workers have full control over their working time and their free time
- draw up policies to ensure the safety of workers, to protect their health and to promote the quality of working life
- move towards greater union involvement in bargaining on work organisation and working conditions to support workers' development, promote employment quality and improve health and safety.

B3. Promoting and extending the European social dialogue

The sector social dialogue committees in EPSU sectors have made progress on a number of fronts over the past five years, especially in terms of health and safety. The impact of this work still needs to be strengthened through the negotiation of binding agreements and improving the representativeness of both trade union and employer organisations. In the light of the European Commission's refusal to support the implementation of information and consultation agreement in central government as a directive, it will be vital to step up pressure on the European institutions to deliver on their commitment to social dialogue.

Action points

- coordinate policy development across EPSU's social dialogue committees and with the cross-sector social dialogue
- aim to negotiate binding agreements that are relevant at the national level and evaluate their implementation
- support opportunities to build social dialogue in other EPSU sectors, especially the efforts in waste and social services.
- review, evaluate and promote the outcomes of social dialogue.

B4. Defending workers against privatisation and outsourcing

There is clear evidence that privatisation, outsourcing, sub-contracting and liberalisation negatively affect the jobs, pay, pensions and other employment and working conditions of public service workers, particularly where there is poor coverage by sector agreements in the private sector. Socially responsible procurement provides the possibility to defend the rights of private sector workers who deliver public services.

Action points

- expose the impact of all forms of privatisation on workers' rights and pay and conditions and support action to protect workers and reverse privatisation and outsourcing
- organise and protect workers in private companies delivering public services and other outsourcing companies, defending their pay and conditions and existing rights
- promote sector-wide collective agreements to ensure a level playing field
- promote and monitor the use of social and environmental clauses in public contracts

- challenge obligatory tendering and attacks on the in-house provision of public services
- lobby for companies to have a duty of vigilance in relation to subcontractors to ensure respect of human rights, including trade union rights.

B5. Ensuring that workers benefit from digitalisation

Employment conditions and forms of employment in public services are being fundamentally and rapidly changed through digital transformations whether in the form of artificial intelligence, automatisisation or robotisation. There are potentially both positive and negative elements to this change. While ridding work of repetitive tasks could make it more fulfilling, the risks include job losses, 24/7 availability and increased supervision and control. Either way public service workers need the protection of effective collective agreements and rights to information and consultation to ensure that trade unions can influence and control the restructuring taking place. More broadly the changing labour market is throwing up new challenges for workers in the form of false self-employment, zero-hours contracts and highly flexible and unpredictable working time. Furthermore, the fundamental changes in employment conditions resulting from the digital transformation make appropriate training and further training measures indispensable.

Action points

- analyse the impact of digitalisation on employment and workers' rights
- address the pressures on pay and working conditions, particularly working time and the spread of telework and push for the right to disconnect – the right not to be on permanent call outside working hours
- secure binding rights to information and consultation to regulate the changes brought about by digitalisation, through collective agreements or legislation
- demand appropriate training and education with a view to the optimum preparation of workers for the challenges arising from the digital transformation, and to ensure that workers affected by digitalisation remain in employment
- support initiatives to regulate, through agreements or legislation, new forms of labour market flexibility
- campaign for a shorter working week, without loss of incomes to workers, to take advantage of digitalisation - as opposed to job losses.

B6. Enforce and improve occupational health and safety

Enforcement and further development of occupational health and safety is a key task for unions. This refers in particular to questions of prevention, avoidance or reduction of burdens and risks, and restoration or improvement of health and ability to work. In particular, it is important for the work environment to be designed so as to ensure health and safety. Workplaces must be accessible to promote the employment of people with disabilities. The EU has adopted important directives on this subject – especially the Framework Directives on occupational safety.

Action points

- continue to promote occupational health and safety taking account of the needs of specific occupational groups
- further develop European legislation and its national transposition especially concerning risks to mental health and the musculoskeletal system
- reinforce health and safety inspection at work and ensure sufficient financial and human resources for effective enforcement

B7. Getting more and better jobs from tackling climate change

Climate change has major implications for the jobs and working conditions of public service workers from the many thousands affected by the energy transition to those on the frontline in dealing with the impact of severe weather.

Action points

- assert rights to information and consultation and negotiation to regulate the process of transition, protecting the rights and jobs of public service workers
- promote a just transition from reliance on fossil fuels to a zero-carbon sustainable economic model, including measures to protect employment and retain public service workers, providing them with training and skills for new jobs and responsibilities
- make the detailed analysis of the potential repercussions on paid work, including employment – quantitatively and qualitatively – an essential prerequisite for any proposal for a decision at European level
- promote the case for the massive creation of green jobs nationally and internationally, through public sector investment and ownership, including in sustainable energy supplies, social housing to the highest environmental standards, and public transport networks.

B8. Delivering gender equality at work

Public service trade unions have often taken the lead in fighting for gender equality at work. EPSU has exposed, highlighted and monitored the impact of austerity and its Gender Road Map and Prague Statement set out the main priorities for action. Key to closing the gender pay gap is securing higher wages in low-pay sectors and occupations dominated by women. There is an urgent need to revalue jobs and reduce gender and occupational segregation in the labour market. The quality, quantity and affordability of childcare services must be improved and more progressive work-life balance policies are essential.

Action points

- 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 in sectors and occupations dominated by women.
- implement the priorities agreed in the Gender Road Map and Prague Statement Breaking with the Past
- turn International Women's Day and European Equal Pay Day into major events for public service workers
- work to remove obstacles in national taxation systems to women's' participation in the labour market, such as the joint taxation of spouses.

B9. Fighting discrimination and promoting equality in the workplace

Many public service workers face discrimination that affects their pay and working conditions, whether because of their race, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics, age, religion, disability, political opinion, social or economic status, or national or ethnic origin. Public service unions have often led the fight to tackle all these forms of discrimination. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) workers and service users are impacted disproportionately by cuts and austerity. They also face discrimination in the labour market with a double impact on BAME women and BAME young people. Racism and fascism have risen across Europe and the discrimination and disadvantage experienced by BAME communities across Europe has deepened including the levels of reported hate crime. Migrant communities are also being scapegoated as the cause of cuts and austerity rather

than recognising the positive contribution made by migrant workers to the economy. For these reasons it is important that we campaign for justice and race equality for those impacted and for safe, inclusive work places and equal access to services.

Action points

- develop common strategies to fight discrimination and violence in the workplace including discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity
- use social dialogue and collective bargaining to develop policies that reflect the diversity of public service workers and strengthen protections against discrimination
- secure workplaces free from sexual harassment and violence against women
- campaign for the use of public procurement contracts as levers to promote equality in public services
- continue to campaign for the adoption of an ILO Convention on violence and harassment in the world of work and to protect the dignity of women and men in the workplace
- facilitate a network of EPSU BAME trade union representatives from amongst affiliates, to identify key concerns, formulate an action plan to address them and to provide advice to EPSU to help inform work to combat race discrimination
- encourage mutual support, exchange ideas and give solidarity in the struggles against oppression, marginalisation and discrimination
- campaign against racism at work and in the wider society.

C. Future of public service trade unions

Strong unions stand up for our values and our vision in our workplaces, in our sectors, in communities and our countries and in the European and global institutions and policy arenas. We promote the interests of our members and workers. The voice of public service trade unions is vital in national trade union centres and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). Trade unions are more effective in negotiating and campaigning where they can count on an active membership, high union density or broad support from workers.

EPSU affiliates across Europe recruit hundreds of thousands of new members every year but the challenge is to ensure that these numbers more than make up for the members who leave, to reverse the decline in union density experienced across many countries and to build an active membership. This also has to reflect the predominance of women workers in the public services and the need to ensure that they are properly represented in trade union bodies.

Action point

- Widely promote the principles and objectives of public service trade unions.

C1. Boosting recruitment and organising

A number of EPSU's initiatives to support affiliates in developing their recruitment and organising strategies and campaigns have begun to bear fruit with some membership recruitment successes. Strengthening and extending these initiatives to more affiliates would provide the basis for a long-term strategy to reverse falling membership with examples of good practice relevant for all affiliates.

Action points

- encourage and support affiliates in taking up new initiatives to boost their recruitment and organising activity

- focus regional resources in Central and Eastern Europe on support for recruitment and organising activities
- ensure that recruitment and organising initiatives take account of any specific measures to increase the membership among young and migrant workers
- encourage affiliates to offer student placements to enable young people to discover trade unionism.

C2. Improving the representation of women and young workers

EPSU has taken steps to increase women's and young workers' representation in its structures and meetings and encouraged affiliates to take similar measures. These need to be maintained and developed to ensure women and young workers play an active role at all levels of the Federation.

Action points

- monitor women's representation in EPSU organisations and promote measures to increase women's participation across the Federation
- continue to support a vibrant young workers' network and its initiatives around mentoring and other measures to ensure participation of young workers.

C3. Building a stronger EPSU

Better coordination within EPSU and with other labour movement organisations can improve the effectiveness of campaigning, lobbying and other forms of trade union action. EPSU needs to be financially sound, autonomous and increase its capacity for legal and political action. Public service unions have a major role to play in shaping the priorities of trade union confederations. At European level EPSU contributes to building an effective ETUC that reflects the concerns of all workers and their families, including public services workers, and that stands up for universal access to quality public services and fights against privatisation. EPSU will be more targeted in its engagement public with European and other institutions and its work with other labour and social movement organisations to achieve change. We will all be stronger if workers and our members feel part of a European trade union movement and affiliates inform and involve all in our work.

Action points

- increase EPSU's strength by ensuring that workers are informed about our joint work, and that affiliates are fully involved in EPSU's planning processes so that campaigning, lobbying and other forms of trade union action get the widest possible support and participation
- raise the profile of EPSU initiatives to shape an alternative Europe based on solidarity and fairness
- work within the ETUC and Public Services International and with the broader labour and social movements to fight for a social Europe that also influences the EU's impact on the wider Europe and on global developments.

Affiliates' Resolutions

FIGHTING FOR A FUTURE
FOR ALL

10TH EPSU CONGRESS 2019

4-7 JUNE 2019, DUBLIN

Dublin, Ireland
June 2019

I. Resolution on Energy

Submitted by French affiliates, France

Energy and climate change: an absolute public service necessity

Preservation of the planet for present and future generations as a minimum requires compliance with the obligations of the Paris COP 21. Global warming is not only a threat to our future; it is also the cause of an ever growing number of wars, natural disasters and climate refugee crises. The most disadvantaged people are its main victims.

- Let us demand concrete responses based on the reality of each country, in order to build action on a European and international scale.

Energy issues are key to implementing a fair transition towards sustainable development.

- The priority is to reduce energy consumption and improve energy efficiency.

All economic sectors are concerned, from housing to transport to industry.

The search for energy savings must not be confined to the individual level.

- It implies changes in town planning, urban development schemes, transport organisation, water management, ...

For the energy sector:

- Each European country must be able to define its energy mix, allowing the development of efficient industrial sectors, to respect the legal obligations and targets to reduce CO2 emission rates as agreed by COP 21.

These obligations are attainable only by reinforcing the public ownership of energy systems, as guarantor of the general interest and energy security. The changes confronting the electricity sector will require:

- Investments and a planned strategy for the long-term.

The excesses of financial capitalism and/or competitive liberal dogma, focused on the short-term, cannot guide energy system management, except to fail in the climate challenge.

The liberal vision of the European construction is based on the disappearance of public services

The demand for democracy and solidarity in the energy sector must be strengthened in each state and at European level. Throughout the world, the negative experience of liberalisation and privatisation shows that the public service concept is a concept for the future, a factor of stability.

It is indeed a matter of the capacity of our society to meet the immediate and future needs of the population on the basis:

- of energy supply, solidarity, social justice and economic efficiency.

Analysis of deregulation in the energy sector in Europe clearly shows less national cohesion, fewer social guarantees, a dramatic increase in fuel poverty and an increase in prices. It is not ruled out that energy shortage is even sometimes organised to meet the demands of market profitability.

The workers in the sector have a keen sense of public service and the general interest

Social dumping, a consequence of strictly competitive and financial policies, must be firmly opposed.

- We must work to ensure that all employees in the energy sector benefit from high-level social guarantees and protection.

The energy transition must be covered by a joint European project which will bring about profound changes in spatial planning, taxation, industrial sectors and the training system.

Control of public service in the energy sector is a must

The decisive decisions must be taken after an enlightened political debate accessible to all citizens and not solely based on the criteria of profitability and primacy given to shareholder remuneration:

- The Unions affiliated to EPSU demand for Energy: a strengthening of the public service requirement, public control and democratic participation. Citizens, workers and unions must be the major actors in this process.

A European energy policy involves:

- the creation of a European energy agency with the remit of grouping long-term purchases, security of supply and interconnection of national networks;
- an industrial strategy creating skilled and sustainable jobs in Europe;
- all this while respecting the specific characteristics and independence of each EU Member State.

II. Resolution on health and social care

Submitted by French affiliates, France

For public health and social care services that meet people's needs

For some years we have seen cuts in public health and social care services and the growth of the profit-making sector that is filling the gap left by declining public provision.

Large private companies are setting up throughout Europe and in the rest of the world, with the sole objective of making profits to the detriment of good working conditions. Generally speaking, these large groups, with their voracious financial appetites, ignore the basic rules of social dialogue and repress workers and trade unions.

For EPSU and PSI affiliates, public services must be accessible to all and meet people's needs. The State must guarantee good quality and reliable public health services, with a sufficient number of qualified, trained staff.

The State must ensure that public providers have the necessary financial resources to fulfil their public service mission while allowing for an honest and productive social dialogue. Pay must reflect the qualifications of the staff and the specific characteristics of the sector, which is strongly feminised.

Meeting these conditions will guarantee quality public services for all, irrespective of social status or financial resources.

The provision of quality public services also requires safe and effective staff-to-patient ratios, which serve to ensure the protection and safety of both employees and users.

Strong public services can block the international spread of private, profit-making provision, which is accessible only to the well-off, and which does not guarantee good quality standards.

III. Women and Gender Equality

*Submitted by three boards of the WIZs (Working Groups on International Affairs):
WIZ Government, WIZ Public Service and WIZ Care & health, FNV, the Netherlands*

Recognising that to promote work-life balance across genders and to increase participation of women, congress calls on affiliates to encourage action by public authorities and employers to:

- allow employees more control over their working hours and place of work;
- develop policies that permit an equal sharing of care and work between women and men;
- make childcare more attractive, by improving quality, affordability and access;
- make jobs more challenging and offer better career opportunities;
- improve the representation of women in all positions and professions, including technical ones;
- actively stimulate employers to recruit equal numbers of women and men;
- build a supportive work environment;
- ensure that all workers are equally evaluated and rewarded in order to end pay discrimination against women and minorities;
- formulate laws and agreements that address sexual harassment and assault;
- develop policies to increase the economic independence of women.

IV. Fighting for young European public service workers means fighting for the future of work and the future of public service unions

Submitted by the Nordic Constituency & the EPSU Youth network

Tackling challenges faced by young public service workers is in line with EPSU's main priorities for the coming years. Addressing the issues of young workers is a part of the solution for the future of work in public services and the future of public service unions.

Young workers and the future of work in public services

EPSU notes that the challenges young workers face today are the challenges all workers face tomorrow. Decent working conditions among young public service workers are key to securing the future of work in public services, for all workers.

Unemployment and precarious work represent a major challenge for the future of work.

In 2017, approximately 15.8 million young people in the EU aged 20-34 years were neither in employment nor in education or training.

Long-term unemployment for young people is a key driver of problems with well-being, income insecurity, and the lack of future employment prospects.

Young public service workers face unpaid overtime or working hours, long working days, are forced into unlawful contracts, receive low salaries, and have difficulties getting a permanent or full-time contract. A precarious work culture further worsens conditions by disconnecting workers from organised working life and unions.

EPSU supports the struggle to solve the challenges that disproportionately affect young workers and recognises that this struggle is a part of the solution to realising a desirable future of work in public services.

Young workers and the future of public service unions

EPSU recognises that youth membership and union participation are key to securing the future of public service unions.

Lack of awareness and interest in trade unions among young workers are now resulting in membership decline all over Europe. The negative image of trade unions, precarious working conditions in the public sector, and the lack of visibility and awareness in the education system about the work of trade unions reinforce this problem. In the rapidly changing world of work, the future outlook for public services and trade unions cannot be visualised without the active involvement of young workers.

To help solve the problem of membership decline and low awareness and interest in trade unions, EPSU supports measures to raise interest in and support for trade unions among youth and young workers.

Young workers engaged within trade unions can take an active role in developing innovative ways to attract and recruit new young members, drawing on successful experiences of organising young workers. Public service trade unions can contribute to youth engagement in several ways, including through youth-oriented platforms and training within unions, and by promoting policies that are especially helpful for young workers.

By achieving this, public service trade unions can remain a strong force to maintain and improve the rights and representation of all workers.

Building public service trade unions with broad representation requires a mutual and inclusive effort that enables youth to actively take part in unions. EPSU notes that young workers' involvement can help recruitment and raise interest in trade unionism among young workers.

EPSU supports and envisages a public sector which offers young workers good and fair wages, decent working conditions, family-friendly policies, opportunities for professional development and vocational training, and an inclusive work environment free from discrimination and harassment.

By achieving this public service trade unions can prove to young workers that they are relevant to the working life of tomorrow and improve youth membership rates.

To support young workers is to invest in the future of public service unions.

Action points:

- Encourage the public sector to offer more employment opportunities to young workers
- Support reintegration schemes for young workers excluded from the labour market for an extended period to address long-term youth unemployment at national and European level
- Promote the development of a youth-centred approach within the public sector; including through counselling, mentoring and early professional orientation programmes directed at youth
- Endorse measures to tackle outsourcing and labour market fragmentation (e.g., unpaid internships, zero-hour contracts and substitution of permanent jobs by temporary contracts) that disproportionately affect young workers
- Support measures to ensure work-life balance policies are available to young workers and their families
- Strengthen cooperation between the public sector, trade unions and education institutions in providing training and union information for young workers
- Encourage unions to include young workers in the common cause of the trade unionist movement by providing platforms, events and training specifically directed at young workers and their challenges
- Support the EPSU Youth Network in their work to involve young trade unionists in EPSU

V. Gender Equality at Work

Submitted by the Nordic Constituency

Gender Equality at Work

EPSU notes that the public sector in Europe is a major provider of health and social care and other public services and should be a socially responsible employer. Furthermore, the public sector is the largest employer of women, and so has a particular responsibility to guarantee women and men equal treatment.

EPSU also notes that its capacity to defend workers and citizens against all forms of unequal treatment and discrimination in many places in Europe has become far more difficult due to the austerity measures taken after the financial crisis.

Involuntary part-time work and workers on multiple temporary contracts often make it difficult to provide high quality welfare services, given the employees' skills, commitment and experience.

EPSU is concerned that part-time employment not only provides poorer earnings, but may in many cases also leads to poorer sickness and unemployment benefits. This then has damaging effects on women's pensions, and increases the already higher risk that women have of becoming poor. This is why permanent, full-time employment must become the norm in sectors dominated by women.

EPSU demands that privatisation, outsourcing and public-private partnerships (PPPs) should not lead to worse pay and employment conditions or other forms of social dumping. Past achievements on equal rights must not be threatened.

EPSU observes that we still have very unequal and gender-segregated working lives; EPSU should therefore work to create and strengthen EU rights to full-time work, reasonable parental leave in terms of pay and duration and maternity pay. Good quality childcare and good regulations on parental leave for both parents contribute to more equal working lives.

The following items may be added to EPSU's already ambitious aims in working for equal rights:

- all people should be able to earn a living throughout their lives;
- both men and women should be able to combine work and caring responsibilities;
- female and male dominated sectors should have equivalent wages, conditions and other benefits;
- workplaces should be safe, free from gender-based threats, violence, sexism or harassment;
- women and men should have equal power in working life and in trade unions, and
- there should be demands for gender equality in public procurement.

VI. The European Union and Economic and Social Policies

Submitted by STAL, Portugal

In recent years, the economic policies of the European Union, often reflected in policies of national governments, have left a legacy of austerity that continues to have a negative impact on public services and public service workers and more broadly growth and economic development in several countries.

While the European Union has contributed to economic development in many regions, the benefits have been unevenly distributed and there remain substantial challenges in relation to employment, income and labour and social rights.

Despite the rhetoric about social Europe, social, labour rights and collective bargaining are under attack in many Member States

European workers and citizens have resisted the withdrawal of rights in many ways and have demanded the creation of a truly economic and social Europe.

However, the power of large economic and financial groups has grown, to the detriment of society, anchored in right-wing politics and neo-liberalism in some cases irrespective of the political position of the government.

This has been made worse by a lack of transparency and signs of corruption that are evident at both national and European levels.

It is therefore up to national and European trade unions to play an indispensable role (because of what they represent, i.e., the productive forces that are the workers), to demand the restitution of social policies and especially the adoption of new economic policies, aiming for:

- Increases to the European Cohesion Fund to promote the development of the most economically fragile countries by promoting effective economic convergence and better living conditions;
- The end to action by the European Central Bank that makes public funds available to large financial groups that generate speculative profits to the detriment of the people and countries in greatest difficulty;
- The implementation by the European institutions of labour and social policies that reflect workers' historical struggles and restore and strengthen labour and social rights ;
- The creation of mechanisms with the European Central Bank to cover the public debt of different countries with feasible and long-term interest and payment terms
- The amendment of the inflexible conditions of the so-called Stability and Growth Pact (SGP), enabling the creation/option of policies that, fulfilling EU obligations, allow different countries to promote the sustainable development of their economy;
- Respect for each country's own sovereignty and culture, contributing to the economic and social Europe that we all want to build.

VII. Increasing wages, promoting collective bargaining!

Submitted by STAL, Portugal

Under the pretext of combatting the crisis, Europe has witnessed the development of policies, that have involved the reduction of wages and purchasing power, the destruction of labour rights and collective bargaining and the brutal dismantling of public services. The effects have been widespread and particularly drastic in the countries subject to Troika bailouts, such as Portugal, Greece, Cyprus and Ireland.

In these countries, workers in general, and primarily civil servants, have been subjected to the shock of extreme impoverishment and increased exploitation. Public services such as education, health, and social security – have been subjected to severe cuts aimed at tarnishing them in the eyes of society, and with a precise objective: to dismantle them as a step towards privatisation.

The reduction of wages, particularly those of civil servants, has become a goal pursued in the name of competitiveness and the balance of external accounts and is the result of governments' submission to European budgetary rules and impositions. The termination of collective agreements and the blocking of collective bargaining in the public sector have been part of the same objective.

For instance, in Portugal, where public service wages have remained frozen for nine years, between 2010 and 2018, only taking into account inflation, workers have lost 12% on average in wages! If we go back to the beginning of the century, the loss in real terms amounts to 20% and in some professions, the most qualified ones, the loss is almost 30%!

Statistics confirm these huge wage losses and the fact that wages in many countries are still far below pre-crisis levels - unlike profits, and this scenario and the measures that have been announced do not bode well, as it is clear that the European institutions have so far failed to develop or implement a comprehensive action plan to deliver on the European Pillar of Social Rights

It is therefore urgent to break away from this path by ensuring that all European workers, particularly public service workers, have a decent salary and standard of living.

It is up to the trade union movement, and of course EPSU, to campaign on this issue and, at the same time, come up with proposals to tackle increasing inequality and an increasingly unfair distribution of income.

With this in mind, and with a view to recover lost purchasing power, it is essential to intensify the fight and demand:

- a general and real increase in salaries for all workers in the public sector to ensure the recovery of the decline in real wages in recent years taking account of economic growth;
- the regular negotiation of wages and their adjustment at least in line with prices and with a share of national average productivity gains;
- the promotion and strengthening of collective bargaining in the public sector.

VIII. Solidarity with immigrants and refugees

Submitted by HİZMET-İŞ, Turkey

Violence, war, poverty, climate change and other pressures are drivers of migration. No one should be treated as illegal and there should be solidarity for all.

EU and national migration policies are often selective and repressive. In some countries, labour law creates a complex hierarchy of workers, making union organisation more difficult. Since 2011, despite the continuing rapid influx of refugees, the EU and its Member States have not taken the responsibility expected of them and have signed an agreement with Turkey in an effort to keep refugees outside its borders.

There are still serious shortcomings in informing migrants about basic human rights, immigration services and access to training. Legal and general information and advice for migrant workers and refugees, including inputs from trade unions, should be provided by public authorities.

Trade unions should support and organise migrant workers and refugees and fight racism, xenophobia and social dumping.

Therefore, the Congress

- Calls on EPSU affiliates to urge and support local and national governments in ensuring that all migrants and refugees, minority groups as well as other vulnerable groups in our societies in precarious conditions have access to public services, including health, education, social protection, legal and local community services without hindrance and fear;
- Calls on member unions to support their local organisations in preparing web-based and printed materials to help migrants and refugees;
- Resolves with EPSU member organisations to lobby for humanitarian and fair refugee policies at national and international level and for the granting of residence permits and citizenship to all immigrants.

IX. Combatting increasing racism, xenophobia, islamophobia and anti-Semitism in Europe

Submitted by HİZMET-İŞ, Turkey

Racist and xenophobic tendencies are becoming more entrenched in European societies and institutions. It is not only extremist groups but also some mainstream parties of both right and left that can be accused of a racist political discourse, especially towards Islam and Muslims.

This has created a situation where victims are afraid of complaining about the attacks against them. According to studies published by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) only 12% of Muslims report cases of discrimination to the authorities, 31% of Muslims seeking work have been discriminated against, and almost 30% of Jewish people have been subject to harassment.

Statistics show that in recent years, attacks on foreigners and especially Muslim communities and places of worship have increased dramatically in major European countries including evidence of thousands of verbal and physical attacks against Muslims.

Europe should not surrender to extreme right or left terrorists, otherwise it will continue to move away from the foundations and values on which it was founded. In addition, European states will continue to lose credibility for their policies unless they take the necessary measures against Islamophobia and other forms of xenophobia.

Therefore EPSU, Resolves to call for the effective implementation of EU anti-discrimination legislation in the workplace to combat discrimination on race, ethnic origin, religion and belief.

Calls on member unions to :

- campaign against racism, particularly in the police and justice system;
- discuss the recruitment of a more diverse workforce in public services;
- promote campaigns and social dialogue and collective bargaining mechanisms to ensure equal treatment and equal pay for all employees including migrants;
- promote worker-friendly, progressive parties and candidates at European, national and local elections and support those political representatives in tackling racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism.

X. For an independent Palestinian state that provides quality public service to its citizens

Submitted by HİZMET-İŞ, Turkey

EPSU Congress NOTES that:

EPSU welcomes and embraces the 30th World Congress of Public Services International (PSI) resolution No 50, For an Independent Palestinian State that Provides Quality Public Service to its Citizens.

Arab-Israeli Wars in the Middle-East resulted in Israel's occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Syrian Golan and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and Syrians.

This occupation has imposed heavy humanitarian and development burdens on the Palestinian people. Among these are the generation after generation of Palestinians who have been compelled to grow-up and live in ever more crowded refugee camps, many in abject poverty, and with little or no prospect of a better life for their children.

In addition to the ongoing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, the biggest threat to peace in the Middle East today is the rejection of the two-State solution, by Israel and the US administration which emerged from the first meeting between US President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

The UN Security Council passed Resolution 2334 on 23 December 2016, stating that all settlement activities should be stopped immediately and that all settlements established after 1967 were not legal. In spite of the UN Security Council resolution, the Israeli Government continues its settlements at an accelerated pace in the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem.

Gaza is still under siege and hence the Israeli Government prevents the Palestinians from crossing the borders to receive medical treatment at various levels, denying the right of the Palestinian people to access the most basic health services.

Despite the UN General Assembly decision that "calls upon all States to refrain from the establishment of diplomatic missions in the Holy City of Jerusalem" agreed by 128 member states, US President Donald Trump decided to move the US Embassy in Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, declaring Jerusalem the official capital of Israel. This decision fuelled the existing tensions and threatened the peace environment altogether.

The United States has violated all relevant UN resolutions and has damaged the credibility of the international community and, under President Trump, lost its role as mediator in resolving the conflict.

The State of Israel continues to use disproportionate force against the civilian Palestinian population who protested against the decision of the United States. As a result of firing into the crowd without discrimination, public service workers, especially the health workers, lost their lives and many were injured.

Europe is Israel's largest trade market. The EU-Israel Association Agreement states that trade and other relations should be based on the respect for human rights. However, the EU and European governments continue to condone trade with the illegal settlements and have failed to hold the Israeli government accountable for its grave violations of human rights and international law.

Congress also NOTES that:

Ending the occupation that began in 1967 and achieving a negotiated two-State outcome is the only way to lay the foundations for enduring peace that meets Israeli security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty. It is the only way to achieve the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

EPSU affirms that quality public services and decent work are in no way possible without a State that can make its own decisions through democratic mechanisms and independently of any external power.

Israeli constraints on movement and the economy, along with the blockade on the Gaza Strip and internal political strife, are at the root of Palestinian suffering in the occupied territories and have contributed to one of the world's highest unemployment rates.

Therefore, Congress:

- Promotes and raises the slogan "a democratic and independent Palestinian State providing quality public services to its citizens";
- Protests against the US decision to move the embassy of Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, which constitutes a major hindrance to the vision of peace with two States existing side-by-side in peace and security within recognized and secure borders;
- Together with PSI, decides to mobilize its resources to meet urgent needs in the face of the serious deterioration of the humanitarian conditions in the Gaza Strip and Occupied Palestinian territories;
- Condemns the disproportionate and indiscriminatory attacks of the State of Israel targeting civilians and public service workers and calls on European governments to suspend arms trade with Israel until the Israeli Government complies with international human rights law.
- Explore with the ETUC how to effectively implement human rights clauses in EU trade and associations agreements, including in relation into the EU-Israel Association Agreement.
- Notes the establishment of the European Trade Union Network for Justice for Palestine to campaign for an end to European complicity and for decent work for Palestinians and commits to inform affiliates about the work of the Network.