

Joint Statement from Europe's public service trade unions on the occasion of the 20th Ukraine-EU summit

The 20th Ukraine-EU Summit will take place in Brussels on 9 July 2018. EPSU, the European Federation of Public Service Unions that includes unions in the EU, Ukraine and the rest of Europe, requests the Ukrainian Government, the European Commission and the EU Council to take into consideration the following points.

- 1) Workers, our families and communities expect that cooperation between the EU and Ukraine delivers social and economic progress. The Association Agreement has to improve the working and living conditions of people. Therefore the Ukrainian Government must involve the unions in developing national plans for economic and social development. Addressing the consequences of climate change and digitalisation requires consulting and negotiating with trade unions to ensure that transitions will be just and do not leave workers and communities behind.
- 2) Strengthening collective bargaining, especially at the sectoral level, and social dialogue are key to achieving better pay, working conditions and quality jobs. Respecting the role of the trade unions in line with European and global fundamental rights and labour standards set out in for example the ILO Conventions, the European Social Charter, and the European Pillar of Social Rights needs to be a priority of the Ukrainian Government and the European Commission. The Ukrainian authorities should stop the attacks on trade union rights, including the sequestration of union buildings and training centres. This is in violation of union rights and undermines the position and capacity of the unions. The international index on trade union rights shows that trade union rights are at risk in the Ukraine.
- 3) Involving the unions in economic and social reforms implies that the Ukrainian Government seeks the opinion and advice of the public service trade unions when addressing public services reforms. We expect that the European Commission supports and monitors this in line with the European Pillar of Social Rights, the autonomy of the social partners and the European social dialogue.
- 4) The Ukrainian public authorities should address the increase in poverty. Higher minimum wages to reach living wages and public investment in building and developing public services and social protection are crucial to ensure workers and people have the means for a decent life. The Ukrainian Government should take major steps to ensure that wages that have not been paid to workers are paid. The European Commission can support the Ukrainian authorities and labour inspectorate in addressing this.
- 5) Public services are to be kept in public hands. The Ukrainian Government should not promote the privatisation of health and care, municipal and other public services. The European Commission and the European and International Financial institutions should stop putting pressure on Ukraine to privatise services. Likewise Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) should be avoided as they are very risky for public finance, as well as for users and for workers as they put pressure on quality of services, jobs and working conditions. The European Court of Auditors has revealed that PPPs do not deliver. In a country that has a massive problem with corruption, tax evasion and fraud, and with regulating corporate power and behaviour, PPPs are a bad idea.
- 6) Both in the Ukraine and the European Union there is a wage gap between women and men. The European Commission has launched several initiatives to address this. For trade unions this is a key issue. A similar agenda is needed in Ukraine. The public authorities and employers need urgent negotiations with the trade unions to develop a roadmap of measures to close this gap.
- 7) Fair and regulated trade. The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement between the EU and Ukraine lacks the necessary tools to ensure a fairer redistribution of wealth that is generated from trade. Progressive taxation and corporate taxation should be part and parcel of a trade regime and included in future discussions between the EU and the Ukraine.