



EPSU Statement on International Women's Day – 8 March 2013

Optimism for equality in Europe?

European public sector unions confirm that women hit hardest in austerity Europe

Across Europe, governments have cut pay and jobs in the public sector in response to the financial crisis. These cuts are damaging the living standards and future prospects of millions of workers in the public sector, and impact disproportionately more on women.

A new EPSU report shows that austerity measures have been particularly harmful to women, who in most countries make up the majority of those employed in the public sector. The report looks at eight countries where governments have pursued a policy of public sector cuts.

EPSU General Secretary Carola Fischbach-Pyttel says: *“Public service workers want more genuine political commitment of the Commission to equality. And while it is important to report on the application of equality policies and have women in the male dominated company boards, action is needed. As we are losing the hard-fought achievements in the battle for equality between men and women. It is time for introducing sanctions for the public sector employers that throw women back because of austerity”.*

In the **Czech Republic**, between autumn of 2008 and autumn 2012 women's employment in public administration went down by 1.9 % while men lost 0.7% of employment. In **Greece**, in the same period 32 500 jobs occupied by women were lost in public administration compared with 14 500 jobs occupied by men. In **Ireland**, 8 900 women lost their job. Male employment went up with 600.

In **Latvia**, it shows that even though women's salaries in the public sector were lower to start with, salaries for their jobs were cut more than those of their male counterparts. In **Portugal**, women have been harder hit in the public sector than men. In particular in education, women lost 800 jobs while men's employment in this sector increased by 400. In Romania's health and social care where most low-paid work is done by women, pay is still not catching up and even went down by 14.5 % for women. There, in four years 96 291 public sector jobs carried out by women have been lost.

Recent figures for the **UK** show clearly that in the most recent period full-time working women in central administration have been worst affected by job losses and part-time positions have increased. Women were particularly hit by job cuts 2% per cent more than men in the period from 2008 to 2012.

Jan Willem Goudriaan, Deputy General Secretary adds: *“There are no signs of an understanding from the EU Executives that we need to be more attentive to the impacts of economic decisions on the employment of women, with real gender-mainstreaming in the coordination of EU policy and concrete targets. In addition, the trends of outsourcing of public services in the occupations where more women are employed, are particularly harmful for their economic independence.”*

EPSU therefore calls for reversing these negative trends in the advancement for equality and asks the Commission to take meaningful measures and act on:

- The application of sanctions for employers who are not committing to implementing equality legislation, in particular equal pay for work of equal value
- Monitoring the impact of EU economic governance and austerity policies on women's employment, pay and conditions
- Including a genuine and effective gender-dimension to EU policy beyond the EU 2020 strategy
- Promoting the transparency of wage statistics for the public sector and counter the non-availability of de-gendered wage statistics for the public sector with the European Institute of Gender Equality
- Developing practical guidance and effective tools on job classifications
- Address low-paid and precarious work in female-dominated sectors such as health and social services
- The impact of outsourcing, privatization on women's employment in the public sector
- The impact of maternity and parental leave on women's employment and pay developments
- Promoting social dialogue between the inter-professional, the sectoral and the company levels social dialogue structures

To download the initial draft report please click here: www.epsu.org/a/9356

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