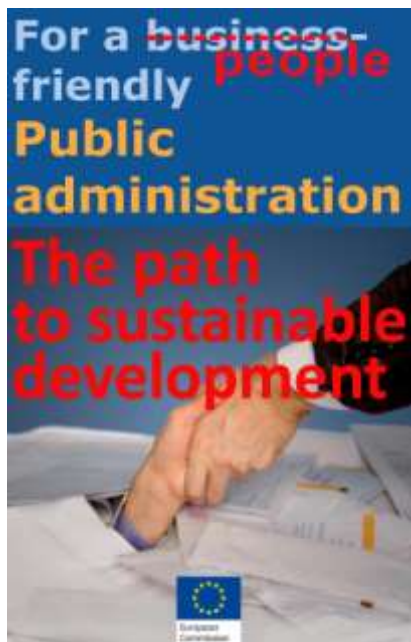


The path to sustainable development: For a people-friendly public administration!

EPSU Statement

Adopted at the Executive Committee meeting, 1 April 2014



EPSU rejects the exclusive, obsessive, and caricatural focus of the European Commission on a 'business-friendly' administration and recalls that public administration must serve the interests of all people,¹ not just one segment of society.

The EU needs reforms to build a people-friendly public administration. Public sector skills, research, policy and advice should not be geared exclusively to business. We wouldn't call for 'business-friendly nurses', would we?

Policy already favours business...

Policy-making in recent years has consistently favoured business interests over other groups in society.

Business even has its own 'better or smart regulation' agenda under the direct responsibility of EC President Barroso and privileged access to policy-making through the multitude of EC expert groups dominated by corporate

representatives.

The EU's policy-making is already heavily skewed towards business, for example:

- Tax: steady fall of corporate and top income tax rates and steady increase of VAT rates mean that overall lower income earners pay more tax proportionately than large multinationals or wealthy individuals
- State aid: EC complex rules pushing local authorities to contracting out public services
- Patents / copyright protection: pharmaceutical industry for example winning greater protection from generic drugs
- Trade: proliferation of bilateral EU trade agreements to open up further public services to competition
- Posted workers: deregulation and lack of administrative checks create more possibilities to exploit workers
- Policy: lack of transparency and contradictory opinions on how the EC decides to submit or repeal legislation

The 'European Semester' and the conditions tied to the Troika financial assistance have led in many countries to public spending cuts and more flexible labour markets that bring (short-term) benefits to a small corporate minority and (long-term) hardship to the many.

EPSU speaks out against this "silent revolution" that is turning public administrations into business outlets. The recent REFIT EC Communication is the latest example in a long line of attacks on much-needed health and safety and environmental regulations under the banner of 'administrative burdens.' How much more business-friendly can the European Commission get?

¹ See: EPSU statement on the 2012 Annual Growth Survey's proposals for the modernisation of public administration and EC reply <http://www.epsu.org/a/8442>

We want a people-friendly administration that treats everyone with respect and as equals....

We want to see reforms that guarantee:

- The right of workers to good pay and working conditions and a healthy workplace through more preventive and deterring labour inspections of workplaces
- The right of citizens and business to fair and progressive taxation through having more tax inspectors that crack down on large complex cases of corporate tax fraud or avoidance as well as frontline tax officers that can support and advise small business and citizens
- The right of the unemployed to a job through more employment advisers that give enough time to person and provide an individualised service
- The right of asylum-seekers to a fair and fast process of their asylum claims through more resources for legal aid, interpreters, intercultural mediators and regular updating of staff on asylum as well as migration laws
- The right of consumers to know what they eat and have safe food through more veterinary checks and better coordination of the regional and national levels of agriculture administrations in response to recent meat scandals
- The right of victims and defendants to a fair trial through more resources in the legal system
- The right of detainees to social rehabilitation through more and better trained prison officers as well as social, healthcare and educational staff
- The right of all to a clean environment, pollution-free nature, through well-staffed environmental protection agencies for preventive and deterring actions

There are many ways that administrations can and should be improved to deliver a fairer and faster service. More transparency and evaluation of how public services are provided, more resources and investment in staff, a stronger public ethos to fight corruption and conflicts of interest, more democracy at work, more citizens' involvement in services – this is what we need! We do not need job and pay cuts that leave workers overworked and demoralised and lead to further erosion of citizens' trust in democracy and welfare state.

How can we build a people-friendly administration?

Rather than waste tax payers money by organising other 'business-friendly' events or establishing business-dominated expert groups, the EC should devote time and resources to developing a 'quality framework on public services, based on EU policy and Treaty obligations, i.e.

- Treaty article 14 on SGEI as well as the Protocol No26 on SGI, which gives the EU and Member States a shared responsibility for *"a high level of quality, safety and affordability, equal treatment and the promotion of universal access and of user rights"* in public services, including public administration
- The Charter of Fundamental Rights' article 41 on the right to good administration
- The principles of good governance (openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence) set out in the 2001 White Paper on European Governance
- Treaty Articles 152-155 which underpin a good social dialogue between trade unions and employers
- Promote and build upon the Framework Agreement between the EPSU-led trade union delegation TUNED and the employers, EUPAE, in central government administrations for a quality administration.²

² European framework-agreement EUPAE/EPSU-led TUNED for a quality service in Central Government Administrations, 12/12/ 2012
<http://www.epsu.org/a/9179>