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Brussels, 7 January 2015

Dear Colleagues,

2015 will be a year of challenges and opportunities when we will continue to build on the achievements we realised in 2014. The New Year started with the news of the early parliamentary elections in Greece. Despite the meddling of EU Commission President Juncker the ruling coalition candidate did not get elected. The continued opposition of the Greek unions to the austerity policies that impose such hardship on the Greek people, cut wages and slash jobs of public service workers possibly could lead to change now. Some predict that Greece will quit the euro and further doom and gloom also for the EU. However, others see an exciting prospect of a government that will fight the structural reforms, the deregulation and the promotion of public-private partnerships (PPPs) that are linked with the Juncker investment plan. Whether the left leaning Syriza party wins the Greek elections or not, EPSU will critically follow Juncker's plans and continue our struggle for an end to austerity that is hurting our members and for a real investment plan in public services that stimulates growth and creates jobs throughout 2015.

Workers continue to call for pay rises, many after years of standstill while profits have gone up. This is a fight EPSU supports across Europe. For example, UK public service workers in the health service, police staff and firefighters, and many others could be mentioned as in Portugal or Italy. There will also be elections in the UK with a referendum on membership of the EU on the table. The EU deregulation and Refit agenda is a response but this seriously effects workers' rights and we will have to deal with initiatives from the Commission on the Directives on Information and Consultation. We are also expecting a review on how social dumping via the Posted Workers Directive can be prevented and a discussion on the Working Time Directive. These issues are on the agenda of our first main event in 2015, the collective bargaining conference. Trade unionists from across Europe will consider working time, minimum and low wages, the latest pay developments, and discuss Europe's economic policies and structural reform. The conference will also consider how we build solidarity in our bargaining.

Solidarity will also be needed for the 98 workers sacked on 6th December by the Hospital of the Maltepe University in Istanbul. They were dismissed for their union activity demanding improved pay and conditions. These members of Dev-Saglik-Is, the health workers' union of the DISK trade union confederation have been on the picket line during the holiday break and into 2015. I have written to the rector of the university and director of the hospital supporting the workers, demanding that they get their jobs back. Such fights underline why it will be important for all affiliates to engage in the **Global Day of Action on 18 February** organised by PSI and the ITUC to defend **the right to strike** now this has come under threat of the European and international employers in the International Labour Organisation.

Another important event this year will be **Global Public Service Day, 23 June 2015**. This United Nations day celebrates the contributions of public service workers to create a better world. EPSU and PSI will use this as an occasion to highlight the dangers to democracy, public services and workers from a series of trade agreements, better known

as CETA, TTIP and TISA. National governments and the European Parliament will start considering the CETA agreement between the EU and Canada towards the end of the year and early 2016. We have been successful in making many aware of the problems such as the threat posed by the ISDS system that will allow multinationals to challenge government policy and our work, along with social movements, has increased pressure on governments to be more transparent. Together we can stop this deal from going through. One of the first EPSU activities is a seminar in Vienna on 15-16 January on these trade agreements, the impact on public services and how we can resist together with our Austrian colleagues and the Education Federation ETUCE. We will continue to explore with union colleagues the implications for public service workers in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine of the EU free trade agreements. With the ETUC/ITUC we will position ourselves on the expected review by the European Commission of its policies on the Eastern Neighbourhood. With the economic and political problems between the EU and Russia, hurting workers, we need initiatives for European prosperity and peace, not the warmongering on both sides, a big challenge throughout 2015.

And towards the end of the year a EPSU delegation will join ETUC, PSI and trade unionists from across the world to make a difference at the **Climate Change Conference in Paris, 30/11-11/12**. We will need to work hard to build pressure during the year on the European governments (EU, Russia, Turkey...) to make a deal that recognises Just Transition for workers and reduces CO₂ emissions significantly. As our Congress resolution said: Climate Change is the largest single treat to current and future generations. More than before there is recognition that the economic system that seeks profit maximisation is at the heart of the problem of global warming.

Many of these issues will be addressed at the **ETUC Congress 28 September - 2 October** in Paris. But the main theme will be how we build and strengthen the European trade union movement and ensure workers have a voice regarding the decisions of employers, governments, European and other institutions that effect our daily lives. A major issue will be how we can improve the recruitment and organising of workers in unions and is an important theme of many of our activities this year for example at the **Youth workshop** with representatives from Central and East European countries on **16 and 17 March** in Bucharest.

So a busy year ahead as EPSU unions continue the positive work in the social dialogue committees, European works councils and building relations with Members of the European Parliament who we have successfully convinced to come up with their position on the first European Citizens' Initiative on the right to water . EPSU will keep the spotlight on Juncker and European governments to meaningfully address tax avoidance and make the point that public services are delivered by the women and men we represent. Our members deserve decent pay and conditions, respect for the hard work in often difficult and dangerous circumstances to promote welfare for our communities.

I wish you, your unions and us together many successes in the New Year.
In Solidarity,



Jan Willem Goudriaan
EPSU General Secretary