



European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)

EPSU Press Communication – 10 May 2011

Trade unions working for better prison services conference, 12 May 2011, Athens

140 trade union delegates organising prison staff from 17 European countries are expected at an EPSU-OSYE conference ***Trade unions working for better prison services*** in Athens on 12 May 2011.

A press conference will be held on 13 May from 10 till 12h00.

The conference will be the largest gathering of delegates representing prison guards, probation, health and educational staff working in prisons in Europe since the EPSU action day against prison overcrowding in 2008.

Delegates will discuss the implications of the EU-coordinated public spending cuts for prisons services in terms of pay, jobs, trade union rights, prison overcrowding and alternatives to imprisonment.

Greece's Minister for justice Haris Kastanidis has been invited to present the state of play of prisons in a country that has a high record of prison overcrowding and that is facing harsh cuts in public services. This will be followed by an exchange of views with Greek parliamentarians and trade unions delegates.

EPSU is committed to improving working conditions for staff and detention conditions of inmates. For this, it is essential that prison management be based on trade union rights, social dialogue, decent wages and sufficient resources that can guarantee humane treatment of inmates and lasting rehabilitation in society. Andrew Coyle, Professor at Kings College in the UK, and former prison governor, will present good practices in this area in and outside Europe.

The lack of access to good healthcare in prisons has become a serious concern for many years including high rate of infectious diseases as well as of suicides. Lars Møller, from the World Health Organisation's Europe office will present main recommendations on how to change that situation.

EPSU is opposed to privatisation of prison services. In the face of public deficits, it is feared that some governments may be tempted to take that road. Researcher Stephen Nathan from Prison Privatisation International will give an update on the extent of marketization of prison services in Europe and the risks associated with the crisis.

In the afternoon, delegates will share experience on main developments with pay and other working conditions, training, trade union rights, responding to the needs of foreign detainees. No doubt, they will also provide further inputs to EPSU alternatives to the European austerity measures.

“EPSU thanks its Greek affiliate for hosting this event. What goes on in prison services is not only a concern for staff, trade unions, inmates and their families but should be priority number one for governments. Our concern right now is that the cuts will make it even more difficult to implement the European prison rules that set minimum standards both on detention and working condition. The Commission and governments must wake up to the alarm bells and provide counter policy options and the necessary public investment.” says EPSU General secretary **Carola Fischbach-Pyttel**.

Final agenda is available <http://www.epsu.org/a/7270>

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EPSU is the European Federation of Public Service Unions. It is the largest federation of the ETUC and comprises 8 million public service workers from over 275 trade unions; EPSU organises workers in the energy, water and waste sectors, health and social services and local and national administration, in all European countries including in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood. EPSU is the recognised regional organisation of Public Services International (PSI).