



European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)

Public service trade unions united against corruption

EPSU statement to mark International Day against corruption 9 December 2011

On 22 and 23 November 2011, European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) affiliates from Western Balkan (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia) and Norway, met in Belgrade, Serbia, to discuss corruption in public services, notably public administration, judiciary and health sectors.

This was the first meeting of EPSU affiliates on this topic with the support of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung - Regional Office for project labour relations and social dialogue in South Eastern Europe. Participants included experts from Transparency International (Serbia and Croatia), Anti-Corruption Agency Board in Serbia, Faculty of Security Studies in Macedonia, and former Ministry of Finance from Bosnia-Herzegovina/Republika Srpska.

As such, the meeting is a concrete contribution to the International UN day against corruption on 9 December.

It is the strong view of trade unions that corruption is a threat to democracy and stability, it curbs economic growth, it erodes the availability and quality of public services and trust in officials and ultimately public sector workers.

Corruption takes different forms and operates at different levels of society both in the public and private sectors and appears to getting worse in a number of countries.

Public service trade unions alone cannot eradicate corruption but there are many ways in which they can contribute to its prevention and reduction building upon EPSU policy for

- transparent, well-resourced administrations, and fair public sector recruitment procedures,
- sustainable social procurement,
- better working conditions and pay based on trade union rights including information, consultation and negotiations rights.

Trade unions also play a role in denouncing abuse of power which require legal protection for whistle blowers.

The fight against corruption also rests on better involvement of citizens in the public budgets and key decisions on public services and public policy. Compliance with the state of law and



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implementation of sanctions together with strong rules to avoid conflicts of interests between the public and commercial sectors and on the funding of political parties are also essential.

The privatisation of public goods and services and lax public procurement rules are major concerns as they have been and continue to be subject to many cases of corruption.

It was much stressed that fighting corruption is about defending the good use of tax payers' money that should serve the general interest not the private interest of the few. In this respect, sustainable public services need more than ever progressive and fair taxation regimes and the fight against tax fraud is central to the fight against corruption.

The meeting will help feed into EPSU-wide policy against corruption and tax fraud as part of its campaign against austerity measures in Europe.

EPSU urges the European Commission to ensure that the forthcoming biannual corruption reports across the EU 27 as well as EU accession discussions take into account workers' views. In particular, there are strong concerns that cuts in public services will make it even more difficult to establish the right safeguards and proper checks and balances to combat corruption in Europe.

The list of meeting participants is attached.

A report of the meeting will shortly be available.

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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 organizes 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 Neighborhood. EPSU is the recognized regional organization of Public Services International (PSI).