



European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)

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Growth needs public services – austerity damage needs repairing

(Brussels 28 June) The European Council may today agree a growth compact. This would be a very much needed step in the right direction but still it would fail to address the damage inflicted by austerity measures on public services. Public services are crucial to the growth agenda but evidence compiled by the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) shows how safety and environmental services are among those under serious threat from cutbacks.

EPSU general secretary **Carola Fischbach-Pyttel** said: “*Our members across Europe are facing a major struggle to defend their jobs and maintain the vital services that they provide. The reports we have commissioned reveal the pressure they are under but also raise major concerns about what austerity means for the future, for the delivery of quality public services, for safety at work, for sustainable development and for the cultural and educational services that are central to fostering fair and open societies.*”

In an economy in recession workers are increasingly vulnerable to employers who try to save money by cutting corners. It is all the more important that properly funded labour inspectorates are on hand to enforce health and safety regulations and other elements of employment legislation. *Labour Inspection Services* (a study for EPSU by Syndex) <http://www.epsu.org/a/8829>

Also, the crisis is being used as an excuse to stop the effort for Green transition. Cuts in public spending undermine work of environmental protection agencies. EU will not achieve its targets for a green economy and the long term negative consequences for the environment can be disastrous. Relaxing oversight means companies escape control and surveillance which will lead to accidents. *Environmental Protection Agencies* (a study for EPSU by Syndex) <http://www.epsu.org/a/8811>

In the last two years Europe has created a battery of policy mechanisms for policy coordination, usually called Economic Governance. The European Semester is one of them, and it is a process of policy co-ordination set up by the European Commission and Council to implement the EU 2020 strategy and respond to the crisis. This report reveals that countries are, in fact, faced with a “*bewildering mix of often overlapping targets and guidelines*” and it is questionable whether the “*measures identified in each NRP are really connected to European goals.*” More worrying is the selective reporting of the NRPs with little or no mention of “*major cuts to public services, the freezing or cutting of public sector workers’ pay and the reduction in employment and/or freezing of recruitment.*”

Public Services and the European Semester – an overview of the National Reform Programmes of 2011 (a report for EPSU by the ETUI trade union research institute) December 2011. <http://www.epsu.org/a/8458>

Europe is picking on Public sector workers, specially women workers

A crisis that was caused by an inadequately regulated financial sector was turned into a problem of public sector debts and deficits and cuts to public sector workers’ pay and jobs became part of the solution. By 2009 several countries had already imposed pay cuts and,



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updated to the end of 2011, EPSU's *Wrong Target* report sets out how governments in 10 EU Member States have undermined social dialogue and imposed pay cuts and pay freezes on their public sector employees.

In real terms public sector workers in Greece are on course to see their pay fall by 40% while in Romania a partial reversal of the 25% in basic pay will not compensate fully workers who saw their total earnings cut by 40% in one year.

The wrong target – how governments are making public sector workers pay for the crisis (an updated report for EPSU by the Labour Research Department) January 2012 <http://www.epsu.org/a/8828>

Moreover, the majority of public sector workers across Europe are women and so they are increasingly at the sharp end as governments impose cuts. *Widening the gender gap* puts the spotlight on four countries and reveals how job cuts and pay cuts are undermining the positive contribution that many public service organisations have made to increasing gender equality. The fear is that this early assessment is only an indicator of a much deeper and wider erosion of equality across the European Union.

Among other findings the report noted that:

- Cuts in public sector employment have led to tens of thousands of women losing their jobs, particularly in Romania and Latvia, and in some areas, such as public administration in both Ireland and Latvia, women have been more affected than men.
- Cuts have also had a direct impact on equality structures, with the Ministry of Equality being abolished in Spain and funding for programmes for women being sharply reduced in Ireland.

Widening the gender gap : the impact of public sector pay and job cuts on the employment and working conditions of women in four countries (a report for EPSU by the Labour Research Department) June 2011 <http://www.epsu.org/a/7891>

This policy is destroying Europe and its culture

Europe's austerity policies threatens Europe's cultural heritage and general education level of population according to an EPSU report on culture services. When libraries, museums and general cultural activities lose funding groups there is a clear risk of society becoming more vulnerable to the spread of bigotry, racism and extreme right-wing views.

Culture: the trade union response to the problems facing the sector (a report for EPSU by the Labour Research Department) October 2011. <http://www.epsu.org/a/8390>

EPSU will continue to mobilise to stop the onslaught of public services and working conditions for public sector workers.

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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).