



Resolution from EPSU Mediterranean Constituency

The 21st century began with a severe financial crisis in the first decade, which was soon passed on to citizens and mainly to public services. The policies adopted by the European Union were linked to austerity, applying budget and staff cuts in public services, in addition to a deterioration in the rights of workers. This situation has been going on for several years, affecting the Mediterranean countries in particular.

The only thing that these measures caused was an increase in inequalities within the countries, widening the poverty gap and the energy gap, generating a new figure of the "poor worker", a circumstance that also occurred between Mediterranean countries as well as in other countries within the EU.

A discourse of mistrust spread between countries, violating the founding pillars of the European Union, and brought with it consequences such as Brexit in a clear anti-European response derived from its mismanagement of the crisis and its policies, as well as a notorious growth of the extreme right in Europe and of nationalist and sovereigntist parties.

Just as we were emerging from the dire economic consequences and massive job losses, the COVID-19 pandemic began. This new health crisis brought the whole world to a standstill and highlighted the importance of public services as essential services, public services that had been mistreated in the previous years of crisis due to a liberal capitalist mentality, where basic services that should serve the population are outsourced or privatised for the sole purpose of making business, disguised as a "better and more efficient management".

Facing the pandemic while maintaining the stability of the countries, given the circumstances, was only possible even with few resources and personnel, because of the good will of the workers, who even risked their health to maintain these services. There were many services, both in the public and private sectors, which proved to be essential, many of which were considered to be low-skilled and of little added value. Within these sectors, the health and social services sector took on great importance, facing a totally unknown virus, with Europe-wide shortages of protective equipment, understaffing, lack of protocols and preparation, and excessive workload, which has resulted in serious psychological consequences for workers in this sector.

Social services and residential home staff were also crucial in the first year of the pandemic when COVID-19 was most deadly among the elderly population. Within the administrations, the part dedicated to nursing homes and home help sector has suffered many cuts and privatisations in order to make the companies economically profitable. These cuts and liberal policies made dealing with the pandemic hell for many groups of workers.

If anything, the importance of the role of public services during the COVID-19 crisis has proved to be absolutely essential, not only in the health sector, but also in social services and local public services, especially in the implementation of socio-economic measures to relieve the effects on employment and social rights.

Public employees have made a great effort to attend to citizens, deliver these measures, contain the destruction of jobs and attend to basic needs.

The EU has put in place resilience plans and Next Generation funds, money that Europe makes available to its countries to rebuild the European Union in the context of a pandemic,

which still do not respond to the problem of the valorisation of labour, as large private interests insist on giving privilege to.

But as the funds begin to arrive in the member states, we are faced with a Russian invasion of Ukraine. An invasion that causes fuel and electricity prices to rise, mostly controlled by private oligopolies that make millions in profits. A war that affects many sectors in the first part, such as transport, but quickly spreads to all other sectors.

As trade unions of the Mediterranean countries, we condemn any kind of conflict, convinced that international disputes cannot be solved by war, we condemn the Russian invasion in Ukraine and we commit ourselves to support the Ukrainian trade unions in this difficult historical moment. We are convinced that action must be taken to end the conflict and to support the stricken populations.

We need an EPSU analysis of how the pandemic has affected public services and how the war is affecting EU countries as a whole, and what the consequences may be in terms of public services.

The most recent problems are the additional costs being assumed by administrations due to the rise in energy and fuel prices, both to heat public buildings, residential homes, etc., and to be able to carry out the tasks of each position that requires the use of vehicles, such as police, firemen, administration maintenance personnel, among other examples.

But social services and administrations are also already being affected by the large-scale migration caused by the war, which is pushing Ukrainian people to leave the country. This war is going to cause a major wave of migration and we have to address it in order to support the fleeing populations. Already with EUCARE we have underlined the importance of public services in the reception of migrants and the responsibility that Europe has to take to face the migration phenomenon. And this is where countries must provide more resources, not only financial but also in terms of staff, to ensure the proper development of public services. We must overcome the positions that some countries have taken up to now and put in place a European reception mechanism based on solidarity.

We must continue to act in the working group that was created to attend to and improve the working conditions of public employees who care for migrants. We believe that we must expand this working network given the circumstances.

From the Mediterranean countries we present this resolution because we believe that our priorities and those of EPSU should be:

1. Strengthen the role of Public Services, fight privatisation.
2. Strengthen Social Services and Health, through public funding and public provision.
3. Organising public health in order to have more prepared health systems in case of future pandemics.
4. Strengthen primary health care as the basis of public health care.
5. Work on migration policies, appropriate treatment of migrants, control of migratory flows, denounce the situation of thousands of people fleeing armed conflicts or poverty (deaths in the Mediterranean, Turkish coasts, Lampedusa) or asylum policies (Syria, Ukraine...).
6. In relation to the Next Generation funds, there have been many inequalities between the contribution that the different member states have allocated to the health and social services sector and there have also been differences in the participation of trade unions in these decisions, therefore, it is necessary to homogenise the allocations to these sectors in the different countries, review them and see if they adapt to the new economic reality, where inflation does not stop rising.

7. To prevent economic events from repeating the policies of 2008 with austericide, policies that worsened the existing economic crisis, paralysed the development of infrastructures, increased unemployment and increased poverty, provoking a destabilisation that violates the founding pillars of the European Union.
8. Recover and adapt public employment and staffing levels.
9. Improve salaries and working conditions of public employees and increase the staff ratio to bring it closer to the European average.
10. Build a Europe of peace, solidarity and readiness to welcome migrants fleeing wars, famine or climate problems.
11. Contrast Europe's rearmament policies and strengthen diplomacy.

We must strengthen the international networks that make it possible for us to achieve improvements not only for public employees but for citizens. With strong public services, people's quality of life improves.