

Statement to the Austrian Presidency of the European Union

Adopted at EPSU Executive Committee 6-7 November 2018, Brussels.

EPSU demands progress with EU social policy initiatives and more from the Presidency

The Austrian Presidency risks failing working people in Austria and across the rest of the European Union. In October, it cancelled a meeting of the Employment and Social Affairs Council thus preventing the adoption of a common position of the Member States on such important EU initiatives as the *Transparency and Predictable Working Conditions Directive* and the proposed *European Labour Authority*. This was an attempt to push back the agenda by several months. It will leave less time for the Romanian Presidency, Parliament and Commission to negotiate a workable compromise just before the European elections. The Austrian government is responding to pressure of employers such as BusinessEurope who are campaigning against these social policy initiatives.

We would also like to see more progress by the Austrian Presidency in other areas, such as the recast of the *Drinking Water Directive*. The European Citizens' Initiative Right2Water, the European Commission and the European Parliament have all made proposals on how to recognise the Human Right to Water in this Directive. The Austrian Presidency is not doing enough to ensure a common position of the Council, thus effectively hindering the start of negotiations to find compromises. This is a let down for the nearly 2 million citizens who supported the Right2Water – the first ever successful ECI.

We are very disappointed that the Austrian government pulled out of the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration*. This was agreed by all UN member states in 2016 and is due to be signed in Marrakesh in December. The European Union has supported it. We note that the Global Compact "reaffirms the sovereign right of states to determine their national migration policy and their prerogative to govern migration within their jurisdiction, in conformity with international law." It creates a framework and set of guiding principles based on a human rights approach to respond to migration. This is being undermined by the fact that Austria is refusing to sign the Global Compact at the very time it holds the EU presidency. We urge the Austrian government to revisit its position and support the common EU approach.

These are all important subjects for millions of European public service workers. Europe's working women and men are expecting progress from the Austrian Presidency.