



European Federation of Public Service Unions(EPSU)

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Internal Market problems 'bypassed' in European Commission's gender equality roadmap

(Brussels 8 March 2006) On the occasion of International Women's Day, EPSU regrets that the European Commission continues to ignore the negative impact of internal market policies on working women's' lives. The Commission's 'Gender Equality Roadmap 2006-2010' does not propose to acknowledge mounting evidence that unchecked liberalization will lead to increased gender inequality.

"The roadmap's fails to go anywhere near the EU's fast lane, that is to say the internal market. The latter's narrow focus on high service liberalization, high competition and low regulation, as best exemplified by the proposed services directive, is blocking the road to achieving gender equality", said EPSU gender Equality Officer, **Nadja Salson**.

For EPSU this is part of the explanation why inequalities between women and men are not falling in the EU, and are *even widening* in a number of countries. Public procurement is a case in point. This sector represents 11% of EU GDP. The vast majority of employees in this sector are women. It is difficult to see the extent to which women's jobs will be better valued in public services that are contracted out if there is no obligation for the contracting firm to promote equality.

EPSU calls for the following points to be included in the roadmap:

- A gender impact assessment of sectoral utilities liberalization directives –the so-called better regulation agenda
- An assessment of the potential impact of the proposed services directives on gender equality.
- A direct role in job classification research in the social care services

EPSU, the European Federation of Public service Unions, is in favour of the proposed action points the Commission addresses to itself and EU governments. However it is questionable what results will be achieved if proper consultation is not carried out. For example the Commission has ignored the trade union role in job classification within social care services, stating only that 'it will work with international organisations'. Genuine consultation means relying on the legitimate partners – in this case the trade unions.

"If we are serious about gender equality then slowing down on the internal market fast lane, taking a hard look at its effects on women as public service workers and users, is an avenue worth exploring both in and outside the EU", Ms. Salson added.

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EPSU is the European Federation of Public Service Unions. It is the largest federation of the ETUC. 8 million public service workers and their 213 trade unions are members. They organise workers in health and social services, local and national administration, energy, water, waste.