

EPSU calls on authorities to build up our public health care systems and abandon attempts to commercialise health care



7th April 2020
World Health Day

**Those that fight COVID19
ASK YOU
TO REMEMBER
THEM TOMORROW**

April 7th is world health day, and this year it is marked by the first pandemic of the 21st century. The pandemic reveals just how much our health care systems have been undermined by years of cuts, underfunding, understaffing and a lack of investment. EPSU has denounced this for many years and has pointed repeatedly to the consequences on peoples' health and the well being of staff. Our warnings were ignored by governments. Only recently did the European semester recommendations start demanding governments to provide more funding. These late reactions have had dramatic consequences.

COVID-19 is killing tens of thousands in all European countries. The public health systems were ill-prepared. The pandemic is having a huge toll on public sector workers (in the health sector, in elderly care, in prisons, on firefighters and many more). Almost the entirety of EPSUs membership is regarded as essential, crucial

and vital to keep people alive, our economies going and society functioning.

Europe has become the global center of the COVID-19 pandemic. Healthcare staff and eldercare workers are working hard to contain the spread of the virus, putting themselves at risk to protect our communities. Despite the unprecedented efforts to stop the pandemic, many healthcare professionals are at the front line, often without adequate protective equipment. We are lacking masks, testing capacities, respirators, gloves, etc. The number of infections and deaths of healthcare staff is increasing every day.

As a matter of urgency, we want to win the battle against the virus and ensure there is enough capacity in our hospital to treat those infected. Health care staff from doctors to nurses to cleaners are putting in immense effort in this regard. Everyone is appreciative. There is no excuse to put undue burdens on those workers. Even in times of crisis, adequate working conditions and protection must be ensured. Staff must have breaks and time off between shifts in order to be able to carry on in what could be a long-term global crisis. Working in such conditions takes its toll on the psychological health of staff, so appropriate support services must also be put in place. They deserve to work in a environment that is safe. EPSU demands that testing capacity is increased so that all the staff working in our hospitals and in the community have the possibility to be tested for Corona virus.

The spread of Covid-19 is putting pressure on long-term care services, which have for years been underfunded and understaffed. Pre-existing financing and staffing difficulties are being multiplied in the face of the current crisis, which in the worst cases is leading to complete closure of some care centers and other facilities. Therefore we need long-term solutions that recognise our health services and health workers as crucial for our well being and guaranteeing the right to health care. The commercialisation and privatisation of our health services will not deliver this. Those services also need more funding to deal with the many people that are recovering when released from the intensive care units. EPSU calls on governments to continue building up public health systems. That includes valuing the work of those in health care, mostly women, in a correct manner. Decent care deserves decent collective agreements for the ones delivering it.

Today, we demand a new approach to healthcare provision and funding and that healthcare professionals are treated with respect and they stop enduring the treatment that they have received in the last decade.

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