

Liberalisation of public services in trade agreements a danger for our social model

European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) - European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE)

Joint Press Communication – 15 January 2015

(Brussels, 14 January 2015) More than 100 trade unionists from public sector unions from over 25 European countries will gather in Vienna to discuss TTIP, CETA and TISA in Vienna on 15-16 January 2015.

EPSU and ETUCE together with AK and ÖGB organise an important gathering on the possible impact of current trade negotiations on public services and how to challenge the liberalisation of public services.

“Governments should focus on objectives and actions to maintain and improve the access of all people to high quality health, education and other public services, and not on liberalization processes. CETA, TTIP and TISA must not be allowed to unravel public services where they exist and prevent them from developing where they do not yet exist” stated Willem Goudriaan, EPSU General Secretary and Martin Rømer, ETUCE European Director.

All citizens benefit from solidarity-based public services. Against a background of increasing inequality within and between countries, public services are even more important. Public services are services that are underpinned by the principles and values of universal access, affordability, democratic control, continuity and equality as set out in the Services of General Interest Protocol agreed by all Member States of the EU. Public services are key to fostering economic and social development and cohesion, equal opportunities, job creation, as well as the fair distribution of income and wealth. Regulation is fundamental to prevent commercialisation leading to cherry picking and a two-tier service, to protect citizens from misleading information, and to ensure long-term focus. Whether it concerns licencing requirements, authorisation schemes, requirements for professional qualifications, planning measures, price controls or freedom of information requirements these cannot be seen as just ‘barriers to trade’! Democratic decision-making is not a

trade barrier.

EPSU and ETUCE have for many years called for a positive EU agenda for public services as part of our demands for social Europe. The EU Treaty and the binding Charter of fundamental rights provide for the right of access to public services. However the EU is yet to give 'teeth' the public service values it supports.

EPSU and ETUCE underscore the importance of the flexibility and reversibility of policies regarding public services, as well as the aim of the EU itself, which is to be a 'social market economy'. Today we see that remunicipalisation, for example in water and energy and that more and more evidence points to the efficiency, as well as the moral value, of public services. Trade agreements should not get in the way.

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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 265 trade unions; EPSU organises workers in the energy, water and waste sectors, health and social services and local, regional and central government, in all European countries including the EU's Eastern Neighborhood. EPSU is the recognized regional organization of Public Services International (PSI).

The European Trade Union Committee for Education (ETUCE) represents 131 Teacher Unions and 11 million teachers in all countries of Europe, 4.2 million teachers in the EU, from all levels of the education sector. ETUCE is a Social Partner in education at the EU level and a European Trade Union Federation within ETUC, the European Trade Union Confederation. ETUCE is the European Region of Education International, the global federation of teacher unions.

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