

Speaking points for Dave Prentis, EPSU vice-President

Resolution nr 1, agenda item 3, scheduled for afternoon of Tuesday 20 May

'An Alternative Europe'

It gives me great pleasure to introduce to Congress the first resolution standing in the name of the Executive Committee.

This resolution sets out the current context we are in and provides a framework for the discussions on our demands for an 'alternative,' Europe.

One thing is clear, today's Europe is off-course. In the text we take a firm position against the current policies of austerity, public-sector cutbacks, and worsening pay and working conditions. These policies affect all of our countries even if they manifest themselves differently in the Eurozone, the European Union and the broader Europe. We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with every worker and citizen who is suffering the consequences of these policies. We affirm clearly, and with force, our commitment to fight for a social Europe. Social Europe needs no justification. It stands up for itself. Anything less will not solve the problems of the 21st century brought about by rising inequality, poverty, demographic change and environmental degradation. Social justice, sustainable development, and democracy must be at the forefront of all policies - local, national, European and global. This is a demand that we share fully with PSI and for which we fight together.

Today workers, families and communities are under attack as unscrupulous employers and governments try to roll back the gains brought about by the welfare state, workers' rights, and democracy itself. EPSU members have seen their wages and pensions frozen or reduced, as in Greece. Precarious jobs and inequalities increase in both public and private services. Many years after Lehman Brothers the European agenda is still putting markets, corporate power and profit over people's well-being.

The quality and accessibility of public services is at stake as budgets are cut and jobs slashed. Youth unemployment has reached scandalous levels. Poverty is growing and xenophobia and racism are on the rise.

EPSU and our members have been successful in resisting austerity and attacks on workers and public services. Millions of people have taken part in demonstrations and strikes to defend their hospital, their fire station or their water company like in Athens, in Thessaloniki, in Rome and Palermo. Their fight is the same one fought by members in many other countries. And municipalities are bringing public services back under local control as they see that outsourcing does not deliver benefits – for example in Berlin, where the privateers of the water company were sent packing.

And we have had some notable success in building support for our alternatives. The ECI 'right2water campaign' and the tax justice / FTT campaign are two examples (flagged up in Carola's report of activities) are two examples.

We need to harness all capacities to turn Europe around and to build a Europe that invests in sustainable growth and employment, including through the ETUC's investment plan for job recovery, demanding funds are made available to invest and grow our economies again in a sustainable way. We want a Europe that promotes fair wages and collective bargaining at

all levels, more justice (including tax justice), more democracy in the workplace as well as society.

Our engagement and struggle for social Europe has made a difference in the past and it can make a difference in the future.

In the resolution before you we set out our blueprint for the Europe that we want to construct: one where the public sector has sufficient, well-trained motivate and well-paid staff; where collective bargaining, social dialogue and trade union rights can play their full part; where nobody is discriminated against because of his or her individual characteristics or beliefs. One which brings all parts of Europe closer to this social Europe, and which drives another, social world.

Out of the 6 amendments that the EC had recommended to reject, 5 have been withdrawn. The amendment that has not been withdrawn is from FNME-CGT to paragraph 9. This proposes to delete the word "race" from the text and only to mention "ethnic origin," whereas the Executive recommended to use both terms. The chair will ask for a vote on this amendment before voting on the resolution as a whole.

To conclude, a recipe to achieve social Europe exists. Among the key ingredients are our members and our capacity to work together and in alliances across countries and at all levels for our common goals. This first EPSU resolution sets out our commitment for this alternative Europe, as a basis for our work with PSI and the ETUC, to achieve another, more just, Europe and world.

We can take inspiration from our long history in the union and social movement to face up to new challenges and to find new answers that unite workers and people across borders.

We have a message of resistance and alternatives. We have a message of optimism and of solidarity. Together we can change course and reclaim our Europe.