

Report on EPSU's work on social services: Review 2009-2014
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Introduction of Resolution 8 "Social Services for All"

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Comrades,

I have pleasure in presenting to you our organisation's review concerning social services and Resolution 8 of our Congress document "*Social Services for All*".

Although the situation may vary from country to country, we have a common core and EPSU places the emphasis on the social services provided as a public service/service of general interest.

The "Social Services" working group is composed of colleagues from the "Health and Social Services" and "Local and Regional Governments" Standing Committees and is headed jointly by their two Chairmen. This working group's task is to consider the preparation of a work programme based on Resolution 8 for the forthcoming Congress period.

Positive outcome from the 2009-2014 Congress period to be continued

EPSU has constantly strived to influence the objectives and content of European legislation, such as, for example, in the field of social services, the Public Procurement Directive (2014/24/EU) and the Directive on the award of concession contracts (2014/23/EU), in view of the specific characteristics of social services.

- The most positive points of these Public Procurement Directives adopted at the beginning of 2014 are the following:
 - All parties and public procurement operators must comply with national employment and labour laws and with collective agreements;
 - As a general rule, contracts are awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous offer; it is no longer a matter of the lowest cost/price.
- The most negative aspects for their part relate to the lack of transparency for citizens and the absence of any reference to ILO Convention 94, which impedes application to all collective agreements.

EPSU will continue its commitment in relation to the implementation of the new Directives, for example by preparing a guide this year, with its affiliates, to promote public procurement supporting good working conditions and sustainable development.

EPSU has also been proactively involved in the political dossiers directly relating to social services, like that on the preparation of the European Parliament report on SSGIs (July 2011), and before then in the preparation of the third Forum on Social Services (October 2010).

- EPSU calls for a European Union action programme in the field of long-term care and care for the elderly based on realistic targets, with a view to improving the quality of services and jobs by promoting the activities of local and regional authorities.
- EPSU recalled that it is important, when drawing up and implementing policies, to take into account the importance and value of decent, stable working conditions and vocational training in order to ensure and improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of SSGIs.
- We supported the idea of a voluntary European quality framework for social services and also called for key importance to be attributed to respect of workers' rights, strong emphasis to be placed on improving conditions of employment and pay in a sector dominated by women workers and the efforts to be continued to reduce the gender pay gap.

The **EPSU report published in February 2011 “Care Services for Older People in Europe – Challenges for Labour”** sets out several recommendations and calls on the European Union to embrace the challenge of the creation of secure, good quality jobs in the care services for the elderly sector.

It is in this context that a **sectoral social dialogue for social services** is taking shape. Launched in 2012, the PESSIS 1 project, in which EPSU is involved in its capacity of trade union social partner, is followed by the PESSIS 2 project, which will be divided into 3 parts: firstly, a mapping exercise for the social dialogue in 6 countries; secondly, a detailed exchange between the employers’ organisations to examine the feasibility of moving towards a sectoral social dialogue; and thirdly, a series of meetings of employers and social partners on the subject and also on the scope which this sector could cover.

I now come to a **summary presentation of Resolution 8**, which was the subject of a large number of amendments by our members. This will be our roadmap for the forthcoming Congress period, with strong policies for a quality supply.

Social services are based on principles of solidarity, equality of access, universality, continuity, availability, proximity, user protection and democratic control. Only if these criteria are guaranteed can important societal objectives, such as a high level of employment, equal opportunities, the fight against poverty and for economic and social justice and social and territorial cohesion, be attained.

Social services depend on collective sources of funding from taxes and social contributions. This funding is responsible for the creation of no fewer than four million jobs in the health and care for elderly and disabled people and child care sector and social work in the EU between 2000 and 2010, and it is vital to meet growing demands for services linked to an ageing population and longer life expectancy. Public, non-profit provision of social services ensures that much needed public funding is not lost to private profits. Profit maximisation can contradict general interest and social welfare objectives and governments at all levels have the responsibility to ensure that regulation is in place and to provide for funding/budgets to enforce public service obligations, including through evaluation, monitoring, verification and sanctions.

In many countries, privatisation of social services has led to ‘zero hours’ contracts, inappropriate opening hours for users and wages below the statutory minimum. The situation has been made worse through the low density of trade union organisations and the insufficient number of strong organisations. Unionisation, social dialogue and collective bargaining have to be strengthened as a matter of urgency in order to improve pay, collective guarantees and working conditions. Collective agreements for a range of sub-sectors outside the public services sector either do not exist or are limited in scope, are not properly applied, or do not reach the workers most in need, for example migrant care workers in households.

Strengthening and developing social dialogue and collective bargaining in the social services sectors at national and European levels are crucial in order to improve the quality of employment and services. The gender dimension must be highlighted and effective measures to address and overcome the gender pay gap need to be taken, given the high percentage of women workers in this area. Improving the quality of work, not least for those employed in personal social services, is a key priority for EPSU and its affiliates.

In the light of these findings, **strong actions are necessary to:**

- Fight against budget cuts in social services and demand adequate budgets guaranteeing a quality service and recruitment of qualified staff capable of meeting the needs.

- Pursue the professionalisation of these trades for better collective guarantees.
- Explore the feasibility of EU legal instrument(s) on social services, based on Article 14 of the Treaty, to develop regulatory framework(s) for social service providers.
- Demand and lobby for European investment plans targeting growth in social services in order to ensure respect of collective agreements and statutory minimum wages where they exist, as well as the training, recruitment and retention of qualified staff.
- Support access to training and qualification, higher levels of professionalisation, representation and defence of workers' rights by trade unions; and develop effective recruitment and retention policies at all levels.
- Promote the sectoral social dialogue at national and European levels (which the PESSIS 2 project is working towards) with representative employers' organisations of the public and private sectors.
- Cooperate and take action with PSI and its affiliates in other regions to further develop trade union strength in the social services area.

Comrades, this is the presentation of our work on social services, but also of all the aims of our work for the forthcoming Congress period in order to guarantee quality services for all citizens, which are all the more legitimately expected in these periods of crises and austerity, without disregarding employment and working conditions worthy of a social Europe which lives up to our expectations.