

Resolution 6 Migrant workers' rights, EPSU congress, Thursday 22 May, item 19

I am pleased to move the EPSU resolution on migrant workers' rights.

People migrate, within and between countries, for economic and social advancement, meeting the demand for their skills, family reunion, simply for adventure.

But many others are forced to migrate because of undemocratic regimes, famine, natural disasters, war, persecution or lack of decent work and pay in the home country.

Once in the host countries, many migrant workers, half of whom are women, are exposed to low pay and discrimination. The lack of information on labour rights in the host and sending country increases the risk of exploitation by unscrupulous employers.

The crisis has led to the resurgence of xenophobic and racist attacks against migrant workers and nationalist far-right parties. Governments have a large share of responsibility. To question the notion of multicultural society, to restrict access to health care or education, to build walls on EU borders or to fail to rescue drowning boat people is criminal.

The crisis has also changed the migratory patterns as many young people are now leaving Spain, Portugal or Greece. In my country, Lithuania, more people leave than they arrive.

As the title of the resolution indicates, our main focus is to uphold the rights of migrant workers, to protect them.

Legally speaking EU citizens moving to another EU country are not migrants but they face similar difficulties as non-EU nationals. This is why our resolution makes no distinction.

Let me outline our main demands some of which were already in the 2009 resolution.

In a nutshell migrant workers must have equal treatment. What does it mean?

It means access to quality jobs and equal pay for same work or of same value.

It means access to citizenship and civic rights after 5 years of stay in an EU member state and access to public services which are essential to social inclusion.

We reiterate our commitment as trade unions to support and recruit migrants, regardless of their status. The contribution of migrant workers to the labour movement has been huge. They also enrich our society, socially, culturally and economically. Most often than not they pay more tax than they get in return.

We need a more protective legal framework. The EU selective migration policy has led to an unacceptable hierarchy of workers' rights that fuels social dumping. We urge EU governments to ratify or better implement the ILO Conventions on Migrant Workers (97 and 143) as well as on domestic workers and the UN Migrant Workers Convention of 1990.

EPSU has contributed to the ETUC policy on migration. It is important in view of the EC post-Stockholm programme for the next 5 years. Our position is, I think, clear.

In line with PSI, the draft resolution promotes a voluntary, fair and humane migration policy based on global redistribution of wealth within and between every country.

We oppose a migration policy simply based on the economic needs of the sending or receiving countries, a policy that treats labour as a mere commodity. The right to free

movement should not be an obligation. It should come together with a right to permanent stay, not temporary. Migrant workers should be able to come and go in or outside the EU.

We repeat our opposition to the criminalisation and detention of undocumented migrants who have committed no crime. I am glad to say that it is now also ETUC policy.

Recruitment conditions are critical to positive outcomes for migrant workers. We oppose private recruitment agencies making money on the back of migrants. Together with PSI, affiliates from Nordic countries and Germany recently discussed the role of trade unions in monitoring EU bilateral agreements in health and social services with countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam, India or China.

In the hospital sector, we will continue following up on a good implementation of the code of conduct on ethical recruitment that was agreed with the employers. It is based on transparency, regulation and compliance with human rights.

Employment of migrants in the public services will continue to be on our social dialogue agenda. The public sector must be a role model employer and its workforce must better reflect the diversity of society. It is also an important source of job creation.

In local and regional government, EPSU and the employers are drafting concrete common guidelines for increasing the recruitment of workers from a diverse cultural background, for regulated working conditions, combating unsafe, exploitative salaries and undeclared work.

In central government, we will build upon the excellent Euromed project on migration services in Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal, France and Romania. The lack of resources, the lack of training on complex EU and national migration and refugee law, the lack of interpreters have serious consequences for workers and migrants. Public administrations are the first step towards social inclusion.

We will also step up actions and campaign to tackling racism in justice or the police. This should also be part of our collective bargaining agenda.

The right to asylum must be upheld. Today only 20% of asylum claims in Europe are accepted. The tragedies in Lampedusa or Malta, the barbed wire fence along the Greek/Turkish border, the overcrowded camps in Melilla are Europe's shame and are also useless. If people are forced to leave their country, they will do so no matter what.

Deep down we need another EU external and trade policy. This is why the resolution calls for fair trade, not free trade, and debt cancellation.

The guiding light throughout our work on migration policy and in defending and supporting all workers is that labour is not a commodity.

All amendments to the resolution are accepted by the Executive Committee except one by FNME-CGT which has been withdrawn.

I move the resolution.