



## ***End of year message to all affiliates***

16 December 2010

This year has been particularly difficult for many of our member organisations and the workers they represent.

We have seen unprecedented attacks on hundreds of thousands of public sector workers across Europe. Job cuts and recruitment freezes have often been accompanied by pay freezes in many countries. But some public sector employers have not stopped there. They often ignored collective bargaining procedures and have simply imposed pay cuts on their workers. In some cases there have been several rounds of pay cuts.

We have seen a wave of strikes throughout Europe: in the last 3 months workers have gone out on strike in France, Spain, Portugal, Romania, the Czech Republic, but also in Ukraine and Russia. Mass demonstrations have taken place in Brussels, Madrid, Rome, Bucharest, Paris, Lisbon, Dublin... the list is endless. Yesterday the trade union movement in Greece has called its members out in general strike. There was trade union action in Spain. Fire fighters demonstrated in the streets of Prague as they did in Talinn. Today public sector workers will go on strike in Cyprus.

We therefore have a very clear message to European Heads of Governments meeting today and tomorrow: "You are hitting the wrong target! You are making public sector workers pay for a crisis they did not create." EPSU is showing politicians the 'red card' and say "Your policies foul public sector workers, when you should go after the greedy bankers."

To give just one example to illustrate the fallacy of the current debate: The cost of rescuing defaulting banks in the last 2 years equals revenue from 30 years of privatization world-wide!

I had today the opportunity to participate in a meeting with the President of the Eurozone, Jean-Claude Juncker. He promotes the introduction of Eurobonds as a way to support countries within the Eurozone to overcome current budget problems. He rightly says: we should be able to support countries in difficulties, when we were able to support banks in difficulties the rescue of which involved much larger sums. We cannot but agree with this position, but unfortunately there is no majority political support for it.

EPSU's campaign in support of public services will continue. We oppose the austerity plans imposed by national governments and the European Commission. These measures are deeply unsocial, unjust. They hit the livelihoods of thousands of families throughout Europe, who have problems to pay their rent, to pay for heating, transport, feed their children. Much of the social progress made in the last decades for women workers risks to be undone by these crude austerity measures.

We also doubt the economic wisdom of these spending cuts. Public spending goes into investments in infrastructures, protection of the environment, and investment in jobs in the public sector but also in the private sector. On 10 December, EPSU was able to agree with the Employers' Platform in local and regional government a joint declaration calling on the European Council to take a long-term perspective when coordinating their responses to the crisis and to provide for public investment to mitigate its effect. You will find the text on our website and I commend it for use at national levels.

We need to stand for a fairer international taxation system, supporting the Financial Transaction Tax and the introduction of progressive tax regimes. We need to stand for tax efficiency, take effective measures against tax evasion, tax fraud, and abolish tax havens.

There are other aspects which provide for some hope that progress in our work remains possible.

Let me cite some examples:

- Tomorrow we will formally launch a social dialogue for the central government administrations. This will mark a proud achievement after long years of joint work, sometimes involving difficult discussions and setbacks. This social dialogue committee will cover 7 million workers and civil servants in state administrations.
- For the health and hospital sector we were able to negotiate a framework agreement on prevention from sharp injuries. This framework directive has become directive on 1 June 2010 and thus has become binding law for implementation in EU member states and countries in the European Economic Area. This is truly a landmark agreement. Other organisations, such as the WHO and the ILO have welcomed it as well as a good example of what can be achieved through social dialogue.
- On 23 September 2010 we organised our first European-wide sector conference for the utilities sector. European Commissioner for Energy Günther H. Oettinger emphasised that “Job creation in the energy sector is key for the future of employment “

2010 has meant year 1 to put the merger between EPSU and PSI Europe into practice and to forge a single European Federation of Public Service Unions. EPSU is active in the work of PSI, be it on the public services agenda in general or specific issues, such as migration. I was able to participate in the Interamerican Regional Conference of the PSI in early September. It was a very interesting experience to witness how our sister unions from the Interamericas tackle the challenges they are facing.

It is my pleasure to inform you that we will now be able to work with a full EPSU staff complement both in Brussels and in the regional offices in Prague, Bucharest, Kiev and Moscow. As in the course of this year we will continue to work with all of you in 2011 towards the fulfillment our joint aspirations in the interest of the workers we represent.

You may find this text in <http://epsu.org/a/7129>

I wish you a peaceful festive season.

In solidarity

Carola Fischbach-Pyttel

***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 250 trade unions; EPSU organises workers in the energy, water and waste sectors, health and social services and local and national administration, in all European countries including in the EU's Eastern Neighborhood. EPSU is the recognized regional organization of Public Services International (PSI). For more information on EPSU and our work please go to: <http://www.epsu.org>***