



After 9 years of austerity Europe's public sector workers deserve a pay rise!

(21 June 2017) On 23rd June, Public Services Day, citizens around the world acknowledge the wide range of education, health, social and other key services delivered all day and everyday by public service workers. This year the European federations for public service (EPSU) and education (ETUCE) highlight the contribution made by millions of public service workers to maintain quality services while suffering the long-term effects of pay cuts and pay freezes. Public service workers do not deserve this treatment.

Austerity has taken a significant toll on the jobs, pay and conditions of public service workers across Europe. Governments didn't hesitate to bail out the banks to stabilise the world economy following the financial crisis. But then they did not hesitate either to impose public spending cuts with public service workers and the services they deliver to people as the main targets.

Across Europe, 19 countries imposed pay cuts or pay freezes affecting over 20 million workers during the first years of the crisis. Job cuts and recruitment freezes and the spread of precarious employment conditions increased the pressure on those still in work to deliver more while being paid less. While pay has gradually returned to normal levels in some countries, millions of workers continue to see a major loss of purchasing power. Repeated pay freezes and below-inflation pay rises have left public service workers in the UK and Italy on average EUR 4000 worse off on an annual basis. In Greece, workers are looking at a 40% loss in real pay while in Spain and Portugal trade unions are trying to negotiate to restore some of the 15% and 9% cut in purchasing power.

EPSU general secretary Jan Willem Goudriaan commented: *"The attacks on public sector pay and services have been hitting the wrong target. Public sector workers continue paying the price while the bankers responsible for the financial crisis see a return to profits and generous bonuses. It is time for public investment to deal with staff shortages and ensure quality public services for all in Europe."*

A positive example is where the Irish unions are negotiating a new pay deal that will go a long way to restoring the purchasing power lost from the cuts and freezes since 2009. This should happen in other countries as well and pay bargaining should be restored for nurses, teachers, police, firefighters, and all those millions of public services workers.

Susan Flocken, director of the ETUCE added: *"We cannot ignore the legacy of pay cuts and pay freezes on teachers and other public service workers. We are challenged with increasingly precarious employment conditions and a shortage of education personnel. Trade Unions play an important role in campaigning for decent working conditions and decent salaries. An attractive and rewarding teaching profession based on high quality education lays the foundation for our society, for our future."*

EPSU and the ETUCE welcome the ETUC's initiative to launch a campaign calling for a pay rise for workers across Europe and we would argue strongly that public service workers need a pay rise too.

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