

## Joint SSE and EPSU event in the EP on job creation, quality employment in and sustainable funding of social services

Brussels, 1 December 2015

On 1 December 2015 the Working Group on Public Services of the European Parliament Common Goods and Public Services Intergroup hosted a public hearing to exchange on the need of creating and protecting quality jobs in the social services sector. It was hosted by Jean-Paul Denanot MEP (S&D/France), the chairperson of this working group. Interventions by Jens Nilsson MEP (S&D/Sweden), Co-Chair of the Social Economy Intergroup, Laura Jones, General Secretary of the European Rehabilitation Platform (EPR) and President of Social Services Europe (SSE), Penny Clarke, Deputy General Secretary of EPSU and Sylvie Slangen, Head of UNISOC to represent the European Centre of Employers and Enterprises Providing Public Services (CEEP) set the scene for a vivid and interesting debate with participants.

Please read the joint SSE/EPSU Press Release below:

- [EP Hearing 01.12.15 Joint SSE-EPSU Press Release](#)

A report on the hearing drafted by the chairperson of the Working Group will be uploaded here soon on availability.

In her intervention Penny Clarke, supported by a number of participants, stressed a number of **priorities for EPSU, several proposals to the European Parliament and demands to the European Commission:**

- Social services are essential for social cohesion, sustainable and inclusive growth and jobs in Europe. Between 2000 and 2009 about 4.2 million jobs were created in health and social services, notably in childcare, care for the elderly and people with disabilities. Employment growth increased in a number of European countries even throughout the crises. The main challenges is, however, **not only to create jobs, but more and quality employment,**

based on investments targeted at the benefit of the citizens as service users and of the workforce, needing and deserving good pay and working conditions.

- There are a number of **good texts adopted by EU institutions**, e.g. a number of policy recommendations in the EP reports on Social Services of General Interest of 2011 (De Rossa) and 2007 (Hasse Ferreira), the Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services (2010), the EU's "Common Values and Principles in EU Health Systems", the recent joint report from the Social Protection Committee (SPC) and the European Commission on long-term care recommending that these systems and services should be integrated into social protection systems for equity and efficiency reasons (2014). But they **need to be much better reflected in EU-level policy or programme initiatives**.
- **Collectively-funded, solidarity-based public services** (i.e. services of general interest not geared at profit maximisation) **have a long and impeccable track record in fostering social justice, social cohesion, welfare, and sustainable and long-term economic growth**. They also provide the frame for the provision of social services by organisations of the social economy or other not-for-profit providers that re-invest possible profits into the services they provide for the citizens. **Collective funding based on taxes or social contributions for EPSU is the model to follow** instead of promoting investment from private investors such as private equity funds that seek profits to the detriment of the quality of services, the continuity of their provision and the working and pay conditions of the staff they employ.
- **Fair taxation systems and measures to reduce tax avoidance/dodging and increase public revenues are needed**. The EU is moving too slowly to here and indeed until very recently has been going completely in the wrong direction.
- **Marketisation or commercialisation of social services is not the way to go** (even more so in the future context of free-trade agreements). Cooperation, not competition, is needed for EPSU to ensure joined up and comprehensive services. Public and non-profit social services should complement each other, and in all cases national and local policy space must be protected to ensure it is possible to regulate services effectively. Regulation of social services is not a barrier to trade. **Social services are not tradable goods**, but help to guarantee social and human rights and i.a. support the

better or easier inclusion in the labour market or in society.

- **EU policies should support Member States to develop and/or maintain solidarity-based financing and public services principles** (universality, accessibility, affordability, equal treatment, continuity, democratic control) **as the necessary stepping stones to quality social services for all.**

There is a role for the EP to monitor that EU policies and legislation in particular is supportive of this orientation. **An Action Plan on eldercare would be welcome - building in the EU long-term care report and other "soft" instruments** (such as the EP reports on social services). The EP should support EPSU and SSE with this demand. The **promotion and effective delivery of integrated care** - based on effective and safe staffing levels and qualified personnel - should be the focus of the action plan.

- **Quantity and quality of jobs must not be traded off against each other if citizens' interests are to prevail.** Quality services for EPSU imply quality jobs. Regulation of employment conditions means collective bargaining and social dialogue – which is the key task for trade unions and employers. Effective social dialogue at sectoral, national and EU-level in the field of social services (e.g. in elderly care, care for persons with disabilities and child care) is important.

- There is a **broad range of issues where EPSU's affiliates are active and where agreements with the relevant representative employers' organisations have been concluded, also relevant for the field of social services** delivered by public authorities (local and regional government), not-for-profit or commercial providers:

1. Recruitment and retention of staff (linked to wages and working conditions, including working time but also job satisfaction, support from colleagues and management).
2. Health and safety at the workplace, including e.g. addressing musculoskeletal disorders and psycho-social risks and stress at the workplace and the challenges of an ageing workforce
3. Professional skills, training and qualifications, in particular continuous professional development mobility of workers (which as a rule have a positive impact on effective work organisation and recruitment / retention)
4. Improving the image of the sector, and in general care work - which links to gender equality, ethical and social values
5. Tackling social dumping and exploitation of workers (precarious work, zero hour contracts, vulnerability of many domestic care workers). The overall EU

social policy framework in this context is very important.



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