EPSU Conference calls for secure quality employment for public service workers

(11 January 2017) Trade unionists called for an improvement in the quality of public sector workers employment condition, at a EPSU conference on employment and public services, which took place in Brussels, over the last two days. The conference which was attended by more than 120 representatives from 30 countries, also addressed the need to improve public services generally.

Opening the conference, Jan Willem Goudriaan, EPSU general secretary, welcomed recent positive developments, signalling that public sector unions in Italy, Ireland and Spain were returning to collective bargaining and recouping some of the pay and benefits lost under austerity measures.

He also noted that the European institutions are taking up the issue of quality employment. The European Commission's latest Annual Growth Survey, for example, makes two references to the importance of quality employment.

Goudriaan was adamant that 'what we need now is to improve the quality of work. We need to ensure that public sector workers get a decent pay increase and ensure that past cuts to their salaries are restored. For this to occur we need an end to austerity and a restoration of collective bargaining'.

Austerity measures have meant pay cuts and pay freezes for many public sector workers in recent years and participants reacted positively to news that the ETUC has declared 2017 "year of the pay rise". Esther Lynch, ETUC confederal secretary explained that the Confederation will be soon launch a major campaign calling for a pay rise for Europe's workers.

Lynch believes, 'workers are right to look for a pay rise, which will support a fairer more sustainable recovery. It is not just about those at the top having a recovery, it is important that workers get their fair share of the profits, which they help to create'.

Speaking on the second day of the conference ETUC Deputy General Secretary Peter Scherrer underlined the need to achieve concrete results from the social

dialogue at European level. He called for better coordination between the ETUC and the European Trade Union Federations as well the need to put pressure on the European Commission to deliver on its commitment to support social dialogue at both national and European levels.

Conference speakers and attendees also addressed definitions of quality employment, changes to labour legislation in Eastern Europe, recent trends in public services, the challenge of improving pay in sectors dominated by women, staffing levels and workloads in prison services and the health sector, the impact of precarious employment on health and safety and tackling precarious employment through social dialogue

Click here for short report of the conference and all the presentations.

This meeting was organised with the financial support of the European Commission

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