



REPORT ON INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES 2002-2006

The years since FP CGIL 7th Congress (January 2002) have been characterised by two events that have substantially marked the international arena as well as FP CGIL European and international policies.

On the one hand, on the domestic level, Genoa G8 Summit (July 2001) and its tragic consequences have allowed the activist movement against free trade to establish itself and millions of citizens to become aware that globalisation as a phenomenon was affecting everybody's daily life and that this process could not be left to market rules alone.

On the other hand, after the war in Afghanistan (October 2001), the international crisis resulting from the events of 11th September 2001 reached its dramatic peak on 19th March 2003 with the onset of the war in Iraq, against which millions of citizens had mobilized in Italy and worldwide – particularly on 15th February, 2003.

FP CGIL immediately realized the risks that were looming ahead on the international scale. As a matter of fact, it was the only trade union that called a workers' strike day for 20th March to coincide with the beginning of the war. This initial opinion has been gradually strengthening in the light of the direct involvement of Italian Armed Forces in Iraq, as wished by Berlusconi's Government in defiance of the Constitution and Italians' prevailing feeling of peace, which has been harder hit during these years of occupation by the deaths of many fellow citizens – both civilians and soldiers –, ranging from the casualties in Nassiriya (November 2003) to the killing of Nicola Calipari (4th March, 2005).

The war – which has caused more than 30,000 deaths among Iraqis and over 2,200 among Americans – has not halted terrorism which, instead, has been spreading worldwide: hundreds of deaths in Madrid on 11th March 2004, in London on 7th July 2005. Then the events in Riad, Casablanca, Jakarta, Mumbai, Bali, Istanbul, Sharm el Sheik... all bear tragic witness to the fact that the whole world has become less safe. The presumed clash of civilisations has dangerously dimmed the prospects of peace and dialogue

between peoples and cultures, allowing extremists and fundamentalists to have a voice and political clout and increasing political instability, particularly in the Middle and Far East.

European movements

A strong movement of young people, workers, and citizens has been growing in parallel with these ongoings, searching for alternatives to free trade, injustice, and violence.

Given its identity, FP CGIL found it natural to set itself within this movement. Its relations with associations and movements, its engagement in social forums – at a local, domestic, and European level – are the real novelty of the last few years and a pathway to which we are still committed.

Since the 1st Social Forum in Florence (from 6th to 9th November, 2002), FP CGIL has constantly developed and deepened its participation in the working sessions of the European Social Forum (Paris, London, Barcelona). On all occasions, workshops were organised – co-promoted with other European labour and social organisations – on the topic of public services.

This has strengthened and enriched our unfaltering commitment to the European Public Service Unions (EPSU).

Protecting the role of the Welfare State, workers' rights, common assets, and public services in Europe: this is the guiding policy that has led us to strive for the strengthening of the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) as the true European unions that are capable of facing the increasingly more aggressive policies of the European Commission and Council for a European Union that supports competition and the market to the detriment of social and inclusion policies.

We consider this practice to be necessary, also because it appears to us to be the only way towards a process of social and political European integration, which has been evasively and inappropriately transposed into the draft European Constitution, thus defeated after the rejection of France and the Netherlands.

Therefore, our work aims to make European trade unions' bargaining role effective, also considering the growing weight of European policies on domestic policy-making and trade union decision-making.

The Bolkestein Directive

Emblematically, our Congress is starting exactly while the European Parliament is debating and voting on the first reading of the Directive on services in the internal market.

The dangers of this directive – presented on January 2004 – are presently acknowledged by many people. We are proud to claim we were among the first to warn about the risks implied in this directive, as documented in the report by our Secretary General to the EPSU European Congress of Mediterranean public service unions, which helped the Congress itself approve an urgent resolution in June 2004.

We have promoted a national campaign to stop the directive. This campaign is connected to the social forums that have backed and supported this policy in Florence, Paris, London, and Barcelona.

The national campaign – which has gathered several social and political forces, trade unions, and institutions – has mobilized a significant number of citizens – in one year, two demonstrations in Europe (Brussels, 19th March 2005; Strasbourg, 14th February 2006) and one in Italy (Rome, 15th October 2005) – for the protection of public services, common assets, and a different quality of development.

It is worth noticing that we have also encouraged the setting up, on 15th October, of the national Co-ordinating Committee of local authorities against the Bolkestein Directive, whose second meeting took place on 11th February 2006.

The core topics of the Services Directive have been worked on by our industry over the last few years (resulting in several national and local initiatives on common assets, the June 2005 Programme Conference proposals, the amendment to thesis no. 4 in CGIL Congress document) and they have played a central role at all local-community congresses.

FP CGIL has also engaged in contributing proposals and amendments – in cooperation with CGIL and EPSU – to the Working Time Directive, which we consider to be one of the areas that deserve further information, monitoring, and action by the whole industry.

We are not just against! A European campaign for public services

At a European level, our action has not been limited to countering the Services Directive. In 2006, we at EPSU helped launch a campaign to obtain a European legal framework (a directive or EU law) for the protection and quality of public services. We consider this initiative to be crucial for the prospect of a European social policy based on the assurance that all European citizens are entitled to enjoy the same rights.

In preparing for its new European commitment, FP CGIL has brought in its experience of the last few years, which has been marked by the search for partnerships with the most sensitive entities of society, institutions and politics, thus helping the EPSU campaign be implemented – at every stage and for the first time – with the direct involvement of civil society organisations and associations.

The institutional role within EPSU

The central role and manifest esteem that Italian trade unions enjoy within the European Federation of Public Service Unions result from our direct and ongoing engagement as well as from the joint participation of both FP CGIL and CISL FPS in EPSU institutions. We consider it as a preferential and unavoidable role to be played with a view to strengthening industry-wide common policies.

The fact that the new assignment from the Federation to Anna Salfi has led to the election (on 29th November, 2005) of a new President, Anne Marie Perret – former vice-president of EPSU – has not diminished, nor will it diminish, the political engagement and involvement of Italy and our Federation in the European unions.

FP CGIL is still a member of the EPSU Executive Committee and has developed and expanded its role in EPSU institutions and permanent committees.

Regarding **local governments**, a social dialogue committee has been set up and formally acknowledged by the European Union. The European organisation of employers is CEMR (Council of European Municipalities and Regions). Fire brigades and environmental health workers are also unionised in this area. As regards **national public administrations**, the issue of European trade union representation has been tackled by creating a joint union delegation – led by EPSU – that is ready to formally establish social dialogue with the acknowledgment and support of the European Commission. In this field, conferences and workshops on the working conditions of defence, prison, and law-enforcement workers have already been envisaged. In the **health** sector, dialogue has been launched with the European Hospital Employers Association (HOSPEEM) within CEEP (European Centre of

Enterprises with Public Participation and Enterprises of General Economic Interest) – that also ARAN is a member of – with the aim of establishing formalised social dialogue. Views are also being exchanged on social services.

EPSU's commitment to extending social dialogue to all public service sectors is a strategic decision with a view to building a strong European trade union federation.

The Mediterranean group

The group of Mediterranean unions affiliated with PSI (Public Services International) and EPSU was set up on 14th December 1989, and is currently made up of public sector and energy unions from Cyprus, Greece, Israel, Malta, Portugal, Spain, and Italy.

Twenty-six meetings have been held over 17 years. The first Conference of Mediterranean Public Sector Unions took place in Hammamet (Tunisia) on 9th November 2005 and was also attended by trade unions from the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea (including Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, and Palestine).

Ten years after the Barcelona Conference (1995) – when the Euro-Mediterranean partnership was launched – and 3 years after the launch of the new European Neighbouring Policy (whose goals and action plans have clearly to do with social consultation, employment policy, freedom of association, and international labour law agreements), we are about to see a free-trade area established (by 2010), which will also cover services. We are aware that promoting cultural and social dialogue is essential in order to steer sustainable and solidarity-based development policies, implement migration policies marked by respect for the individual and acceptance, and effectively fight against crime. We believe these goals can only be achieved through the strong involvement of public services and a qualified role of public sector workers.

All this makes the Mediterranean experience an inescapable strategy in the activity of our industry.

Public Services International (PSI)

The situation is different as to Public Services International (PSI), where the commitment of FP CGIL has become increasingly marginal, owing to several reasons.

The experience of the Social Forum has opened up new fields of action and new opportunities to establish international relations between trade unions, associations, and movements that are more responding to the need to communicate with public opinion on such topics as the struggle against market globalisation, the establishment of a different development pattern and rights.

The EU enlargement to 25 members has extended the action range of ESPUS, which – as mentioned above – has strengthened its role in the field of European social dialogue and enhanced its capacity to guide and coordinate European trade union policies, in a situation of growing stability from an organisational and financial standpoint. In our opinion, this has emphasised the poor influence of PSI in Europe and unveiled its crisis.

In the EU, there is currently a true overlapping of the two labour organisations, with PSI not having a definite role – unlike EPSU – in the relation with European institutions, nor relations that are useful for the development of national unions' policies.

This has resulted in the duplication of offices and equipment, with an obvious increase in costs having an impact on the amount of membership fees that has become more and more expensive for national unions.

It should be stressed that PSI crisis is to be set within the more general crisis of international trade-unionism. This has led the ICFTU to launch its merger with CMT at the Miyazaki Congress in 2004, aiming to set up one global confederation of trade unions in 2007. CGIL agrees with this choice.

This set of circumstances has fostered the decision by PSI and EPSU to work out plans for the creation of one Pan-European public service union.

FP CGIL considers this decision necessary to overcome the difficulties faced by international trade-unionism as mentioned above. However, the Pan-European union will only be effective if – far from being a mere combination of the two organisations – it is a newly-formed entity capable of also including unions not currently affiliated with any of the two organisations, widening its scope of action to cover the whole EU area, and safeguarding the autonomy, stability, and political subjectivity gained so far by EPSU in the EU.

To this end, the two organisations have appointed a joint working group – including FP CGIL among its members – that will have to submit a project by the end of 2006.