



XXVII EPSU Mediterranean Group Meeting Nicosia, 29 May 2006

Joint Communiqué

The 27th Meeting of the EPSU Mediterranean Group was held on 29 May 2006 in Nicosia where the organizers and hosts were PASYDY, FP SEK and FSGE SEK which shared coordination and the chair.

The following members of the Group participated:

FILCEM-CGIL, FLAEI CISL, FPCGIL, CISL FP (Italy), UCAPSE (Israel), STAL, SINTAP (Portugal), FSAP-CC.OO, FSP.UGT (Spain), G.W.U. (Malta), ADEDY (Greece), CGT Santé (France), TURK-SEN, KTAMS, PASYDY, FP SEK, FSGE SEK (Cyprus).

There were also representatives from UGTT (Tunisia) and VER – DI (Germany).

EPSU was represented by the General Secretary Carola Fischbach Pyttel and PSI by Jürgen Buxbaum who brought to the meeting the positions of EPSU and PSI on subjects discussed and answered the queries of the participants.

The Minister of Finance of the Republic of Cyprus Michalis Sarris attended the opening session and addressed participants explaining the public service policy of the Cyprus Government.

The Agenda of the Meeting included the following:

- **PSI/EPSU working group. - The role of Med Group within EPSU.**
- **EPSU Campaign and Bolkestein directive - The need to improve the quality of Public Services and the role of trade unions.**
- **Mediterranean Conference - Follow up**
- **Working time directive**
- **The future of the pension schemes and the current challenges - Situation in Cyprus (Public & Private Sector)**
- **Public Utilities / Energy**
- **Coordination of Med Group**

Presentations were made and views were exchanged and proposals made on the line to be followed by the Group on the subjects discussed which will be the line to be followed by the Group and its members in EPSU and in PSI. In this connection the meeting was briefed on the progress made for the merger of EPSU with PSI Europe and unanimously adopted the expressed support for moves which will strengthen unity and promote more effective functions. In particular the Group

underlined that the merging process should strengthen the capacity of the European Federation to defend the role of public services in the European social model all over the EU countries and to extend European social model principles in all the other countries where EC policies influence the future of public services. The Group also expressed the hope for a high integration in the organization of the new European Federation aiming to a concrete synergy in every field. In this way the new organization should realize also scale economies that must be considered in fixing the amount of the affiliation fee.

Of particular interest was the presentation and subsequent exchange of views regarding the so called Bolkestein Directive. A review was made of the EPSU campaign and the developments which followed and it was concluded that the campaign had been successful in intercepting the course of ratification of the Directive as originally promoted. The meeting noted the need for continuing the efforts for achieving the ultimate objective of reducing the fields of application, which still includes SIEG and in particular water, social services, and waste. It was noted that the dangers have not been eliminated since inter alia national governments have submitted amendments to the Directive -which are aiming at the opposite direction - than the aim of the unions and promote privatization of services and other programmes leading to shrinking of the services in the framework of globalization.

It will be necessary to follow the further steps of European Council and Parliament on the Directive.

As a natural prosecution of the European mobilization against the privatization of public services EPSU launched a Campaign for an European legal framework for quality public services. The Group agrees that it is an important challenge for public sector Unions, it is a pro-active strategy that will be supported developing specific initiatives at national level in each country, to give certainty to a legal support for public services and to realize a qualitative improvement of public services especially in regard to water services and health and in this the public sector unions have a special role to play.

It was decided to adopt a plan of action which will contribute to a positive trend during the study by the Commission of the directive which will be tabled for second reading in the European Parliament and in this connection it was underlined that only modifications will be tabled and the danger of retreat is evident.

The meeting recognized the need for mobilization of friendly forces and groups including users of the public services for whom the quality services are a main need.

For the work which was done at the First Mediterranean Conference in Tunisia the meeting expressed its satisfaction and expressed support to the efforts for a follow-up. The representative of Israel regretted the fact that he had not been invited to the Tunisia meeting and it was explained by the organizers that this was impossible but in a future meeting the matter will be examined. The importance was stressed of the meeting in Tunisia as regards major regional problems such as the Palestinian problem and Iraq.

For the working time directive it was clarified that at present there are no prospects for progress but the worries persist especially in regard to the energy and health sectors. In this connection the meeting repeated the firm position of the unions regarding the safeguarding for the workers of the right to rest and protection of health and family life.

The subject of pensions was discussed with the opportunity of the presentation of the pension scheme in Cyprus for the broader public and the private sectors. The problems confronted in the whole of Europe and worldwide were underlined and the need was kept in focus for keeping a vigil in view of the unfavourable dimensions in this field through collective action. Among other measures that could be promoted for solutions the need was pointed out for older ages to be involved in active service as a means for facing the problems from the longer life expectancy and its impact on pensions.

After several changeovers in national unions, the coordination of the Mediterranean Group should be revised by charging a national coordinator for each country.

It was confirmed that the 28th meeting of the Group will be in 2007 and will be held in Spain and the Spanish unions undertook to fix the date.

Nicosia 29 May 2006