



TriPartite Social Summit

16 October 2024

Speaking Points Jan Willem Goudriaan - EPSU General secretary

Spoken word counts.

EPSU is the European Public Service Union, representing 8 million workers delivering public services from central and local public administrations, to utilities and health and social care. Our employers are in the public, non-profit and private sector.

Three points:

First

We expect the Commission to develop a **Public Service Agenda**. This is crucial for a complete concept of EU's competitiveness. Otherwise there is no fundament for many of the policies we advocate. If we do not have for example well-resourced and staffed public administrations at local, regional national and European level, quality judiciaries, and inspectorates for tax, labour, environmental and digital protection, policies cannot be developed and executed, funds not properly distributed and laws not enforced. The proposals to deregulate and simplify are going to make a mess in and of the EU of 27 and potentially 34 or more with even more variation and improper implementation. This contributes to distrust in the public institutions as an OECD survey stressed.

Draghi failed to mentioned the nearly 200 bn Euros needed in our public and social infrastructures to underpin this part of our competitiveness, preparedness and civil protection. His concept of competitiveness must be enlarged to include the development of public services including health, education and child and elderly care, etc.

This public service agenda is needed in all policies. like the Clean Industrial Strategy and other policies from Defense and Space, to pre-enlargement reviews and Digital technologies. Public services allow workers and our communities to realise their human rights, like the right to health and water. They are the embodiment of the right to stay. In Euro speak: EU policies should be benchmarked against the protocol on services of general interests which is an integral part of the Treaty. And what happened with the commitment to the well-being economy ?

Second

Dear Commission President

Former Italian prime minister Letta recognised the risks of an unbalanced European development. He called for **an action plan on services of general interest**. The La Hulpe Declaration of April 2024 echoed the same need to develop our public services.

Dear Commission President – I read your announcement of an **Action Plan on the Pillar of Social Rights** in the Political guidelines and the mission letter as implementing those calls and in developing chapter III of the Pillar to ensure people can enjoy their rights to care, health education water energy and access to other public services. We look forward to discuss this with you and expect the Workprogramme of the Commission for 2025 to include this.

Third

In EPSU we are concerned about the impact of the coordinated austerity policies on workers and communities. We see already an impact on public investment. This will result in less growth and make achieving many objectives of the EU (addressing housing, climate change, realising clean industries and so on) difficult.

And public service workers are confronted with violations of their bargaining rights as governments as employers impose wage freezes despite still high inflation; they see cuts in jobs (which will harm the implementation of policies – think of reducing the nr of firefighters while flooding and forest fires increase) and cuts in spending for education, health etc. In light of mr. Draghi's report, cuts in public investment go against the ambitions of the EU as set out by Letta, Draghi, La Hulpe Declaration and the Commission President's political guidelines. Staffing is a concern throughout our public services. The EU is not prepared for a new pandemic with over 1 million health professionals lacking.

The relentless drive for productivity increases combined with the staffing shortages lead to work overload, stress and burn-outs for hundred thousands of workers. It leads to ill-health and lack of well-being, Eurofound has recorded this for at least 25years. The EU mental health strategy will need to address this: one way is through a Directive on Psycho-Social Risks and we want to see initiative of the Commission to deliver this as soon as possible.

And any plan to address mental health must address also staffing shortages as mental care nurses, psychiatric nurses, therapists and so on are lacking.

Funding for public investment can come from addressing wealth, excessive corporate profits and ensuring Fair taxation policies. It is important that the EU supports Zucmans plan at the G20.

We can deliver for Europe but we need an ambitious strategy to deliver Europe for all.

<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/publications/2023/psychosocial-risks-workers-well-being-lessons-covid-19-pandemic>