



Public Services International  
Internationale des Services Publics  
Internacional de Servicios Públicos  
Internationale der Öffentlichen Dienste  
Internationell Facklig Organisation för Offentliga Tjänster  
國際公務勞運

## **SPEECH OF ROSA PAVANELLI, PSI GENERAL SECRETARY AT EPSU CONGRESS**

**TOULOUSE, FRANCE 20/23 MAY 2014**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

It's my pleasure to introduce the discussion on Resolution n. 3 "Strengthening workers' rights and employment in Europe through collective bargaining, social dialogue and industrial action" and trying to do it from the global perspective that the experience in PSI is teaching me.

Since my election, I have met many affiliates in all the regions. Many PSI members want to know how public services unions in Europe are opposing and fighting for an alternative to the unprecedented attack on workers and unions rights. They recognise that the European unions contributed to building this social model, through collective bargaining and social, which provides the basis for equitable distribution of wealth, including universal access to quality public services. This model is unique, is special, and is the aspiration of many workers in the world. THIS MODEL IS WORTH FIGHTING TO SAVE.

The recognition of the fundamental role of trade unions as social partners has been the instrument to ensure social cohesion and peace in Europe. This has helped overcome the tragedy of two world wars in 30 years and helped forge the identity of the future European Union.

This reality is rapidly changing and is affecting living and working conditions of public services workers as well as private workers, and how the weakening of public services is affecting the quality of life for millions of citizens.

All over the world, the gap between the rich and the poor is widening.

Most of the jobs created in the last two decades are short-term, part-time, temporary, casual or informal, and largely precarious. A majority of these lower paid, less protected workers are women and youth (those lucky enough to even have work).

The share of wages in total income declined over the last two decades whereas the share of profits in national income increased virtually everywhere.

Governments align with international financial institutions and multinational corporations to dismantle labour relations where it will hurt most for future generations: in the public sector.

Isn't this the experience with the IMF before, in many developing countries, and now with "Troika" also in Europe?

Why do governments recognize an entity like Troika which is not even an institution, which doesn't officially exist?

They do because they don't have the courage to impose for themselves the austerity measures and privatization policies and to attack trade union and worker rights.

Substantial categories of public employees are newly denied the right to bargain. PSI affiliates are facing similar challenges across the globe:

- Deregulation and dismantling of public employment:
- De-institutionalization of social dialogue and tri-partism, replaced by discretionary policies: how many of you have had the opportunity to discuss the austerity packages with your governments, or negotiate with private employers employment conditions in recent years?
- De-registration of trade unions and legislation that foresees unreasonably complex administrative rules or penalties for strike action: just ask our UK colleagues.
- Criminalization and prosecution of protest actions and weakening the autonomy of the judiciary: at the 2009 EPSU Congress, *Meryem Özsögüt* from Turkey told us of her terrible experience being imprisoned for her union activity. Today President of DISK and President of PSI/EPSU Turkish affiliates, brother Kani Beko cannot be with us because of the injuries provoked by the police that forced him to the hospital only few days ago

All these facts make Europe more and more similar to the rest of the world, make European trade union experiences closer to those of PSI South Korean, Indonesian, Peruvian or many other affiliates.

The impact of such policies are a perpetuation of inequality, the creation of a class of working poor today and a future of poor pensioners – mostly women – as well as the loss of social mobility which in the last century was the main motor of economic growth.

This is why PSI affiliates around the world are watching the European trade unions, are looking at EPSU with the hope that here we, all together, will be able to resist the attacks and propose an alternative.

And we all know that the alternative is to create decent, stable and sustainable jobs, through investing in public services.

We all know that to reduce inequalities we need to fight, in Europe and globally, to redistribute the wealth through collective bargaining, progressive and fair tax systems as well as ensuring universal access to quality public services.

PSI is leading a global campaign for fair and just taxation. What started as the fight for FTT has grown. Now, even the OECD and the G20 recognise that corporate tax planning, tax avoidance, tax evasion and tax fraud need to be addressed.

In Europe, we need to establish a harmonized system of minimum wages and respect for international labour standards if we want to defeat the social dumping and the marketization of workers.

But when from Portugal to Romania, from Greece to Spain, from Hungary to Estonia the reality is that public services unions are denied the right of collective bargaining, or when public administration and labour reforms aim to reduce unions rights, which social dialogue are we speaking about?

Or when the rules for industrial actions are used to prevent social protest, is it not democracy at stake?

So, I firmly believe that if we are to be successful we need to unveil the hypocrisy of the European Commission and the ECB, and expose their plans to get rid of trade unions rights.

We saw the video on our work in Greece, it is a good example about how powerful our message can be, how strong can be our impact telling the true story of austerity.

I do believe that if we want to be effective in our industrial actions, we all together need to call on the full respect of the right to strike that is threatened by many governments.

In the last years we assisted in placing more and more countries from the EU in the short-list of cases to be discussed in the Committee for the application of Standards during the ILC for violation of trade unions rights.

This year they will include Croatia, Greece and Portugal along with Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Turkey, Uzbekistan.

This suggests that we need to work together to coordinate EPSU and PSI agendas not only for the ratification of ILO conventions, but also their full implementation, included convention 154 on the regulation of collective bargaining and 87 on the right to organize and to strike.

It is a political imperative for our organizations to counter the neo-liberal role that the European Union is playing all over the world where it wants to expand its influence, privatising public services to favour the powerful lobby of European business, as well as weakening labour rights.

What we are doing about Guatemala is a positive example. PSI organised a mission to demonstrate solidarity to our local affiliates, EPSU president Anne-Marie, along with many affiliates from Europe joined this mission and lobbied their embassies to pressure the Guatemalan government to end the impunity of the assassins.

We also organised a meeting at the EP where we demanded that no trade agreement can be implemented with Guatemala without full respect for labour rights.

Now we are implementing a project with all of these unions to help Guatemalan affiliates and to keep the pressure on the Commission and on the Government of Guatemala. We are already seeing results.

South Korea, which wants to deepen trade relations with the EU, while systematically violating the most basic worker rights, is the next target for PSI action.

As we saw this morning, free trade agreements are among the neoliberal tools which the EU is promoting.

PSI is developing new research on sectoral impacts of these trade agreements... We are leading a global coalition of NGOs, jointly organising many regional conferences to : inform and train our members and civil society for action; to lobby trade negotiators and officials; to disseminate concerns in the media...

We are giving profile to secret and complex processes.

As you may know ITUC Congress is coinciding with EPSU congress and a delegation of PSI is also there. Yesterday, PSI was a protagonist in an exciting debate on the new generation of free trade agreements. The debate was focusing on mitigating the impact of these agreements by including labour clauses. The PSI position swung this debate, highlighting that these agreements are not about trade but about privatisation, weakening union rights, and preventing government ability to regulate in the public interest. At the end an electronic poll at ITUC saw 90% of delegates supporting the PSI view.

We need to convince our National centres, the ETUC, the ITUC to be more critical and, together, to influence the global institutions.

As well, PSI and EPSU are jointly defending the rights of workers in privatised services. Just last week, unions from the French multinational GDF-SUEZ met in Chile. Next week the workers of ENEL-ENDESA will meet in Brazil. They are negotiating the implementation of the recently signed global framework agreements.

We must be aware that in front of us there is the battle to reconquer collective bargaining, social dialogue and decent work within Europe. We must be aware that we still have to fight to promote the same values in the rest of the world.

Let's engage in this battle, let's be brave enough to show that we are fighting together as one.

We need boldness to resist the forces which want to divide workers on the basis of national origin, age, gender, public from private, we need boldness to stand up for workers' rights.

We need unity to make the European social model again a reality in Europe and to export it globally.

We need unity to defeat the greed of business and privateers, and I am confident that all together we will be able to win.