

The EPSU agenda and activities in Local and Regional Government

EPSU Firefighters' Network 3 April 2012



I. EPSU and Local and Regional Government Priority -Economic Crisis in Europe-



Current context - lessons from the financial crisis have not been learnt

- ✓ Economic governance package and ‘coordinated austerity’: Public sector workers, older people and unemployed/poor targets of austerity plans
- ✓ EU 2020 strategy lacks positive policies on public services – e.g, Single Market proposals, SGI Communication December 2011
- ✓ Lack of Social Agenda – example of ‘new jobs and skills’ flagship, trade union rights
- ✓ Impact of liberalisation of public services: e.g. high electricity prices and little investment from sector in renewables;
- ✓ EU policies on public procurement and PPPs: bias against ‘in-house’ and in favour of ‘lowest price’

Impact on public sector workers over two years (4Q 2008 to 4Q 2010): examples from EPSU report
 'The Wrong Target' <http://www.epsu.org/a/7109>

Country (public sector)	Change in pay (2 years)	Change in prices (2 years)
Estonia (local government)	-11.6%	+3.2%
Hungary*	-17.2%	+9.7%
Ireland	-4.6%	-4.9%
Latvia	-19.8%	+0.7%
Lithuania	-8.7%	+4.4%
Romania (pub admin)	-26.9%	+12.8%

* Change in composition of public sector

And yet... EU Treaty obligations on public services and fundamental rights

- ✓ Article 9 states “in defining policies and activities *the Union shall take into account* requirements linked to the promotion of high level of employment, the adequate social protection, the fight against social exclusion, and a high level of education, training and protection of human health”.
- ✓ Public Services Protocol on public services calls for a “high level of quality, safety and affordability, equal treatment and the promotion of *universal access* and of user rights.” Article 14 provides legal basis.
- ✓ Charter of Fundamental Rights. Here EC Communication COM (573) states “*legislative and decision making...must be in full conformity with the Charter*” + proposes fundamental rights ‘checklist’ to benchmark EU policy + annual report on application of Charter

EPSU Alternatives to austerity: promoting our Alternatives

- ✓ The **Single Market must contribute** to Social Europe – e.g., not public procurement with sustainability as ‘optional extra’ but sustainable public procurement (labour/green/gender equality clause)
- ✓ Shift economic policy based on ‘small government, low taxation’ – need **public investment**.
- ✓ Shift debate from spending to public income: key to this **progressive taxation** and tax efficiency, financial transaction tax, Eurobonds, and good governance...
- ✓ EPSU **action plan against tax fraud**, linking with job cuts in tax services and naming and dodgers



Next Steps

- ✓ More **coordinated European trade union mobilization** against austerity policies – first organized on 30 November 2011 – ETUC ‘social contract’
- ✓ Challenge EU policy focus on budget consolidation through cuts in public spending
- ✓ Promote discussion on fairer taxation systems (part of LRG/NEA Work Programmes)
- ✓ Pressure EU institutions to use ‘positive’ Treaty provisions on ‘Social Europe’ - public services, fundamental rights, sustainable development

II. The EPSU Local and Regional Government Sector: Standing Committee activities and sectorial social dialogue



The Local and Regional Government Sector in Europe

- Services include—depending on the country— health care, public transport, education, police services, fire services and water, social care, refuse collection, planning, parks, etc.
- Expenditure: 15.5% of GDP in the 27 EU states and 33.9% of total public sector expenditure
- Complexity of the sector: political and institutional, employment status and level of collective bargaining
- Majority of EU states, 23 out of 27 have two or three tiers of local government (exc. BL)
- Employment status: 15 of 27 EU have special employment status, but CZ, PL and SL similar rules to private sector
- e.g. BL, CZ, HU, PL, SL significant responsibility for education and health
- Sector employs 17 million people in Europe
- Sectoral Social Dialogue established since 2004, first informal working group in 1996 between EPSU and CEMR-EP

Sharing of political, administrative and fiscal powers: each country is unique!

Political

legislative power

capacity for policy-making in a differentiated way

Administrative

executive power

implement what other levels of government have decided

Fiscal

capacity to raise taxes

capacity to allocate money to different political priorities

EPSU's LRG Standing Committee

- LRG Committee based on national representation from 30+ European countries
- (1 titular/ 1 substitute per country + observers)
- Chair VISION Sweden and vice-chairs UNISON UK, STAL Portugal
- Meets 2 x year + social dialogue meetings & ad-hoc workshops/conferences
- LRG Committee agenda for last meeting 4 October 2011
 - public procurement
 - social dialogue
 - economic crisis- cuts in public spending in LRG
 - “cultural workers”
 - climate change

Work Programme: Quality services and jobs

- water campaign / citizen initiative
- Link with PSI / PSIRU
- PPPs <http://www.epsu.org/a/4217>
- 8/9 May Local and Regional Conference Riga: “developments and trade union strategies regarding the (re) municipalisation/insourcing of local public services”
- social procurement (Input into Guide on Socially Responsible Procurement)
- climate change

Work Programme: Pay and working conditions

- ‘pay checklist’ – equal pay
- LRG collective bargaining updates with epsucob@NEWS and
- Public Services Monitor - stories about privatisation, QPS <http://www.epsu.org/r/578>
- Input into EPSU ‘decent work’ policy: part-time work, fixed-term contracts, temporary agency work
- LRG checklist on outsourcing <http://www.epsu.org/a/2433>
- Research on eldercare (with HSS committee)

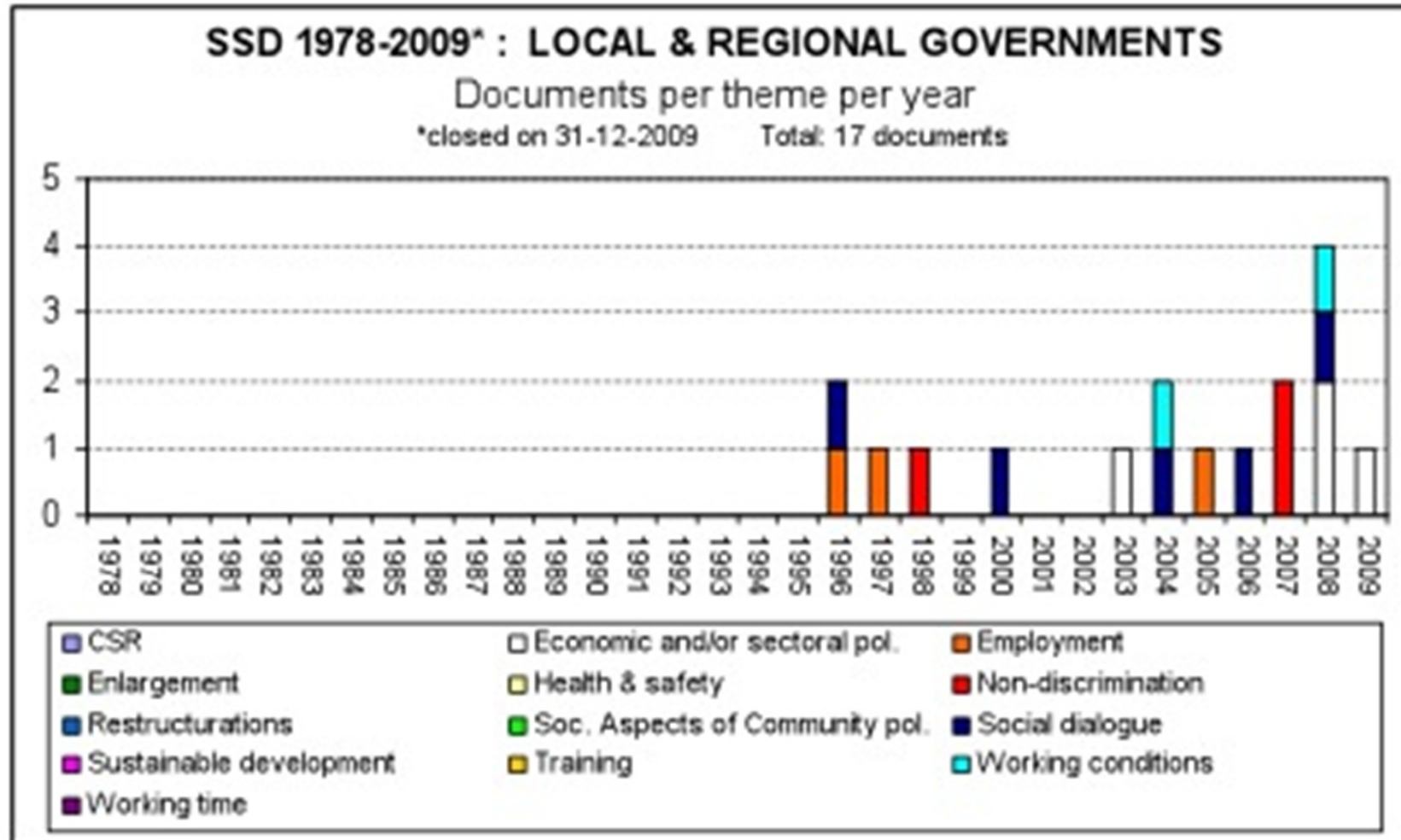


European Social dialogue with CEMR

<http://www.epsu.org/r/3>

- ✓ Impact of economic crisis on LRG (three JS)
- ✓ Promoting social dialogue in the 'new' member states and candidate countries
- ✓ Evaluating experiences in various forms of local service provision (outsourcing / insourcing, PPPs, inter-municipal cooperation)
- ✓ Tackling harassment and violence at work
- ✓ Promoting gender equality and reconciliation of work and family life
- ✓ Active inclusion, migrants, social procurement
- ✓ The future of the workplace (project 2012)

Joint Texts



III. The EPSU Fitefighters' Network



EPSU local and regional government firefighters' network

- “Virtual” network of EPSU members - dedicated webpage <http://www.epsu.org/r/315>
- meetings in 2006 (UK, with FBU) and 2007 (Luxembourg), 2009 (Brussels) 2009, 2010 (Vienna), 2011 (Brussels)
- Common framework for:
 - Organising firefighters, both professional and volunteers
 - Defending the ‘neutrality’ of fire service (fire services are public services)
 - Linking firefighters with the wider trade union movement
 - Exchanging ‘good practices’, pursuing common objectives
- Key documents to date:
 - Working time survey 2006 <http://www.epsu.org/a/2633>
 - EPSU firefighters Charter <http://www.epsu.org/a/3464>
 - Health and safety project with ETUI ‘*Feeling the heat*’

EPSU local and regional government firefighters' network

Ideas for future work?

- Follow-up to 'Feeling the heat' – dissemination / national events / further translation...
- Restructuring / diversification of the fire services
- Pay and working conditions, including working time, pay and pensions
- Standardisation

How to organise?:

- Regular information exchange
- 'Feed' EPSU website
- Future activities



For more information see:
<http://www.epsu.org/r/315>