



Solidarity message: General strike, Romania, 31 May 2010

On behalf of EPSU, representing 8 million public service employees, we express our solidarity for the general strike in Romania on Monday 31 May 2010.

We fully support the opposition of our affiliates to the government's imposed austerity plans following the IMF-led loan as an attempt to respond to the economic crisis.

The plans include the reduction of public sector employees' wages and pensions by 25% and 15% respectively, cuts in public sector jobs by 37 000 and of the child care allowance.

In 17 countries now, including 5 from Eastern Europe outside the EU, governments have resorted to pay freezes, pay cuts, job cuts and recruitment freezes as part of the fiscal consolidation strategies imposed by national governments, often in line with demands from the European Union and the International Monetary Fund. As in Romania, public sector trade unions are fighting back with protests and strike actions planned for the next few weeks as in Italy, Spain, Greece, Portugal and France.

Attacks on the public sector are a narrow, inadequate and unfair response to the economic crisis. Public services are more vital than ever, not just as an important stabilizing mechanism but to provide essential support to the millions of citizens who are suffering the worse consequences of the crisis.

Romania is the second poorest country in the EU, including working poor many of whom are indeed working in the public sector – the current measures will exacerbate this situation especially as inflation is expected to rise beyond 4%. It is also a country faced with chronic prison overcrowding and underfunding that translates in inhumane working and detention conditions. Following an EU decision, 23000 additional repatriated prisoners are expected by the end of the year. In the face of budget cuts, the health and safety of prison staff and inmates will be seriously endangered.

Public sector workers are not calling for privileges but for decent pay and working conditions to provide the services people need! Public sector workers are nurses, carers, teachers, tax collectors, police and prison officers, labour, health and safety inspectors, social protection administrators, etc... not faceless bureaucrats whose low pay can be cut as it pleases governments.

EPSU calls for sound alternative responses, including as a matter of emergency tackling tax fraud, that represent billions of uncollected € in the EU, making taxation fair and progressive so that the wealthiest and large companies pay their fair due to society and help restore Europe's public services, and introducing a tax on all financial transactions.

EPSU will ensure that an alternative approach be communicated at national and European level in the run up to the European Council meeting on 17 June next.

We wish Romania's affiliates a successful strike.

In solidarity

Carola Fischbach-Pyttel

EPSU General Secretary

Please also see general press releases on www.epsu.org