

European Federation of Public Service Unions

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EPSU sends solidarity greetings to striking health workers

(2 October 2014) Following yesterday's demonstrations in Greece, EPSU sends its support to the thousands of hospitals workers who are taking strike action today in defence of the health service and jobs. The strike has been called by the POEDHN health workers' union part of the ADEDY confederation which is extremely concerned about current health reforms which it sees as leading to further privatisation.



The health service has been under sustained attack over the last six years as the policies of the Troika (European Commission, European Central Bank and International Monetary Fund) have led to massive cuts in funding. The Troika called for health spending to be capped at 6% of GDP at a time when the economy has shrunk by 25%.

Spending on mental health services has been cut by more than half at a time when the increase in unemployment and financial hardship is leading to more depression and need for mental health support than ever. Drug rehabilitation programmes have been cut leading to a surge in HIV infections. What would appear to be sensible measures to reduce pharmaceutical costs have led to increased costs for patients and voluntary medical services have sprung up to help deal with the estimated 800000 workers who are no longer covered by medical insurance.

Many hospital employees are now working excessive hours to try to maintain services in the face of staff and funding cuts. EPSU sends them solidarity greetings and support in their continued fight to defend the public health system in Greece.

EPSU General Secretary Jan Willem Goudriaan said: "Five years of austerity are leaving deep wounds in Greek society. Health workers have directly experienced the cuts in services and salaries, but also see how it effects public health. Workers are standing up for public services and people and we will support the many actions against failed economic policy this autumn."

Some background information on the state of the health service in Greece can be found in this article that was published in the UK medical journal *The Lancet* in February this year.

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