

Resolution for the EPSU Executive of 7 and 8 April 2021

For an EU that defends public services for citizens

Signed by CCOO FSC, CCOO sanidad, UGT FeSP, CGT Santé, CGT des Services Publics, FPCGIL, CISL FP, UIL FPL, UILPA

The National Recovery and Resilience Plans (NRP) are a major challenge for the whole of Europe. For the first time in a long time, due to a pandemic that shocked the whole world, the European Union, with the launch of the Recovery Fund resources, discovered itself as a Community in order to face the most serious crisis of the last 100 years. In this context, Europe and European politics are asked to pay the necessary attention to a project of social and economic reconstruction marked by a wide-ranging vision, based on the future and on greater equity, innovation, the reconversion of productive activities with a strong investment in research, digitalisation and organisational innovation of the activities of public administrations, as well as the reconstruction of a universal public social-health system closer to citizens. The crisis has highlighted many dimensions of inequality that create disvalue and must be overcome.

In particular we can't forget that the heaviest bill during this crisis, not only social but also economic, has been paid by women, who represent 76% of the total number of people employed in the health sector, one of the most exposed to Covid-19.

In addition, women are over-represented in essential services that remained open during the pandemic, ranging from sales services to childcare. (In the EU, women account for 82% of all check-out workers and 95% of those employed in domestic and care work). Women also predominate in remote work.

The impact of Covid-19 on women is stark and takes the same direction all over the world.

It should be avoided that one year after the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic this social and economic fallout could trigger long-term impacts on gender equality. The pandemic has made clear what until yesterday was only a complaint: if we do not invest in the public system, society and economy are more exposed to risk. A change of pace means assessing not only how much is spent in public service systems but also the quality of spending and how investments are made, and we must finally overcome the season of linear cuts and austerity, considering that public service can create economic and social value. That is why we need to invest in modernisation and professional training to create public administrations that can respond to user demand by putting workers in safety, stability and organisational well-being. If the public service is promoted as the basis of citizenship because guarantees universal rights, and if investments are made in employment and resources, it will be possible to bring about the necessary change in public services that will make the public the productive and effective lever for meeting community needs, strengthening local service networks to achieve greater social cohesion and effectiveness. The Recovery Fund therefore represents a great opportunity to revitalise and modernise the public administrations, with a focus on gender equality, and to make it fit for the challenges by making it the main instrument for

countering the effects of the economic, social, health and ecological crisis and social and economic inequalities.

For these reasons, we believe, in order to reaffirm the founding and universal values of the Union, that the resources of the Recovery Fund in the EU must guarantee substantial investments to make the rights guaranteed by the public service enforceable.

To do this, we need to modernise public administrations and bring them up to date, with a digitalisation process, but also with a major recruitment campaign, including support for youth employment and stabilisation of precarious employment, to make up for the lack of staff, to ensure stable and no longer precarious employment, to guarantee efficient service in all sectors and to make the public sector attractive for the recruitment of young people.

The pandemic has highlighted many shortcomings: starting with territorial health care system, which must be rebuilt to provide immediate responses to the health needs of citizens; local services that offer a network of assistance in the territories and which must be implemented at this time of serious crisis in which poverty has affected many European citizens; central administrations must be implemented with a process of transformation that leads to the modernisation of systems.

The Recovery Fund is a great opportunity to invest in the public and ensure better services for citizens, but the pandemic must leave a strong lesson that the EU must never forget.

There is no going back, the EU of austerity and fiscal compact can no longer return, the sufferings and frontline battles of all European public workers must make us remember that people come before budgets and profits and that the EU is not based on financial balance but on the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

In the next upswing, which we all hope will be swift, with a universal vaccination campaign that overcomes divisions between states and stops the pandemic once and for all, as workers' representatives we must fight for all people, citizens, workers, communities and our planet to take priority over the profits of a few.