

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Greenwich
Unit of Assessment: (UoA 19) - Business and Management Studies
Title of case study: Establishing social services work as a strategic priority: the case of the European Federation of Public Sector Unions (EPSU)
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Europe needs better social services as its population ages. However, low pay and status are making recruitment and retention difficult. EU public procurement rules are transferring services to the private and not-for-profit sectors where there is limited scope for effective social dialogue. Jane Lethbridge’s research has led EPSU affiliates to understand the trends and realise the importance of European-level action. This awareness informed EPSU’s 2009 Congress decisions, which prioritised future social services social dialogue work. By 2012, EPSU had started to discuss how to support an EU Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee where it will be the trade union social partner.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>European countries need more quantity and quality in formal social care provision. Informal care, previously provided by women, is no longer a reliable source of care because of women’s increased participation in the labour market. Health and social care is one of the European Union’s fastest growing economic sectors, generating about 5% of total economic output (European Commission, 2010). However, the sector faces problems of recruitment and retention because of low pay, the low status of caring as an occupation and poor working conditions. The workforce has a majority of women workers in all countries, who are predominantly low paid. It is also ageing as young people are unsurprisingly reluctant to enter the sector. The shortage of local labour has led to the use of migrant labour in many countries. The need for more and better care is especially pressing in the light of Europe’s ageing population: how to meet the needs of older people is one of the most important political issues facing national governments. Longer life expectancy means higher levels of disability and morbidity, increasing demand for social services.</p> <p>Existing research had focused on local and national situations, and EU-funded research programmes provided country studies with some synthesis of results. What was lacking was a trade union perspective which identified common issues facing social services workers throughout Europe. Research by Jane Lethbridge, a researcher at the Public Services International Research Unit (PSIRU), commissioned by the European Federation of Public Services Unions (EPSU) between 2005 and 2012, established that social services workers are employed by public, private and not-for-profit employers, with a trend for greater provision by private and not-for-profit providers. European level policy has contributed to this trend, in particular the EU public procurement requirements which require public services to be put out to tender, to allow private and not-for-profit organisations to compete.</p> <p>The research was informed by a survey of national health and social services trade unions across Europe which received responses from 18 unions covering the following countries: Nordic countries, UK, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Austria, Germany, France, the Netherlands, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic and Ukraine, which showed that, with some country exceptions, the coverage of social services sector workers is lowest in the private and not-for-profit sectors. Union representation of social services workers is also lowest in these two sectors. The implication of this diverse coverage for trade union action was that social dialogue was necessary if workers and employers were to work together to deliver quality services with improved working conditions. Social dialogue is the essential link between quality social services and pay and working conditions.</p> <p>EPSU represents 270 trade unions from every European country. They cover 8 million public services workers and organised workers in the energy, water and waste sectors, health and social services and local and national administration.</p>
<p>3. References to the research (REF1 submitted staff in bold, **REF2 Output)</p> <p>Provide references to key research outputs, any key research grants, and evidence of the quality</p>

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of the research:

Research outputs:

- 3.1 Lethbridge, J. (2005). *Care services in Europe*. London: Public Services International Research Unit. Available at: <http://gala.gre.ac.uk/id/eprint/3761>
- 3.2 Lethbridge, J. (2007). *Changing care services and labour markets*. London: Public Services International Research Unit. Available at: <http://gala.gre.ac.uk/2977/>
- 3.3 Lethbridge, J. (2011). *Care Services for Older People in Europe - Challenges for Labour*. Public Services International Research Unit. Available at: <http://www.epsu.org/a/7431>
- 3.4 Lethbridge J. (2012) PESSIS – Promoting employers’ social services in social dialogue: Final European Report. *European Federation of Public Service Unions*, Brussels, Belgium. Available at: <http://www.epsu.org/a/9108>

Research grants/ consultancy:

Jane Lethbridge has been commissioned by the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) for the following research projects:

- 3a 2005 Social services 1 – overview €5,000
- 3b 2007 Social services 2 – labour market €5,000
- 3c 2007 Care multinational companies eligible for European Works Councils €2,500
- 3d 2007-8 Social services 3 Child care services in Europe €8,500
- 3e 2010 Care multinational companies eligible for European Works Councils €2,500
- 3f 2010-11 Social services 4 Care services for older people – the challenge for labour €15,000
- 3g 2012 Care multinational companies eligible for European Works Councils €2,500
- 3h 2012 European Coordination of PESSIS research – Mapping social dialogue in the social service sectors in 11 European countries €10,0000 (VS/2011/0428 Project PESSIS ‘Promoting employers’ social services organisations in social dialogue’)

This demonstrates that the EPSU values the research.

Quality of the research:

The report *Care Services for Older People The Challenges for Labour* was reviewed as part of the REF process. Reviewer, Dr. Alison Tierney wrote I “think that this report is really very important in terms of its relevance to the serious matter of how care for the expanding population of older people (especially the old old) is going to be managed in coming decades. Although much is fairly well understood now about the likely type and extent of care needs, there is little (as far as I know) that links this with the available workforce, and so it is the analysis of the issues relating to labour (and especially the female workforce, and the ongoing shift to home care) that is original – and very important – in this piece of work. This report makes recommendations about how good quality and secure employment in the eldercare sector could be secured in the EU, and this Report really deserves to make an impact on debates and on policy”.

4. Details of the impact

European Union (EU) legislation and policy has powerful repercussions for national governments and their people. The European Federation of Public Sector Unions (EPSU) recognised more than ten years ago that many of the problems faced by workers in the social service sector were common across Europe and were being exacerbated by EU policy. Research by Jane Lethbridge, presented during four seminars between 2005 and 2009, led EPSU affiliates to realise that EU public procurement rules in particular, which require governments to open up public services to competition from profit and not-for-profit providers, were having a negative impact on employees. They began to understand that quality services depended on improved working conditions, training and registration. Supported by Lethbridge’s research at each step, EPSU is now exploring how it can support a Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (SSDC) for the social services sector. SSDCs are an important governance tool and pillar of the European social model: the European Commission (EC) established them to promote dialogue between employers and workers in order to agree social policy. An SSDC can improve terms and conditions for social care workers which will benefit recruitment and retention in the sector and in turn drive up standards of care. In short, Lethbridge’s research has exerted a pull on the levers that slowly but surely turn the great wheels of European governance, which affects the lives of millions.

EPSU moves to strengthen industrial relations and social dialogue

This awareness by EPSU affiliates informed motions and subsequent decisions at the 2009 EPSU Congress, which agreed that EPSU priorities should include organising, lobbying, mobilising, policy development and social dialogue in several areas of social services. Congress agreed specifically to:

10: *“Strengthen industrial relations in the health care and social services sectors at European, national, regional and local level, and set up joint activities and projects with relevant employer organisations.”*

11: *“Promote the implementation of cross-sectoral and sectoral European Social Dialogue texts.”*

14: *“Build on the existing work and networks in the area of social services and develop further activities to strengthen trade union and EPSU involvement in the area of social services”.*

This was the first time an EPSU congress had given such specific emphasis to working with different types of social services. **Congress resolutions were translated into a work plan for social services work, which union officers had to implement. The resolutions changed the way EPSU operated in relation to the social services sector.** More staff time and resources were devoted to working with social services affiliates and collaborating with non-governmental social services organisations.

To inform the development of the EPSU social services strategy, in November 2009 Lethbridge presented a review of EPSU’s actions on social services since 2005. She stressed the importance of developing a European strategy which recognised some sub-sectoral differences, eg childcare and social care, and that development of social dialogue should be the next priority, which would have to involve identifying and working with social partners.

Research on care for older people makes case for European-level social dialogue

In April 2010, following the EPSU Congress recommendation for work with specific social services, Lethbridge was commissioned to research social services for older people, mapping types of social services and providers for older people by country; identifying employment trends and industrial relations, and identifying issues for trade union strategies. In October 2010 she presented results of the research: ‘Care Services for Older People in Europe – Challenges for Labour’^{3,4} to both the EPSU Local, & Regional, Government Health and Social Services Committees, with EPSU affiliates from across Europe attending. She recommended that EPSU should explore the development of social dialogue in the care sector at European level, building on national and local arrangements.

EPSU plans a Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee

In 2011, EPSU became part of the EC-funded project PESSIS (Promoting employers’ social services organisations in social dialogue), working with partners in the non-governmental sector. This was a significant step in establishing partnership working in social services, with the potential for social dialogue. The PESSIS project contracted Lethbridge to coordinate national researchers mapping social dialogue in the social services sector in 11 European countries. Lethbridge presented the results to the EPSU Health and Social Services Committee in October 2012, which then discussed the options for a future European social services dialogue committee. This represented an important development in EPSU social services work. EPSU has moved from raising awareness with affiliates about the need for work on social services, to discussing how to support a European level sectoral social dialogue committee where it will be the trade union social partner.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact**EPSU Adopted Resolutions EPSU 2009 Congress - Health and Social Services section**

<http://www.epsu.org/a/5535>

Lethbridge J. (2012) PESSIS – Promoting employers’ social services in social dialogue Final European Report

http://www.socialserviceseurope.eu/images/pessis/Documents/Reports/pessis%20pdf_small.pdf

The 2012 PESSIS Final- Promoting employers’ social services in social dialogue European Report was commissioned by an alliance of organisations, including EPSU, which was exploring how to set up a Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for the social services sector. This was the first step for EPSU in working towards setting up a Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee at European level

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and the report was the product that came from this first step.

Deputy General Secretary, European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)

Jan Willem Goudriaan has been Deputy General Secretary of EPSU since 2001 and has a detailed knowledge of how EPSU has increased its work on social services issues. He was present at the 2009 Congress and is aware of the value of my work to EPSU.

Previous Head of Health (now Assistant General Secretary, UNISON) and previously EPSU Chair of Health and Social Services Committee 2006-11

Karen Jennings was Chair of the EPSU Health & Social Services (HSS) Committee during the period 2006-2011 and observed the increased focus on social services work as a result of my research reports. She understands the significance of moving the HSS Committee to address social services issues.

General-Secretary, EASPD (European Association of Service Providers for People with Disabilities)

Luk Zelderloo has worked in partnership with EPSU, through the PESSIS project, and appreciates EPSU's commitment to social services social dialogue. He is aware of the significance of the changes that EPSU has made and he is familiar with the quality of my research.