

European Conference: In defence of public and universal health service and social protection

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Last November in Katowice (Poland), a European conference was held on the defence of public health and social care systems. It was decided to call a new conference which will be held on May 12-13 in Paris, to continue our analysis and establish joint mobilizations.

Everywhere in Europe, the crisis of national debt is used as an excuse to attack public hospitals, welfare, patients, and health workers. As a result we see reduced access to health care for the poorest, closures of beds, services, and even hospitals, acceleration of hospital privatization, increased taxation of patients, or like in Poland, the replacement of employee status with self-employed status or imposing 'garbage contracts' outside of labour legislation.

This means the rejection of public finance system and social security in favour of private insurance benefits. In Britain, the sweeping "reform" will break up the National Health Service, create a competitive market and far-reaching privatisation of health services, alongside £20 billion cuts in the health budget.

In all European countries, different austerity measures in health services aim at dismantling the egalitarian social solidarity systems. This is one further example of how governments make the workers and society pay for the economic crisis they have created. This demonstrates the importance of an international resistance to privatizations and austerity policies.

The Polish government's decision to replace employee status with self-employed status is a danger for all Polish workers but it also represents an laboratory test which could spread over all European countries.

This situation needs common action by health workers, patients, citizens, national resistance and solidarity in defence of public health and social security system, and international initiatives to defend universal access to an egalitarian solidarity health system.

There is a choice between the needs of a public health service and those of private bankers. We have already chosen: equal access to a free health system, the democracy of a public health system, public finances instead of private profits.

The appeal for this conference is supported by:

Free Trade-Union 'August 1980' (Poland),

National Trade-Union of Nurse and Midwife – Silesia (Poland)

Trade union OZZPSR – National Union of Workers of the Emergency Service (Poland)

KZZPRM – Trade Union of Medical Rescue Employees (Poland)

SUD Santé Sociaux trade-union (France)

Health Emergency (Britain)

National Coordination of Committees to Defend Hospitals and Maternities of Proximity (France)

Coordination Santé Solidarité Gironde (France)

Union Syndicale des Psychiatres – Trade Union of Psychiatrists (France)

Initiative of Women against the Debt (Greece)

Federation of the Hospital Doctors of Greece (ONTE)

People Health Movement (PHM)

Tip Dernegi – Medical Association (Turkey)

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