



PSI Global Labour Remunicipalisation Workshop

“Union strategies to bring public services back in-house”

4-5 December 2018 | Room IV – ILO | Geneva Switzerland

Languages: EN, FR, ES

CONCEPT NOTE

BACKGROUND

There is a growing body of research that shows that cities, communities and in some cases states are bringing back public services from private to public ownership and management due to the failure of privatisation to keep its promises in term of cost effectiveness, service quality and user access. Research also points to the poor working and labour rights conditions of workers employed in privatised public services.

In 2017 [research by the Transnational Institute](#) counted 832 cases in water, energy, waste, transport, health and social services and education. Each remunicipalisation case is unique due to specific local and national jurisdictions, political systems and social movements that underpin it. Trade unions and labour are involved in these processes, either by accompanying their members during the transition, or being part of the social movement or campaign that prompted the shift. In some cases, trade unions are leading these processes by knowing and showing local government, service users and workers the benefits of reclaiming public services in the public interest.

PSI policy supports and encourages remunicipalisation. However, it acknowledges that it is a complex process and that workers and trade unions have specific concerns relating to terms and conditions of employment in the transition. In many jurisdictions, it is neither easy nor clear how to move the workforce from the private sector to the public sector. In others there are clear laws that regulate such transition. There may be legal barriers to hiring staff directly from the private operator into government service. Additional concerns relate to transferring pension funds, salaries and entitlements, job descriptions, career paths, seniority, etc. It may be that unions only represent private or public sector workers, so could stand to lose membership in a remunicipalisation.

OBJECTIVES

The growing experience trade unions are accumulating in this field represents a valuable body of knowledge to tap into to learn from each other and successfully address challenges while avoiding common mistakes. Yet, the labour angle of remunicipalisation is clearly under-researched.

This workshop aims at filling that gap, bringing together the contributions of PSI trade union representatives from four continents and distilling lessons learned, to build the capacity of trade unions to engage confidently in remunicipalisation processes, the other side of anti-privatization campaigns.

Drawing on the analysis of concrete remunicipalization cases, the workshop aims to address the following issues:

- Identify the key elements of a remunicipalisation campaign
- Options for dealing with questions of employment, related conditions and workers' rights in the transition
- How a remunicipalisation campaign can become an organizing and growth opportunity for trade unions
- Trade union and civil society alliances in support of social mobilisation and progressive change
- Preparing for the reaction of private operators
- Legal considerations



Contributions will feed into research for a trade union Remunicipalisation Toolkit.

This workshop is open to PSI affiliates and their allies.

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