



PSI Local and Regional Government Global Network

Session #2: Anglophone Europe / Inter America

6 April 2022

DRAFT REPORT

Welcome and opening remarks

Daria Cibrario, PSI Local and Regional Government Officer, opened the meeting and welcomed participants.

She briefed that is the PSI sectoral cross-regional policy forum for all PSI affiliates representing LRG workers and union representatives worldwide, established by its Charter in 2016 in Brussels. This was made in compliance with resolution 34 of PSI's 2012 Congress. This contact group is now planned for twice a year in order to strengthen joint work at regional and global level.

Rosa Pavanelli, PSI General Secretary, presented her opening remarks via video recording:

Rosa shared her concerns over the current global situation; the continuing effects of the pandemic and the war in Ukraine which has led to the end of the geopolitical balance that resulted from the end of the Second World War. The crisis is affecting the social, economic, and political system globally. Rather than being the solution, the neoliberal model has instead caused increased inequality and injustice throughout the world. This is the moment to reconsider the overall economic and political model and end the colonial system. The multilateral system must be strengthened to stop a few super powers governing the world. Local and regional governments are fundamental for providing all services that people need. It is vital to create a substantial policy that local governments are the common house of the community where the fundamental rights of the person can find satisfaction. Rosa recalled PSI's campaigns, including against privatisation, for tax justice, and most recently to support the waiver of intellectual property rights for vaccines. Medicines, and all technological facilities that can help to produce vaccines. She stated that strong innovation is needed to confront the challenges ahead and concluded that it is important to establish alliances with civil society and progressive organisations, and especially with local authorities that are working to create the changes needed.

Daria informed that the full action plan for the local government sector, presented last December at the end of the cycle of consultations called LRG Next, is available along with a one page summary. Comments are welcome. She also stressed that participation in the session would be very welcome.

Item §1. **LRG Workplan & Activities 2022 - Part #1**

1. Assessment of LRGNext2021

Global LRG Network Action Plan 2022

- **Assessment of LRGNext2021**

Daria reported on the results of the LRGNext 2021 Consultation Series. Six thematic policy consultations were held on difference themes. PSI delivered ten PSI background policy briefs as discussion papers. 26 responses were received on the survey that was circulated for feedback.

Hazel Ripoll, PSI Campaigns Associate, provided highlights of the [LRGNext 2021 Survey Results](#):

Overall participation of 453 people, with 228 people attending one or more sessions, with an average of 75 attendees per session. Participants included 129 representatives of 98 PSI affiliated unions, 43 staff members and 56 attendees from civil society and other organisations. Representatives of PSI affiliates in 55 countries attended the series.

Daria noted that the geographical spread of participation was uneven PSI are aware of the need to make participation easier for Latin American affiliates in particular.

Daria informed that [all the material developed](#), including video recordings, summary outcomes and finalising the design of all [policy briefs](#) and all these resources will be made available on the main PSI website.



PSI Local and Regional Government Global Network

- **Global LRG Network Action Plan**

This process has also taken stock of the work carried out by PSI in the sector between 2016-2021 and issued an [Action Plan](#) 2022-2027 that represents the roadmap for the work of PSI and affiliates

The draft LRG Action Plan was presented on 3 February the closure of LRGNext2021, has been circulated and comments and feedback are welcome. Daria thanked those affiliates who have taken the time to provide feedback especially Vision, JICHIRO and the FNV Overheid.

Questions and comments:

John Richards, UNISON UK, gave his support to the Action Plan and added that affiliates should take opportunities to try to create a new local government sector plan of action for the future.

Daria added to John's statement that it must happen as a global force. The aim is that adhesion to the Action Plan will make it trickle down into daily reality and back. Daria stressed that feedback on the Action Plan would be very welcome and that the programme is evolutive, and will be the compass to guide LRG work for the next five years and will also guide the PSI Programme of Action for the World Congress 2023.

2. Thematic Workshops & Activities 2022

Daria briefed that the [Calendar of Activities and Events](#) for 2022 has been circulated.

Local Public Services Funding was a clearly priority that emerged from discussions. Accessing a regular stream of public resources remains a major challenge for most LRGs worldwide.

Two key reasons that make public funding critical for unions and workers:

1. Without it there is no local government employment and working conditions are poor.
2. Communities, rural and urban, do not have the means to provide equitable access to quality public services without public funding. This is a key determinant of social injustice and inequality.

Therefore, PSI will hold two online thematic working groups on this theme that will look at municipal and regional public banks and also socially responsible public procurement:

1. 12 May 2022
2. 28 September 2022

PSI will send out a pre-registration form for anyone interested in contributing.

Dr Thomas Marois, SOAS/University of London, presented a report on Public Banks:

Public banks can exist as important legacy institutions that can be significant organisations in the interest of workers and communities. A public bank is owned by public authorities and can also be public in terms of governance and mandate. They can be focused on specific purposes or be universal. There are over 900 public banks worldwide, which have control of over \$49 trillion of assets.

Prospects for workers and unions:

- Decarbonisation. Globally, public banks have been engaging in important projects such as decarbonisation and green transitions. They can of course be contradictory, for example the Chinese Development Bank is one of the leading investors in green technology, but also investing in things without community consent or consultation. Trade unions and communities must claim and shape public banks in their interest.



PSI Local and Regional Government Global Network

- Definancialisation. Can take flows of global capital and fix them within communities and direct them towards community development, for example the North Dakota Bank pulls together flows of capital and try to fix them within their jurisdiction.
- Democratisation. Public banks should be a site of economic democracy. Thomas gave the example of Banco Popular in Costa Rica which is a radical and inclusive democracy led by the Assembly of Working Men and Women, which consists of 290 representatives from ten social sectors. The partnerships formed by the bank, such as with Coopelesca, shows how public partnerships can be facilitated through finance.

Trade unions must ensure public banks be in the interest of the public; they need to claim and democratise them. This is a necessary condition of any transition to a more sustainable and equitable global economy.

Daria confirmed that Thomas will develop a policy brief for workers and trade unions on public banks as part of the working groups.

Questions and reactions:

Oscar Rodriguez, PSI Sub-regional Secretary for Central America and Mexico, thanked Thomas for his fantastic summary on Banco Popular and community development in Costa Rica. He confirmed that the bank is successfully recognised globally as an efficient and competitive bank, whilst still fulfilling its social role.

Sandra Massiah, PSI Sub-regional Secretary for the Caribbean, asked Thomas' thoughts on the credit union movement's involvement in public banks. **Thomas Marois** responded that there is some fear among cooperative financial institutions, or credit unions, particularly in Canada, that public banks could be a threat to them. However, public banks can be very useful for the scale in which they can operate, and they should channel these into institutions on the ground; it should be a collaborative relationship, not a competitive one.

Gerardo Juara, AGOEC Argentina, noted that international data must be considered and stressed the importance of union alliances and cross-sectoral strategies. He also referred to the difficulties in the global south surrounding corruption. **Thomas Marois** agreed that the challenge of public banks in the global south is the cost of credit and overall indebtedness. Public banks cannot resolve that problem, but there are opportunities for greater public collaboration in this regard. A strength of public banks is that they can become a tool through which financial resources within communities can circulate within the same space, rather than being extracted to the global north. They must be democratised and made transparent in order to struggle against corruption.

Jennifer Porcari, AFT Public Employees USA, noted that AFT member in North Dakota depend on the public bank there for funding of public education and find it very useful, especially in the context of Dakota being a very conservative state.

George Poe Williams, National Health Workers' Union of Liberia, asked whether it would be possible, in areas where there are no public banks, for trade unions and civil society organisations to collectively demand corporate social responsibility and negotiate to make recommendations on public funds. **Thomas Marois** responded positively that the aim is to use financial resources that are the public's, and finding institutional means to pool them together and deploy them for public purpose. This is at the essence of the existence of public banks.

Thomas Hanna, The Democracy Collaborative, gave a report on Community Wealth Building:

The Democracy Collective work theoretically and practically to rethink and redevelop local economies around alternative models. The current project is Public Services and Community Wealth Building; Leveraging the Power and Potential of Public Services to Create Stable and Prosperous Local Economies. Public services are



PSI Local and Regional Government Global Network

intrinsically related to the health of local economies. As such, public services and public sector unions have an opportunity to play a role in community economic development.

Community wealth building directly contrasts with, and has emerged in response to, the dominant form of economic development that developed during the neoliberal period which focuses on private solutions. Community self-determination is central to community wealth building, so will look different in each community. Publicly owned assets are critical to building more democratic and equitable local economies. So growing and stabilising public services is a key community wealth building goal. Public services are also known as anchor institutions so can play an important role in further incentivising and supporting further democratic changes to the economy. There are three categories of action that anchor institutions can take:

1. Workforce development – insourcing of jobs and contracts.
2. Real and financial assets – local productive investments, and providing land and facilities.
3. Procurement and spending – purchasing from public, local, non-profit sources.

Not a single community wealth building project has supported the outsourcing of public service jobs. Some of them have great track records of insourcing or democratising services.

Questions and comments:

John Richards, commented on the difficulties that unions have experienced in directing pension investments in the public interest. **Thomas Hanna** responded that there is growing awareness globally of the power of public sector pension funds and how they have been misused to abuse rather than support workers over the past 40 years. This is critical to community wealth building, who must think about what to invest in and advocate for worker and community voices to be more in control of assets.

Steve Joseph, DPSU Dominica, noted that the credit union within the subregion has been a bedrock of community wealth building. However, small credit unions are now amalgamating with bigger cooperatives, such as the National Cooperative Credit Union. There is now more competition to be elected onto boards, which brings a risk of communities losing a hold of the processes and their participation in the governance of these institutions.

Helene Davis Whyte, Jamaica Association of Local Government Officers, confirmed that there are similar trends in Jamaica; Jamaican credit unions and cooperatives are amalgamating, claiming that it is so they can meet requirements of new government legislations that treat them as ‘normal’ banks. She agreed with Steve that this takes away the orientation and organisation of smaller credit unions. They are now almost mirror organisations of banks, so will they remain relevant? **Thomas Hanna** responded that the power of public services must be connected to other interventions in other parts of the economy that will support communities. He agreed with Thomas Marois’ earlier statement that public banks are not a threat to credit unions, they help to support them, as seen in the far more robust and stable banking system created in North Dakota.

Daria reminded the meeting of two other PSI LRG Thematic Workshops and encouraged participation:

1. 14 June 2022 – Remunicipalisation /in-sourcing : trade union strategies.
2. 14 September 2022 – Occupational Safety and Health in the LRG Sector.

PSI will send out a pre-registration form for anyone interested in contributing.



PSI Local and Regional Government Global Network

Item §2. LRG Updates & Actions from the Regions - Part #1

Daria invited affiliates and PSI Regions and Subregions to highlight the current challenges, union actions and activities currently ongoing in the LRG sector in their communities, countries, regions and subregions.

John Richards briefed the meeting on the current situation in the UK:

For over a decade, the government held wages down and profited from mass employment due to EU freedom of movement. Since leaving the EU, many European workers have left the UK so there is now a crisis of employment. Another major issue for the UK is the cost of living crisis. UNISON will be running a cost of living campaign over the current months and are hopeful to get more traction than in previous years, which could potentially allow trade unions to make higher demands.

Everline Aketch, PSI Sub-regional Secretary for English-speaking Africa, briefed on current challenges in the subregion:

- Decreased local revenue collection means governments are struggling to deliver quality public services.
- Privatisation of some essential services. Remunicipalisation is needed in order to attain smart cities.
- Low pay. In countries such as Nigeria, workers can go without pay for six months at a time.
- Crackdown on organisation of unions by some governments.
- High redundancy and retirement, coupled with freezes in new recruits within local governments, is leading to work overload for the remaining workers.

The region is currently running a project focusing on waste management in Tanzania, sponsored by FORSA. The government remunicipalised waste services in Dar es Salaam City, so this could be a pilot to see if it could be brought in in other countries.

Sandra Massiah informed the meeting of updates from the Caribbean subregion:

The Caribbean LRG Steering Group decided to focus work on affiliates from territories with defined constitutions or legislation for local elected government systems, as many other territories have either no recognisable government structure, or an informal one. Affiliates in three countries were identified to take the lead in LRG work; two in Jamaica, and one each in Dominica and Belize. There is a strong relationship in each of these countries with the national trade union structures, as well as the pivotal role that these affiliates play in their own countries.

Sandra confirmed that the priorities in the PSI Global Action Plan are all of varying importance in the Caribbean subregion, though the overarching issue is public financing. The Steering Committee have identified specific areas of focus, though it is clear that they are all cross-cutting and are linked to PSI's priorities. She concluded by noting that 12 of 20 Caribbean countries are classified as high income countries, which means that they are not directly eligible for projects. Therefore, the subregion has used its own internal resources and chartered their own paths to realise PSI goals.

Phillip Tate, Public Service Union of Belize, informed that the pandemic brought lots of issues to the fore at the municipal level in Belize. The government are aiming to fulfil their commitment to raise the minimum wage to 5 Dollars Belize per hour.

Nadia Lambert-Britto, NUGFW Trinidad and Tobago, briefed on the current reform bill being debated in Trinidad and Tobago, which proposes that property tax go to funding local governments, rather than funding coming from central government. The government has not engaged with unions over their concerns and have not mentioned what will happen to the current local government workforce. **Daria** thanked Nadia for highlighting this key issue; that trade unions should be involved whenever there is fiscal reform to ensure that it is progressive.

Steve Joseph added that several Caribbean island are in different stages of legislative reform; this links closely to issues including autonomy, funding, and democratisation of local governments. He also noted that since Hurricane Maria in 2017, the Dominican government have worked on a climate resilient recovery plan, which



PSI Local and Regional Government Global Network

focuses heavily on clean energy. Thanks to this costs of energy will ultimately decrease and benefit local people. Trade unions and civil society should have a stake in this, despite the government picking its own advisory board. **Daria** requested a copy of any reports on this so that the University of Glasgow can add it to their insourcing and remunicipalisation database.

Steve Porter, Sub-regional Secretary for North America, informed the meeting of the Education Support and Cultural Workers meeting on 12 April 2022. The network has drafted manifestos and presented them to the ILO and UNESCO. UNESCO will be hosting its Higher Education Conference on 18-20 May 2022, which occurs only every ten years. The Education Support and Cultural Workers will be presenting a declaration calling for greater attention to be paid to the work of higher education support workers. He added that privatisation is a constant problem which continues to impact education and cultural support workers.

Jennifer Pocari, American Federation of Teachers, noted that the US are preparing for a huge wave in retirement of public sector employees, and unions are working to make a good recruitment and retention plan to avoid privatisation of essential services in response to this. They are also trying to get funding to support the weak public infrastructure in the US.

Robert Ramsay, CUPE-SCFP updated the meeting on the upcoming review of the Canada Infrastructure Bank, which Canadian colleagues are framing a response to in collaboration with Thomas Marois. The Canadian government are due to move forward on long-awaited projects to expand healthcare coverage and some potential labour-rights gains.

Item §3. LRG Workplan & Activities 2022 - Part #2

2. Thematic Workshops & Activities 2022 (continued)

Daria informed the session of important upcoming events:

- 17-21 May 2022 – Africities Summit (Kisumu, Kenya).
- 26-30 June 2022 – UN World Urban Forum 11 (Kavotice, Poland).
- 27-30 June 2022 – Shifting narratives – the political economy of public services, spending, and production (London, UK, and hybrid).
- 10-14 October 2022 – UCLG World Congress (Dojeon, South Korea, and hybrid).
- 28 November – 4 December- TNI Future is Public Conference 2022 (Recoleta, Chile, and hybrid).

Local governments are not recognised in the UN multilateral system or in international diplomacy and negotiations. Therefore, LRG unions' natural employer counterpart is not represented at the ILO. UCLG unites many of these institutions, with whom PSI have developed a good working relationship. PSI negotiated a memorandum with UCLG Africa a memorandum for cooperation and dialogue between local government employers and workers to advance quality public services and to advocate jointly in national and international fora in favour of adequate public funding for local government. So, there are opportunities to facilitate dialogue with regional chapters. **Daria** encouraged regions to be looking at organisations that represent local government employers at a pan-regional level; PSI will provide assistance if necessary.

WUF 11 takes place every two years, but is also a long term process that looks at the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, which is the outcome of the Quito Habitat 3 Conference 2016. It makes sense for workers to be involved in these processes. PSI have teamed up with Building and Woodworkers International Union and International Transport Federation and will work on the event together.

Edmundo Werna – World Urban Forum 11, gave the following presentation on why public workers should participate in the World Urban Forums:



PSI Local and Regional Government Global Network

1. Enhance the role of public workers at the central stage to give them more attention and support. 20th century onwards, the role of labour in urban development began to fade, linked to neoliberal policies. Decisions made by policy makers in local development impacts workers.
2. WUF are a magnet for LRGs. Members of the UN are central governments, but in WUF mayors and local representatives also attend, so it is an opportunity to liaise, making voices heard, and exchange knowledge.
3. Decision-makers about investments and policies influence the lives of public workers, so WUF are a good opportunity to advocate with these decision makers.
4. Need to concentrate in a few key meetings. There are now thousands of events every year but the WUF are the largest in the world so they deserve priority attention.
5. Debunk myths. The way urban development evolved included some myths that need to be addressed, including that investment is needed in equipment rather than labour, and the romanticisation of informal work and unpaid labour, when in reality it is far more ethical to pay good salaries. This can be done via presence in the WUF and engaging in debates. These myths prevail with decision makers in urban developments. Trade unions must counteract this and make decision makers understand the importance of workers. Decision makers also need to understand that without decent work cities cannot prosper.

George Poe Williams, noted that in Liberia, community health workers still sometimes have to work for free and are used as informal backup staff. WHO must understand that these workers' rights are being abused.

David Kapihah, ILO Regional LRG Studies, updated the meeting on the progress of the ILO research on working conditions of subnational level governments in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America:

Objectives:

- Develop comprehensive global analysis of working conditions of subnational government workers.
- Shed light on rights and working conditions, vocational training and qualification systems.
- Explore the role that national government frameworks have in ensuring local governments have the appropriate consequences and means to ensure decent working conditions, and reliable employment for subnational workers.

Current status of the studies being conducted in four regions:

- For Africa and Europe, the first drafts were received and commented on by ILO and PSI. The second drafts were received and are being reviewed internally and will be shared to PSI for input. The aim is to share the study for comments ASAP.
- In Asia the participating countries are still being decided and proposals for consultants are being received, with the aim of hiring consultants by late May 2022.
- In Latin America the study has been finalised and is on the ILO website.

Findings of the Latin America study:

- Data and statistics do not provide a clear distinction between different levels of government. Government is still regarded as general public administration, so this poses challenges to qualify the number of workers in subnational governments. Most countries are 3-tiered; permanent workers are the majority, then temporary fixed term contracts, and finally outsourcing is an increasing trend.
- Wages are lower for local governments than workers in central governments.
- Female workers are concentrated in the education and health sectors. They have the worst working conditions and salaries of all sectors.
- Several Latin American countries have not ratified all of the fundamental ILO conventions.
- National legislation against violence and harassment exists but is not usually accompanied by adequate mechanisms to lodge and hear complaints or accompanying sanctions.



PSI Local and Regional Government Global Network

Daria informed that the report on Latin America has been shared but only in Spanish.

Item §4. LRG Updates & Actions from the Regions - Part #2

Luis Monje, PSI Project Officer, gave a brief overview of the UD strategy of PSI and how it relates to LRG:

Union Development supports PSI's global and regional priorities. There are currently over 50 externally funded projects around the world at global, regional, sub-regional, and national level. The main contribution is to strengthen local ownership and participation of projects. It is crucial to maintain active participation from PSI affiliates. There is big potential for the LRG sector in the future of PSI projects.

Five main umbrellas of focus; trade unions rights, health and social care, defending public sector from privatisation, building QPS and climate change, and sectoral growth and capacity building.

The UD team have identified six main milestones:

1. How the Covid 19 pandemic has shown the value of essential public services.
2. Public investment in local public services. Try to change mindsets and reverse this trend.
3. Sustainable development goals cannot be achieved without participation of public service workers.
4. How to support public services workers in organising and unionising.
5. People over profit and remunicipalisation.
6. How to support through social dialogue and networks.

Luis stressed that it is essential that affiliates be aware of and participate in PSI projects with civil society movements and local governments, and encouraged ideas for future projects.

Luis introduced a new colleague in the PSI UD team, **Aisha Bahadur**, who added that unions are about organising; networks are great but unions must inspire each other and take action to the ground.

Daria noted that the LRG five year action plan has been given to the UD department to obtain alignment between objectives set by LRG affiliates and the projects on the ground.

Juan Diego Gómez Vasquez, provided an update on the U2U project:

The project aims to recover the importance of public services in societies by looking at best practices, with a view to supporting SDO's in complex situations. To date, the project has put in place a training process, shared experiences, and identified 20 successful cases in Latin America which contribute to fair societies. These cases will be uploaded to a digital platform so they can become a reference point for the formulation of public policies at municipal and local level. The interactive digital platform will include information and training videos. It is currently only available in Spanish, though it is hoped to add information in English and Portuguese. The project calls for joint work with social organisations; these alliances and partnerships should be strengthened.

Laura Maffei, Consultant for the Just Transition Project in Latin America, noted that it is important for affiliates to share their projects as there are so many lessons and inspirations available.

Juan Camilo Bustamante, ASEMUCH CHILE, commented on the historic time currently being lived through in Chile. Unions are working hard and going back to topics that they were unable to fill under past governments. They have been actively participating in the process of issuing a new constitution. Thanks to PSI, a movement in support of quality public services gathered over 15,000 signatures. Juan added that public banks are an interesting concept and with the new constitution the situation is hopeful that public companies could be created, as it is currently very difficult in Chile. Finally, he reminded participants of the TNF Future is Public Conference in Recoleta at the end of the year.

Oscar Rodriguez asked if it would be possible to have more time for regional analysis regarding the situation of local governments in Latin America and the Caribbean in order to share experiences and good practices.



PSI Local and Regional Government Global Network

Daria suggested organising a workshop on the topic which could include speakers from UCLG and unionised companies.

SAVE THE DATE

19 October 2022: LRG Global Network (#2) One single virtual session 1-5.30pm CET

Daria thanked all participants for their contributions the meeting.