

## **Orpea Workers are organising across borders**

(11 May 2017) Workers in the French social services multinational, Orpea, recently came together in Brussels, in order to better coordinate their struggles for better pay and conditions.

The meeting, which took place on 4 and 5 May, followed on from a series of events organised by the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), which represents care workers in the public, non-profit and private sectors across Europe. EPSU is building networks of workers in multinationals that provide social services.

Those working in the Orpea's care homes shared their experiences and discussed what their unions can do to get a better deal for employees in the group. Attendees noted that multinationals like Orpea are expanding in order to provide more care services across Europe, meaning workers need to now coordinate across national borders. These developments present challenges to unions, in terms of language and cultural differences. Participants in the meeting received training on how to overcome these problems and take strength from the diversity of experience in different countries.

There is a trend across Europe towards greater private provision of our vital care services. Unfortunately, those working for these private outfits are often on the short end of companies' push for greater profits. By far the largest cost in care is staffing, so often the easiest way to maximise profits is to keep down wages and keep staffing levels to a bare minimum.

Guillaume Durivaux, EPSU's policy officer for multinational companies, commented, 'Inadequate staffing causes stress for employees as workloads pile up and lead to poorer care for users. Of course, such decisions are short sighted but are often taken nevertheless, in pursuit of quick returns. Clearly workers need a seat at the decision-making table to reverse this trend and ensure good care for users and quality work for employees.'

'Care remains a public service whether it is provided publicly or privately. EPSU is standing up for care workers, who deliver a vital public service, in private, non-profit and public providers. EPSU will continue to help Orpea workers to get organised

throughout Europe,' added Durivaux.

**This meeting was organised with the financial support of the European Commission**

- [Log in](#) to post comments



- [Printer-friendly version](#)

Policies

[Company policy and EWCs](#)

[Quality employment](#)

[Social Services](#)

Sectors

[Health and Social Services](#)

Companies

[ORPEA](#)