

## **Norwegian recruitment sector shaking from largest scandal of all times**

(26 April 2011) Norway is shaking from the most comprehensive case of social dumping in modern times. The recruitment agency Adecco was managing a total of five nursing homes in Norway. In all these homes, serious breaches of collective agreements and working hour regulations have been disclosed.

Employees from other countries were revealed to be working double, triple and even quadruple shifts, and having to use bomb shelters in basements for sleeping quarters. The employees were not paid wages according to collective agreements and did not have regular employment contracts, but were working as and when the employers saw fit. They were not paid overtime. Pension installments were drawn from their wages, but Adecco kept the contributions meant for pension funds to itself ("The Enron model").

The exposures led to the director of Adecco Health in Norway being fired. Some municipalities terminated their contracts with Adecco after the agency had been revealed to exploit its workers. Adecco has now withdrawn from all nursing home management in Norway.

Not only has Adecco been breaking labour law and agreements among its health and care workers, but the agency's real practices have been exposed in other sectors as well: Polish waste truck drivers were working 12 to 16 hours' days without overtime and were under the threat of being fired if they complained.

Following this scandal, more recruitment agencies have been exposed. Employees have been working from 70 up to 100 hour weeks without overtime. These long working hours have not been exceptional, but rather the rule for many workers.

Fagforbundet, the Norwegian Public Services Union comments that the recruitment sector is practicing social dumping and that the extent is much wider than there was reason to believe. In the wake of the exposure of the recruitment agencies' foul practices, keener attention is paid towards the attempts to dump workers' wages and working conditions and undermine the Norwegian labour sector. Fagforbundet

and LO-Norway are currently intensifying their efforts against social dumping.

Internationally, the Adecco Group is based in Zurich, Switzerland. Being aware that the group has large operations in Sweden and Denmark as well, Fagforbundet has notified colleagues in Swedish Kommunal and Danish FOA, as similar practices may be found in the rest of Scandinavia.

EPSU asks Scandinavian members in European Works Councils to question the management in their company about the use of recruitment agencies and the working conditions they apply.

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