EPSU tells employers on WDDW: tackle staff shortages in care. Workers deserve respect, higher pay and better working conditions



(3 October 2019) Europe’s people want quality services for the young, the disabled, the elderly and all in need of care. Workers want to deliver this care, says EPSU on the occasion of World Day of Decent Work.

Quality care is delivered by workers. 4 in every 5 care workers are women. Care work is often undervalued, low paid and undertaken in precarious conditions and with a lack of training and poor career prospects. Care services across Europe suffer from staff shortages as employment conditions do not match the physically and emotionally demanding jobs with high workloads. Research in Sweden and France underlines that the number of health and safety accidents is higher than in traditional industries like construction. Workers and the people needing care are the victim of this. Many are angry that these services are not delivered or have become less affordable or accessible when they or their families need them. This is a

consequence of years of austerity. That is why EPSU, organising Europe's care workers demands more staff, more resources and better pay and conditions.

EPSU supports the right to care. The European Pillar of Social Rights sets this out. EPSU's General Secretary: "*We expect of Europe's governments and the European Commission an action plan to implement the right to quality care. Public investment will be key to deliver this for Europe's people*." EPSU engages with employers and providers of care, with local authorities, governments and the European Commission to convince all actors that more funding is required to ensure care is available, affordable and accessible for all. The EPSU representative adds " *Without higher pay, better working conditions and respect, workers will abandon care work. Measures to ensure increased staffing, better health and safety, more training and opportunities for career development are part of the mix to ensure Europe's people get the quality of child-, elderly, long-term and other care they need.*"

Joining in the demand for quality care services and decent pay and conditions on the occasion of this global day for decent work is ETUC's Esther Lynch. She argues that "*Policies to ensure more public and affordable quality care services must also tackle the problem of poor pay and conditions for care workers. One way to do this is by supporting collective bargaining*." EPSU supports the demands for sectoral collective bargaining, like for example in Germany where Ver.di seeks a collective agreement that would cover all elderly care workers. Workers in elderly and other care services are no longer satisfied with being exploited. An example is France. EPSU supports the strike of the affiliated unions 8 and 15 October. Workers in care services will walk out for for higher pay, better conditions and more staff. EPSU represents workers in public, non-profit and private care services including in multinational companies. EPSU reached an innovative European Works Council agreement with French multinational Korian for example. With a similar company ORPEA, there is no progress. This company has engaged in anti-union behaviour.

The EPSU unions cover professional medical staff like doctors and nurses as well as all workers in auxiliary services.

Background

Joint Statement of ETUC and European Federations representing domestic and care workers on the occasion of the world day of Decent Work (Celebrated every year)

EPSU supports the demand for countries to ratify International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention No 189 that guarantees rights for domestic workers. The Commission is to play a more active role. Of the EU28 only 7 countries have ratified the convention (Belgium, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy. Portugal and Sweden) . The only other European country that has ratified the convention is Switzerland

EPSU's work on care

For more on the work of **EPSU on care** (Childcare, elderly and longterm care)

A study of ETUI for EPSU confirmed that workers in health and care services earn less than national average wages. *She works hard for the money: tackling low pay in sectors dominated by women – evidence from health and social care*

EPSU's and **staff in embassies**, employers which can be notorious for exploiting domestic workers due to the impunity the ambassadors have

EPSU's UE-care network of workers **delivering care for migrants and refugees**

For our recent work with the **European social services employers** covering various areas of care. Previous work with the care providers.

EPSU's work on **public investment** and the **European semester**. The Commission's 2019 Report on equality between women and men in the EU addresses the need for Good care infrastructure arguing it considerably facilitates women's engagement in paid work. The 2018 country reports of the European semester state that childcare should be available, affordable and of high-quality p15-16

More info on the joint strike action in France 8 and 15 October 2019

Multinationals

Confronting anti-union behaviour of French elderly care provider **ORPEA**, a multinational company convicted in Court for unlawfully dismissing union workers

The European Works Council agreement between EPSU and the French company **Korian** (elderly care provider).

The demand for a global agreement on workers' and trade union rights to counter anti-union behaviour for the German multinational **Fresenius**

Recent examples (testimonies) of lack of staff

For EPSU's work on **staffing levels**

Doctor says how they are treated borders on slavery (Czechia)

Staff shortages lead to reduction of ambulance crews (in Latvia)

Workers in elderly homes face more sickness due to stress (Sweden)

In France – the number of people seeking to enter the "concours" for the education institutions for health care assistants (Aides-soignants) went down with 25% between 2012 et 2017 ;

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France

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Collective Bargaining
Company policy and EWCs
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Social Services
Solidarity
Staffing levels
Strike
Sectors
Health and Social Services
Networks
EWCs