

EPSU CARE WORKERS MEETING 7 March 2008

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Time to Care: Towards a Better Deal for Care workers in Europe

International Trade Union House (ITUH) Room B

5, Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 1210 Brussels

Friday 7 March 2008

At several occasions, including during our EPSU Committee meetings and our Social Services Conference in 2007, concerns were expressed by trade unionists about the working conditions of workers in the care sector in Europe. The papers from amongst others the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions and NGOs like the European Women Lobby underline that many care workers work in difficult circumstances.

Even though the situation may differ very much from country to country and from service to service, health and social service workers often receive low salaries, and work in difficult circumstances including irregular working hours and short-term contracts.

As the majority of workers in the health and social services sector are women, we consider this state of affairs a threat to achieving gender equality in Europe. This is why our event coincides with the International Women's Day.

To help support the discussion, EPSU has commissioned a research to compare on a country-case basis the wage levels in the care sector with the average wage levels in order to study the relation between wages in the care sector and the gender pay gap. The initial results of the research will be presented on the 7th of March.

We would like to invite you to share your views on the working conditions in the care sector with us, and discuss about the present horizontal segregation and gender stereotypes in the labour market and the consequences of this on working

conditions in women-dominated sectors like the health and social services sector.

We also want to explore how present inequalities between men and women in relation to care responsibilities and care work can be tackled by EU-institutions, governments, employers, social NGOs and of course trade unions and how we can improve both the quality of services and the quality of employment/work in the health and social services sector. It is reminded that the Commission intends to publish a Communication later this year on child and dependant care services. Also, following a Commission's consultation on work/life balance, the European cross-sectoral social partners are currently considering possible negotiations on the revision of the parental leave directive, amongst other items. EPSU is taking part in this discussion and the workshop will therefore be timely to help develop our policy in this area.

The meeting is open to all members of the standing committee for health and social services, the gender equality committee and the social services working group. We expect unions to cover the travel and accommodation expenses of their participants.

Exceptionally, financial assistance is available according to the attached EPSU 'rules governing financial assistance in EPSU conferences', for a limited number of participants.

Interpretation will be provided in English, French, German and Spanish. In addition, participants can speak (but not listen) in Danish, Swedish, Norwegian and Dutch.

Please fill in the attached participation form and return it by 21 February 2008 at the very latest.

If you have any questions about the content of this Circular or the meeting on 7 March 2008, please do not hesitate to contact us by e-mail or telephone.

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