

ORPEA puts the health of its employees and residents in danger



Press Release (EN - [FR](#))

(Press Release, Brussels, 23 October 2020) While France is experiencing a massive health crisis with 40 000 new Covid-19 cases per day and 165 deaths, the management of the ORPEA group, Europe's largest multinational company providing elderly and other forms of care, continues to ignore public health measures put in place by the French government to protect citizens' lives. The management has decided to organise a face-to-face meeting of worker representatives from different countries (FR, BE, IT, PL, DE, AU, ES, etc.). This puts the health of its workers in danger. The management refuses to organise a video conference. Its aim is to jeopardise the work of the negotiating group to set up a European Works Council.

It is outrageous the extent to which the ORPEA management will go for the sole purpose of union busting and to deny basic information and consultation rights.

The meeting, organised at the last minute, was supposed to take place in a hard to access location in the Alsatian countryside; a region that has been placed under curfew due to the health emergency and the worrying number of new infections linked to Covid-19.

The Special Negotiating Body (SNB) members expressed their concerns about this meeting (lack of concrete sanitary measures, long and complex travel arrangements, absence of concrete proposals for an agreement sufficiently in advance) and proposed that an online meeting be held, thus allowing the negotiation process to continue without disruption. This proposal was brushed aside by the group without any explanation.

The management of the ORPEA group, paying little heed to the health of its employees and the residents of the establishments in which they work, stubbornly persists in sabotaging the negotiation process for an information and consultation body at European level, in accordance with European and French legislation.

EPSU condemns this irresponsible act towards the workers of ORPEA and to the process of bargaining and information and consultation rights. Hospitals are overflowing with Covid-19 patients and public health systems are on the brink of collapse. The ORPEA management only intends on frustrating the process. EPSU will work with the unions to ensure the safety of SNB members, their families and residents of the establishments in which they work. We will together address the situation that has emerged and consider the best way to enforce workers' information and consultation rights.

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Background:

On behalf of the workers representatives and union delegates representing the workers in ORPEA, EPSU sought the opening of negotiations for the establishment of an EWC in November 2017. Despite the role of the Special Negotiating Body, management did not make any proposal for a text until 22 October, a day before the meeting on 23rd October. Delegates requested another meeting format (video

conference) which would not jeopardise their health and safety and which would be in line with governmental advice. Delegates from all countries declined to attend.

Management proposed a text which reflects the subsidiary requirements being the minimum the company is obliged to do after three years since the start of the negotiations.

ORPEA is a French multinational company providing elderly and other forms of care. It is one of Europe's largest company in the elderly care sector. Its behaviour contrasts starkly with others in the field. It has a record of violations of trade union rights in France and abroad.

EPSU is the European Federation of Public Service Unions. It is the largest federation of the ETUC and comprises 8 million public service workers from over 265 trade unions; EPSU organises workers in the energy, water and waste sectors, health and social services and local, regional and central government, in all European countries including the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood. EPSU is the recognized regional organization of Public Services International (PSI). For more information please go to: <http://www.epsu.org>

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