



EPSU fosters cooperation between health unions to ensure decent jobs!

EPSU Statement – 4 July 2014

Free movement within Europe is a key right for workers, nevertheless this implies certain risks. In this context, the increasing mobility of health workers in Europe can be taken advantage of by companies that treat their workers in an indecent and illegal way, and do not comply with collective agreements and labour law in order to make profits at the expense of health workers and quality public services. This phenomenon has been exacerbated by the financial and economic crisis, something that health workers are not responsible for. EPSU and its affiliates will continue to propose alternatives to austerity policies. We will work towards a situation that allows mobility on the basis of free movement -which means on an equal footing and not driven by necessity- and towards respect for the basic principle of equal pay for equal work, in the same geographical area.

A blatant case of this has become public in Germany, where Spanish nurses are being evidently being underpaid. These nurses have criticised a situation in which they are working below their level of acquired professional qualifications and experience. The European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), the biggest trade union federation in Europe for health workers, and its affiliates in Germany (ver.di) and Spain (FES-CCOO and FSP-UGT) are calling on health workers to no longer accept such conditions and to report these cases.

The company in question, that offers specialised medical care at home, amongst other services, has not signed up to the collective agreement, and has no works council. The hourly wage is believed to be only €9, which corresponds to the minimum wage for healthcare assistants/auxiliary nurses. The "regular/normal" wage for a nurse responsible for general care is between 13.50€ and 14.50€ per hour. By not following the collective agreement, this company can bend the legal framework to the detriment of workers rights and patients' welfare.

In addition, the company claims back the cost of language tuition and induction where the employee wishes to terminate their contract before the contractually agreed term. This is technically legal. However, by means of this practice, migration costs are used to bind employees to a single company. EPSU commits to address these conditions. What is more, the language courses offered to the nurses are being co-financed from the European Social Fund (ESF), that is to say with public money. We denounce the availability of public funds from the ESF to dodgy companies and organisations that do not comply with labour and employment law and that do not sign up to the relevant collective agreements in the country where they work.

EPSU, together with its affiliates, the workers concerned and their trade unions, will explore, where such cases are occurring, means of bringing them to the public attention and will work to remedy the situation. EPSU is the main platform of European public service unions facilitating exchange and cooperation. EPSU promotes and supports the safeguarding of decent work and compliance with legal norms. Within the framework of EPSU, national trade unions, working together, can ensure that, by offering legal advice and representation, their members' rights are being respected at workplace level.



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H E A L T H A N D S O C I A L S E R V I C E S

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 and national administration, in all European countries including in the EU's Eastern Neighborhood. EPSU is the recognized regional organization of Public Services International (PSI). For more information on EPSU and our work please go to: <http://www.epsu.org>