Strike in Belgian ORPEA elderly home – lack of staff hurts quality of care



(4 March 2020) Workers in an elderly care home of the French multinational ORPEA in the town of Waterloo organized a strike picket 3 March. They expressed their distress over the lack of staff which impacts on the quality of the care delivered. This increases the workload and leads to stress for workers. It was calculated that due to staff shortages workers had just 16 minutes per elderly to provide the distribution of meals, to assist with the eating, to clean up the breakfast and clean the room, to deal with the toilet and make-up of the bed and so on.

The lack of staff for elderly care is not specific to this home. It is a general problem in other establishments of Orpea and in the sector. EPSU representatives joined the picket to express the solidarity of the unions in Orpea and the sector. The lack of workers to provide quality care is a European issue that needs to be addressed. There is an estimated shortage of around 2.3 million carers in Europe. EPSU highlighted the need for making elderly care part of social protection, providing

sufficient funding, ensuring higher wages and better conditions during a recent discussion with employers, stakeholders and the European Commission.

The strikers received a solidarity message from Ver.di reminding the strikers of the 200 days' strike in Thuringen and how solidarity is important. The strike was organized by affiliates Setca and CNE and came after several discussions that did not deliver a result. It took place before a conciliation meeting to show the strong support of the workers.

Negotiations on establishing an European Works Council are ongoing.

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