

German hospital workers: “I know many who are very dissatisfied”

Dietmar Henning, Wolfgang Weber
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Following the discussion with the representatives of the works council, we spoke with several employees at the hospital. Maaïke Schotten is a nurse. She reported that most of her colleagues work only 60 percent of the time. She herself works full-time and earns around 2,700 Dutch guilders a month.

“For Holland, wages here are still good in comparison”, she said, “but they are dropping all the time. Wage increases are always smaller, expenditures such as rent are always rising. Considering the long training we have to have, our wages are really quite small. Moreover, we have to work shifts, which is very stressful I find, as do many others.”

Asked what she thought about the union’s policies regarding a shorter workweek and corresponding reduction in take-home pay to create more jobs, she said, “If that really was the result, then I wouldn’t complain. But the workweek is being cut and wages will be less—and the work itself? It gets harder and harder, there is always more to do on a shift.

Abdul Carim Lamarti said, “What do I think of the Polder Model? Quite truthfully, I haven’t really thought about it. But now when you ask me, I would say, it’s all crap! Things for me aren’t quite so bad. As someone responsible for supplies, I earn around 2,200 guilders. You earn more at the hospital than elsewhere. But it’s an uphill struggle.

“Colleagues of mine who are now working in the areas which have been privatised are not happy. I know many working in the kitchens who are dissatisfied. Two years ago this area was privatised. Everyone got a new contract. In return for their loss of wages—all are now earning considerably less—they should have received 12,000 guilders compensation. The unions promised them that, as 70 percent of those working in the kitchens were quite well paid.

“However, it later came out that the compensation was being calculated gross, and a lot of it went in taxes and other contributions. They were really led down the garden path. Things weren’t any different with the cleaning ladies. They are still paid the same as before, but now they have fewer holidays.”

Komi Kamessa works for a sub-contract firm in the hospital. He reported that he does not have a permanent contract. “In the past it was easier to get a permanent contract, but not today. I have to call up every week, or ride down to the office to see whether they have any work.” If he is able to work an entire month, he earns 2,100 guilders.

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