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European nurses fighting for pay increase

Not only in Denmark are nurses fighting for pay increase and better working conditions. Nurses in many other countries in the EU face similar challenges. That is the message from the European Federation of Nurses' Associations' General Assembly in Copenhagen.

Several European nurses' organisations are struggling a historical fight for pay increases and better working conditions.

In Copenhagen, members of 28 European nurses' organisations are together and they represent approximately 1.5 million nurses at European level. Many of the organisations face the same kind of problems, stated EFN President Grete Christensen in her opening speech of the General Assembly:

"In Finland they had successful negotiations which resulted in pay increase of 22 – 28% for a four-year period. However the result was only a reality after a tough struggle. In Sweden the negotiations have just broken down, just like we in Denmark are expecting a conflict from next week. In Germany they have just concluded the negotiations for the public employed nurses after some long and difficult negotiations", said Grete Christensen who is also first vice-president of the Danish Nurses' Organization.

Grete Christensen stated that recruitment of new and retention of experienced nurses are two serious challenges on the European labour market. Recruitment and retention will be a growing problem in the years to come, not least in Denmark.

"Many nurses apply for jobs in the private health care sector as the pay and the working conditions are considerably better here. This trend will be even more common, unless our members employed in the municipalities and hospitals during the present collective bargaining get a significant pay increase of 15% for the coming three-year period. We are way behind compared to employees in the private sector with the same level of education, and the non-existing of equal pay is unsustainable when we want recruitment and retention of competent employees", she says.

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