



FENPROF – FEDERAÇÃO NACIONAL DOS PROFESSORES

FP-182/2011

10/10/2011

To
Education International
ETUCE/IE
ETUC
Teachers' trade unions from around the world
Other international organizations with
intervention in the Education area

Subject: the state of Education and Teachers in Portugal: information and request for solidarity

Dear Friends, Dear Colleagues,

After the completion of 6th IE World Congress in South Africa, the situation in Portugal has been deteriorating, particularly in what concerns education, and the difficulties we, then, reported, have become worse and more complex. The beginning of the school year was hard and the proposal of State budget for 2012 announces additional difficulties. As the country's situation worsens, IMF, EU and ECB impose even greater sacrifices and more austerity to the Portuguese people, as well as major cuts in public services.

The investment in education, which from 2010 to 2011 decreased 803 million Euros, passing from 5.1% to 4.7% of GDP, is in the proposal of State budget for 2012 further reduced to 3.8% of the GDP, corresponding to an overall cut of 1,5 million Euros. It won't be possible for a country still facing deep structural problems, reflected in high rates of dropping out and school failure, to respond appropriately to these problems and to new challenges - like the extending of compulsory education from 9 to 12 years - with a financial cut which puts Portugal in the 27th and last position on the list of the European countries concerning the weight of education funding in the GDP.

As a consequence of these drastic reductions, this year unemployment among teachers has increased (more 12,500 unemployed than last year) and 1,800 permanent teachers were also affected, with no classes assigned. These numbers are expected to rise next year, causing the elimination of at least 25,000 jobs, in a teaching staff of about 140,000!

Wages and pensions are also being hit hard. In these two years (2011 and 2012) the average diminution of real wages/purchasing power has been about 30%, and for pensions of about 25%, throwing many teachers to an extremely precarious situation.

The measures proposed in the State budget to achieve these reductions will put at risk not only the quality of education but also important social responses, which is unacceptable in a context where families and schools are impoverished. Examples of that are some

curricular changes imposed for the only purpose of cutting teaching hours in major subjects, closure of primary schools, creation of mega school clusters (dehumanized units with thousands of students), increasing the number of students per class, extinction of projects aimed to combat school failure and dropout, cuts in the operation budgets of schools, despite the sharp rise in goods and services. For example electricity VAT rate will increase from 6% to 23%, what may make it impossible for many schools to turn on central heating next winter.

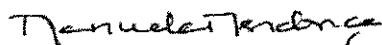
Besides denouncing this very serious situation whose consequences will be extremely negative and in some cases may even lead to irreversible breakdown, we appeal to your solidarity that could be expressed through positions of protest sent to the Portuguese leaders (with a copy to FENPROF, to be published on its web site), in particular:

- President of the Republic
Calçada da Ajuda
1349-022 LISBOA
(belém@presidencia.pt)
- Prime Minister
Rua Imprensa à Estrela, No. 4
1200-888 LISBOA
(pm@pm.gov.pt)
- Minister of Education and Science
Avenida 5 de Outubro, 107
1069-018 LISBOA
(gmec@mec.gov.pt)

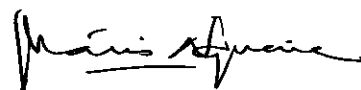
For a more complete understanding of what is happening in Portugal in the education field, FENPROF's concerns, positions and proposals can be found in fenprof@fenprof.pt.

Regarding the struggle of Portuguese teachers, besides the more specific ones, there will be in the very near future two important moments, in which we will be involved with great determination and commitment: the General Demonstration of Civil Servants, scheduled by all representative unions for November 12th and the General Strike called for November 24th, by CGTP-IN, in which we are affiliated, and by UGT.

In solidarity,



Manuela Mendonça
International Secretary



Mário Nogueira
General Secretary