

## **THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE GOVERNMENT-EU-IMF POLICIES ON EDUCATION IN GREEK**

### **GENERAL**

The Greek Government is imposing financial terror, sacrificing the needs and rights of the majority of the society in order to confront the crisis always at the expense of employees. This is the culmination point of the latest governmental policies and choices leading the country to default. The public debt is the result of usurious loans and the illegal connection between politicians and huge financial interests, which have increased public expenses. This debt serves as a pretext to secure the interests that dictate the policy implemented by the Government, the EU and the IMF. Besides, employees have paid this usurious debt more than once.

### **MEMORANDA AND EDUCATION**

In an intense way, the Ministry of Education is trying to persuade us that there is no Memorandum for education. Unfortunately, the documents signed by the Greek government with the Troika show otherwise. By signing the updated No 3 and No 4 Memoranda the government is responsible to set up an independent task force on education policy so as to propose solutions for the tightest possible management of the meagre funds available for education.

In the Memorandum No 4 the Troika control over Greek education goes even further. To be more specific, according to this document the government is committed to submit a report every three months on what it has done or not for education. The Troika will control everything; even the law on the quality of Education the troika itself suggested and the government will submit to the Pqrligment; as well as its Implementation!

Thus, the Greek education is literally and officially under the troika custody since the Ministry of Education will have to implement the proposals of the “special policy group on education”. As a result, decisions on the way education functions in all levels, will be based on strictly financial criteria aiming at a “cheap school”. Through this “new market-oriented school”, what is expected is cost effectiveness, scale economies and the cheapest possible solutions regardless of the severe educational and social consequences. The EU declaration that education is a matter of national interest and the EU principles that the nature of its contribution is subsidiary, sounds as a bad joke.

### **SPENDING ON EDUCATION**

Through the Memoranda and the Mid-term Fiscal Consolidation Strategic Framework the Government under the Troika (EU-ECB-IMF) mandate imposes an exorbitant and unbelievable reduction of public spending leading to the eradication and dismantling of public education. Despite the government announcements and commitments towards the EU, and despite predictions talking about a 5% increase of the GDP by 2013 that is, an increase approaching the average of the EU member states, public spending on education will have been reduced even further reaching 2, 23 % of the GDP by 2015, followed by dramatic consequences on public schools.

It is through the memorandum that the government handed in education to the Troika wishes and choices. The independent task force on education policy set up in the Ministry of Education follows the EU, the ECB and the IMF choices.

So, the decrease in public spending will be 1.436 million euros, that is a 19,2 % reduction as of 2009 until 2015.

Chart: PUBLIC EDUCATION SPENDING IN GREECE								
YEAR	2009	2010	2011 BUDGET	2011	Mid term programme estimates			
					2012	2013	2014	2015
TOTAL	7.480	6.988	6.863	6.530	6.362	6.221	6.105	6.044
REGULAR BUDGET	7.131	6.683	6.283	6.009	5.841	5.671	5.554	5.494
PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAMME	349	305	580	521	550	550	550	550
% SPENDING ON EDUCATION/GDP	235.017	230.173	232.100	225.400	228.400	235.500	242.900	251.900
% SPENDING ON EDUCATION/GDP	3,18%	3,04%	2,96%	2,90%	2,79%	2,64%	2,51%	2,40%
% SPENDING ON EDUCATION/GDP (SPENDING ON TRAINING AND RELIGIONS IS EXCLUDED)	2,94%	2,82%	2,75%	2,69%	2,59%	2,46%	2,34%	2,23%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amounts are in millions of Euros</li> <li>• SPENDING ON TRAINING AND RELIGIONS CONSTITUTES THE 7% OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, LIFELONG LEARNING AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS (2010, 2011)</li> </ul>								
DATA PROCESSING FROM MID TERM FRAMEWORK OF BUDGETARY STRATEGY 2012-15, THEMIS KOTSIFAKIS, MEMBER OF THE E.B OF OLME								

In July a further reduction in education spending envisaged by the NSRF programme was announced from 2,058 billion € to 1,694 billion € (18% approximately) under the pretext of the restructuring of the percentage of the European and national contribution (from 68% -32% to 85%-15% respectively). It was presented as a success by the government. In reality this implies a further reduction in public spending on education from the Public Investment programme in the budget.

### SCHOOL COMMITTEES

Schoolteachers, parents and pupils have already felt the severe cuts in the daily school operations. Funding of school committees has been reduced by 60% resulting in the financial asphyxiation of the public school and in its weakness to meet its rudimentary daily needs. Parents are being called all the more to contribute financially in the purchase of the bare essentials required for the school operation.

Given the fact that the Government has doubled the price of heating oil, it is certain that schools will not afford buying any in the winter.

### SCHOOL MERGERS AND CLOSURES

The Greek Ministry of Education has announced the merging of **1933** school units in both primary and secondary education, without any prior and substantial dialogue with the teaching profession and the Greek society.

In particular, this decision allowed for the merging of **1523** schools in Primary education and **410** schools in Secondary education. As a consequence, **1056** schools have been closed down permanently, that is **851** out of 10.798 (7.8%) in primary education, and **205** out of 3.185 (6.5%) in secondary education.

Closures and mergers will continue in the next year as well. (2012)

### ABOLITION AND DOWNGRADING OF EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT STRUCTURES

The Ministry of Education closes down 22 out of 58 Environmental Education Centres, athletic schools, athletic classes and several All-day primary education schools.

It abolishes Support Teaching Courses in secondary education.

The teaching of foreign languages is downgraded both in Primary and Secondary education. Second Chance Schools are downgraded.

It abolishes the teaching of art courses, citizen's education and ICT courses in upper secondary education disregarding their importance in youth education.

The operation of Youth Consultancy Centres is being postponed.

Professional Orientation in schools is abolished.

The Ministry of Education gradually downgrades and closes down the 800 school libraries set up by EU-Greece co-financed programmes.

Finally, in lower and upper secondary education it imposes classes with 28-30 students instead of 25.

### **SCHOOLBOOKS**

**The new school year has started without books.** It is doubted whether books will have reached schools until Christmas. The Government has abolished the institute publishing them. The financial restrictions have created this unprecedented chaos where photocopies are the main teaching material.

### **SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION**

The Ministry is planning to turn Headmasters into Managers controlling and determining almost everything through assessment. The Ministry's intention is to abolish collectivity and democratic decision making in teacher boards and to restrict school board responsibilities.

### **CONTENT OF STUDIES**

**The educational reforms** promoted by Government [new school, new Lyceum (upper Secondary education)] are based on the rationale of providing fragmentary knowledge and skills, and on the establishment of "values" such as "the market-oriented school", and the training. These reforms are relevant to the equivalent anti-educational reforms of the "enterprise university", promoted by the new law on tertiary education. **This policy leads to the devaluation of the free, public education and to the opening of education to the strategic investments of the profiteering companies.**

### **OECD REPORT**

According to the OECD report commissioned by the Ministry of Education, teachers are held responsible for all misfortunes in Education instead of the policies implemented so far. It is a fact that in this OECD report the increase of the teachers' workload through the increase of their timetable is the first measure presented.

### **REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF TEACHERS (RECRUITMENTS, RETIREMENTS, DISMISSALS)**

Between 2010 and 2011 there have been 3400 recruitments and 17.500 retirements. In a total of 160.000 teachers (there has been a 10% reduction approximately).

### **TEACHER WORKING CONDITIONS**

Through the school closures, the increase in the number of students per classroom, and the abolition of educational services, the Ministry of Education creates intentional redundancies aiming at compulsory teacher mobility across the country.

There are now direct threats of transferring teachers in other services, of labour reserve and dismissals. 120.000 dismissals have been announced in the public sector up until 2013. (the number is still unknown in the field of education).

In parallel, through the National Operational Programme of the Ministry of Employment entitled "Social Work" the government promotes even more the privatization of education creating thus Middle Ages working conditions for teachers. Those unemployed will sign contracts with the NGO's and then they will be subleased to the municipalities in order to work.

### **TEACHER SALARIES**

Measures, measures, measures! Salaries and pensions are slashed and measures, more measures are taken. Every 2-3 days new measures are being discussed and announced. The total loss in our annual income, taking into consideration the cuts, the new insurance contributions and the tax increase, equals to four salaries that is, 20% approximately!

A new law on pay scale is expected including a 20% additional reduction on teacher revenues, relating salary with productivity and performance.

- 20 - 40+ % annual reduction under the new pay scale law
- Annual net income: 8.500-17.500 €
- Monthly net salary: 577 - 680 (1<sup>st</sup> year)– 1371 € (after 35 years)
- Salary improvement following harsh evaluation & assessment
- Limited positions in the new pyramid pay scale.

The Greek teachers' salary which was the 50% of the equivalent Eurozone salaries already, is being reduced to half within two years time.

The government has recently decided to impose a **new tax on housing, through electricity bills in order to collect money immediately**. Therefore, it is clear that they won't stop taking measures unless we stop them through our struggles.

### **PENSION CUTS-AGE LIMIT INCREASE**

Age limits have increased from 60 or 65 years to 70 (depending on the years of service).

The years of service have increased from 35 to 40 (for full retirement).

The special provision on teachers envisaging the granting of reduced pension (30/35) after 30 years of service at the age of 60 is abolished.

All along with the salary cuts there have been similar cuts in the teachers' pensions (basic and subsidiary) and more are under way.

### **CONCLUSIONS-ACTIONS**

We understand that now our claims must be political. Employees face up this ongoing storm and declare that there is a solution. There is another policy! It is not employees that caused the public debt. We do not recognize this debt. We demand that it is deleted.

- WE MUST OVERTHROW THIS POLICY AND THE GOVERNMENT IMPLEMENTING IT. WE MUST OVERTHROW ANY OTHER GOVERNMENT INTENDING TO IMPLEMENT THE SAME POLICY. THE TROIKA MUST LEAVE THE COUNTRY.
- We must abolish the barbaric Government-EU-IMF memorandum, the mid-term programme and all those measures emanating from these.
- We must overthrow the neoliberal policies throughout Europe.

We, the teachers, all along with the other employees in our country have organized a strike on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of October. We are organizing demonstrations every week. We are organizing building occupations and protests. Students have occupied most of the Universities and demonstrate every Thursday. These days, pupils in Secondary Education have already started their mobilizations by organizing school occupations.

During the last year more than twelve strikes, both in the public and the private sector, a lot of demonstrations and square sit-ins, took place in Greece.

The Government deals with all our protests with aggression and police brutality. All these months we had a large number of arrests and even injuries of citizens. The police forces did not hesitate to cause permanent physical damages to citizens and even hit children and students.

Dear colleagues,

Our belief is that Greece is **just the point of departure**, as similar policies are being implemented or are under implementation across Europe (especially in the countries of the European South). Therefore, we believe that there should be a coordinated reaction of all Federations of workers, youth and social movements across Europe.

All Teacher Federations (and not only them) are called out in a coordinated struggle. It is our duty to overthrow the policies which subvert our working rights, and dismantle both the welfare state and the public education in Europe.

**We suggest that we should organize joint struggles and mobilizations throughout Europe** which might include strikes, demonstrations and protests, sit-ins in public buildings and other forms of manifestation. ETUCE and EI are able to and must take on the role of the coordinator in this struggle. A joint struggle across Europe can overthrow the neoliberal policies. We strongly believe that employees are going to win.

We also suggest ETUCE will organize delegations to European bodies with representatives from member organisations from the countries impacted by the crisis.

**All together for another Europe!**

THEMIS KOTSIFAKIS, OLME  
KOMNINOS MANTAS, DOE  
GREECE  
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