

**Vorsitzender**

Hellenic Republic  
Minister of Education and Religious Affairs, Culture and Sports,  
Mr. Konstantinos Arvanitopoulos  
Athens  
Greece

16 May 2013  
UT/MB

**Teachers strike on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2013 against education cuts in Greece**

Dear Minister Konstantinos Arvanitopoulos,

as president of the German Education Union (GEW), representing 270.000 teachers and other education workers in Germany, I want to express support and solidarity with the trade union protest in Greece on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2013 against further cuts in public education, dismissals and worsening of working conditions of teachers.

The policy of the Greek government and the Troika of ECB, EU and IMF is wrong. The ongoing austerity measures are destroying the society and the quality of education in Greece. Discount schools are not the solution of the crisis. Greece and Europe need more investment in education. GEW together with the German trade union federation (DGB) demand a European Marshall-Plan to promote training and education and to modernise and expand public and private infrastructure in Europe.

I would also like to remind you that Greece has binding international obligations to respect the right to freedom of association, which includes the right to strike. These obligations are set out in international human rights treaties signed by the Greek state. They include the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights.

These rights can only be limited under very specific circumstances if it is demonstrably necessary and proportionate, and will protect national security, public safety, public health or morals, or the rights and freedoms of others. The education sector does not constitute an essential service in that sense, so the use of special government measures to thwart a teachers' strike in Greece does violate your country's international obligations.

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Therefore I call on you to respect the right to strike for teachers on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2013 in Greece and to withdraw your plans of dismissal of 10.000 substitute teachers, increase of teaching hours, further abolitions and mergers of classes and schools units and increase of number of students per classroom.

With regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ulrich Thöne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'U'.

Ulrich Thöne  
President of GEW