

OLME

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TO:

- **ETUCE,**
- **EDUCATION INTERNATIONAL**
- **TEACHER FEDERATIONS ACROSS EUROPE**

**JOINT STRUGGLE TO OVERTHROW THE HARSH NEOLIBERAL
POLICIES IN EUROPE**

Dear Colleagues,

During their General Assembly, the Presidents of the local teacher trade unions have reached a decision. The summary of this decision analyses the situation both teachers and employees are going through in Greece. It is a well known fact that the Greek government in cooperation with EU and IMF has imposed salary cuts (a total of 3 salaries less per annum), reductions on pensions, an increase of retirement age limit (40 years of work) and a downgrading of all public, social utilities, being this an unprecedented and harsh austerity policy always under the pretext of financial crisis. Public education slashes are unheard (of 2, 75% of the GDP). The negative changes on the teachers' working conditions, the merging and the closing down of school units, and the preparations for a market and a business oriented school – create a negative climate across the country.

Similar policies are being implemented or are under implementation across Europe (especially in the countries of the European South) with Greece being the point of departure. Therefore, we believe that there should be a coordinated reaction of all Teacher Federations across Europe. ETUCE and EI are able to and must take on the role of the coordinator in this struggle.

All Teacher Federations 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.

OLME and DOE (Greek federation of primary education state school teachers) have already planned a 48 hour strike on 22nd and 23rd of February. A joint struggle across Europe can overthrow the neoliberal policies. We believe that employees are going to win.

THE DECISION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF OLME

Employees in Greece and throughout Europe suffer an unprecedented attack by the Neoliberal policies implemented by EU and the governments across Europe.

At this time, under the pretext of crisis, the measures taken along with those under way have changed dramatically the status of employees in favour of the financially powerful. All those measures are responsible for the abolition of the Trade Union achievements and of fundamental rights such as public social insurance, industrial relations, collective rights etc. The implementation of such policies has dramatic consequences on employees, leading economy to a dead-end and dismantling the social cohesion.

Three Memorandums-agreements have been signed between the Greek government and the (EU-ECB-IMF) Troika team. **Through the 2011 budget the government**

- **Bargains away and sells out the public property.** Public spending on education, health, and the welfare system is reduced and the services of these sectors are being commercialized. It has increased the public utilities rates either they are privatized or they are under a privatization process adding new burdens to the lower social strata.
- Under the pretext of financial crisis it does not exercise control over employers which proceed to massive lay offs and violate industrial legislation. **It increases unemployment** to such an extent that it condemns a million of unemployed people and their families to despair.
- **Reduces dramatically the wages** of employees both in the wider public sector and the private one. It abolishes the sectoral collective agreements in favour of business agreements which allow for lower wages.
- **It burdens the lower social strata with new, indirect taxes** and causes an even further reduction in the employees' revenues.

Through the enactment of a new **scale of salaries** for the public sector, the Greek government aims at a further reduction in our salaries. **It also aims at a “performance” based salary.**

The Greek government refuses to subsidize our social insurance funds leading them to a dismantling and to a closing down.

Our medical care is constantly being downgraded. The new law on the public health system downgrades the already insufficient medical care.

According to the 2011 budget, it is the first time that public spending on education has reached a **record low** of less than 3% of the GDP (2, 75% of the GDP in 2011).

There has been a reduction in the absolute value of expenses for the first time.

The Greek government and the troika have signed on the creation of a “special policy group on education” aiming at a drastic reduction in the meagre expenses provided for under the new budget! The Greek education is literally and officially under the IMF custody which will decide on the way education functions in all levels based on strictly financial criteria aiming at a “cheap school”.

The policy followed will lead to:

- Closing down and merging of school units,
- Reduction of work places and ban on recruitments
- Violation of industrial relations

- Increase of teachers' working- hours
- Abolishment of every institution supporting learning process
- Cutting down on funds covering the operational costs of schools

No school unit will escape this policy as all of them should prove that they deserve the scant state funding through the "social accounting" process.

The Ministry of education is planning to turn the headmasters into managers detached from the school board, which are expected to control and determine almost everything through the evaluation process. The Ministry's intention is to limit the responsibilities of the school board and to impose the idea that the school teacher is largely responsible for the sufferings of public education.

The government is taking advantage of the crisis and proceeds with the implementation of large scale processes involving the closing down and merging of school units across the country. In the name of IMF, the so called neighbourhood school is substituted by massive school centers. It is obvious that the implementation of these plans will efface neighbourhood schools and thousands of pupils and teachers will be forced to move under adverse conditions. The number of students per classroom will increase sharply with dramatic consequences on the quality of education process.

Under the misleading motto "students come first" the Government is also planning changes related to the content of the school which is called the "new school". Through official declarations on the "new school" we can easily notice that the announced policy is practically in line with the strategic aims of the neoliberal education policy followed by EU. An example of this is the frequent use of terms referring to the opening up of the new school to the market forces, to reinforcing competition, to "innovation" and "entrepreneurship" etc.

The changes promoted in relation to the content of studies as well as to the structure and the function of the "new school" aim at a privatized and disciplined school, adapted to the financial interests. It is a school which will produce workers with limited general knowledge, equipped with practical skills according to the market demands. **General knowledge** is being challenged through the plans for the new programme of studies for the Lyceum

The Ministry of Education uses "consultation" as a pretext, having already decided on the changes to be implemented in education. Its policy is dismantling the public education as well as the teachers' industrial relations. An example of this is that the Ministry of Education refuses to meet and discuss with the Executive Board of OLME that is the representatives of our federation.

The oncoming period will be very critical.

What is required is the creation of a powerful **education front** which will confront effectively and victoriously the neoliberal, anti-popular and anti-education policy of the government. As a trade union movement we should also contribute to the **greater possible mass rally of workers** and the better coordination of all work forces in the public and private sector. We should pay particular attention to make pupils and parents aware of the consequences of those measures in the education provided.

Our ultimate goal is to create a powerful workers front which will crush the EU, IMF and government policy, and annul the obsequious memorandum in favour of employees.

We do not accept the argument that the policy being implemented is the only solution. The joint struggle of all trade unions across Europe aims at overthrowing the anti-

popular measures taken by the government, the EU and the IMF which overburden us with the crisis.

There is a solution. There is another policy!

THE MAJOR CLAIMS OF OLME ARE:

- **To abolish all those measures curtailing our salaries and pensions. We say no to the new scale of salaries inaugurating cutbacks. The net salary of the newly appointed teachers should reach the amount of €400. We demand full pension after 30 years of work.**
- **To say no to the violation of our working rights. Sectoral collective agreements must be signed.**
- **No cutbacks on education, health and social insurance. No merging and closing down of schools. Immediate increase of spending on education at least 5% of the GDP.**
- **Immediate financial support of our Social Insurance Funds.**

OLME has drawn the following action plan for the next period:

1. **Awareness campaign** on the consequences of the government-EU-IMF measures on education and the teachers for the whole of population.
2. **Informing teachers** on the Ministry of Education plans.
3. Setting up **volunteer networks to support our pupils**
4. **Coordination of teacher and parents' federations** to act jointly. To form a common front to support the public, social goods (education, health, social insurance)
5. **A 48 hour strike on February 22-23 along with the Primary Education Teachers' Federation (DOE).**
6. **New general assemblies** for the escalation of our mobilizations.

For the E.B. of OLME

The President

The General Secretary

Ο Πρόεδρος

 Δημήτρης Πεππές

Γρα. το Δ.Σ. της ΟΛΜΕ


Ο Γεν. Γραμματέας

 Νίκος Παπαχρήστος

Dimitris Peppes

Nikos Papachristos

