

Strike and mass protests against Spain's education cuts

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Tuesday's strike by the main education unions, the UGT, CCOO, ANPE, STES and CSIF, closed down most universities, vocational training centers and primary and secondary schools in 14 regions throughout Spain. It is the first time since the death of Franco that a strike in education has had such a wide impact.

The strike was called against the harshest cuts in education in the history of Spain. The right wing Popular Party government is planning to reduce public investment in education from 4.9 percent to 3.9 percent of GDP. This would mean €10 billion cuts in five years. A previous €3 billion cut in education does not include the regional government cuts.

The effect will be felt next term. Around 40,000 to 50,000 teachers will be dismissed. Students per classroom will increase by up to 20 percent—from 27 to 30 in primary schools and from 30 to 36 in high schools. Teachers will have to increase their teaching hours by cutting the time used to prepare classes. Absences of fewer than two weeks will not be covered.

Added to this, 2,000 vocational training modules planned for 2013 will be eliminated in a country already suffering 50 percent youth unemployment. University fees will increase by around €500 on top of the €1,000 per year average, while scholarships will be reduced by 11 percent.

According to the unions, around 70 percent of teachers responded to the strike call in primary and secondary, and 90 percent of professors in universities.

Throughout Spain massive protests were held. In Madrid, 105,000 marched according to the unions—from Plaza de Neptuno up to the Paseo del Prado and Calle Alcalá, where a secondary student, a teacher and a university lecturer read out a manifesto against the cuts.

In Barcelona, a demonstration of 150,000 marched

through the main streets behind a banner asking, "What future do we have?"

Jesus Rodríguez of Directa said that "unlike other demonstrations that have paralysed teaching at universities, the demonstration received a much greater presence of large social sectors from the districts and municipalities on the outskirts of Barcelona. At the demonstration you could find people of all ages, even toddlers."

In the Autonomous University of Barcelona, students cut one of the main roads going to Barcelona, the AP-7. This was the first day of the three-day strike called at this university to coincide with elections to the rectory.

In the University of Barcelona, which is nearer the city's center, police surrounded a march of students.

In the Madrid Complutense University, students put up barricades. The police charged and arrested two students.

In Valencia, a group of 300 students entered the regional Ministry of Education and put up a banner saying, "We have had enough. No more cuts. This is shameful."

In the Balearic Islands, 70 university students also occupied the regional ministry, yelling at and insulting the regional minister of education.



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