

Romanian teachers protest austerity policies

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12 November 2013

World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke to education workers marching against the Romanian government in a one-day rally organized by the Federation of Free Education Unions (FSLI) on the 6th of November in the capital, Bucharest. The protest gathered around 9000 workers according to union estimates.

Education workers are faced with poverty wages and increasingly difficult working conditions. The Social Democratic Government has imposed a wage freeze on public sector workers, part of the austerity program agreed with the IMF and the EU. It is also planning the introduction of new reactionary legislation, such as competence reviews for staff based on students' performance, the introduction of professional managers in schools or modifying the curriculum to address business demands.

The union leaders that organized the rally are actively trying to prevent a wider mobilization of workers against these attacks.

Workers that spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* expressed their anger at the government's policies and their desire for a wider social struggle against the austerity measures.

Laurenta, a teacher for 36 years, complains about the lack of funding and difficult teaching conditions. "In today's economy, where the parents also cannot help us, the Education Ministry is not sending school materials," she said.

She says that she earns 1500 lei (340 euros) a month, and that when "I first started in 1977, I earned 1390 lei. The difference from 36 years ago is almost nonexistent."

Asked about performance pay, she explained that "competence is only on paper," and that children from working class families are at a disadvantage. "Those that have money will also make performance. Their parents can provide materials, so they can create a good environment," she said.

Alexandra has worked as a school cleaner for 25 years and earns 670 lei (150 euros). "I have to buy wood and gas for heating and I have loans from the bank to pay back. How can I live? This is the same salary as in 2010 when it was cut by the Government," she asked.

She added that "[Prime Minister] Ponta did not respect his promises," and that workers must mobilize against the Government in a "general strike and that everybody should participate, not just from education."

Constantin is 56 and works as a school mechanic in Bucharest. He says that "I make 800 lei (180 euros), my wife doesn't have a salary and I have a daughter at the university. At the school I have to perform various unqualified jobs, otherwise I will be laid off."

He also stresses that, "the situation has become unbearable" and that "we need a general strike, not only in the education system."



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