

For a European-wide strike against school openings!

Network of Action Committees for Safe Education
27 January 2021

The following statement was unanimously adopted by the Network of Action Committees for Safe Education at its meeting on Monday.

The refusal of the ruling class to consistently close businesses, schools and day-care centres has led to an unprecedented disaster. While new coronavirus strains are spreading throughout Europe and health systems are on the verge of collapse, Germany now has more fatalities in percentage terms than the USA. In several German states, crematoria are completely overwhelmed by the large number of corpses. Meanwhile, stock prices, which are feasting on the mass deaths, keep climbing to new highs. Since the beginning of the year, there have officially been almost 20,000 COVID deaths in Germany alone.

Scientifically, there is no question that it is necessary to reduce economic activity to essential areas and keep schools and day-care centres closed to bring the virus and the dangerous mutations under control. Yet governments of all stripes are keeping businesses open and turning schools and day-care centres into holding pens so that parents can work in unsafe workplaces. In many federal states, schools are to be largely reopened as early as 1 February.

We strongly oppose this policy, which places the interests of the rich before the health of the people and call on students, teachers, educators and parents to take their safety into their own hands. Safe Education Action Committees, independent of the establishment parties and trade unions, must be established at all schools and day-care centres to organise strikes as soon as the facilities are to be opened.

The pandemic is an international phenomenon and requires an international response. We stand in solidarity with the school strikes and protests in Greece, Poland and France and welcome the formation of action

committees in many cities in Britain and the United States. The action committees must work closely together and prepare for a European-wide school strike.

The dangerous situation in schools and nurseries cannot be separated from the problems in public transport and workplaces. While nurses, bus drivers and meat-processing workers are putting their lives on the line every day under the most adverse conditions, the biggest mass layoffs in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany are being carried out and wages are being cut. The government and corporations are using the pandemic for an unprecedented redistribution of wealth from the bottom of society to the top.

Therefore, resistance in schools must be linked to workers struggles for safe workplaces and to defend their jobs. It must be part of a broad mobilisation for a general strike that protects people's needs and health against the profit logic of capitalism. Instead of transferring billions to the corporations, the large fortunes must be expropriated and the following demands must be implemented:

No opening of schools and day-care centres before the pandemic is under control! At the earliest, when the incidence value is below 25, face-to-face teaching in small, fixed learning groups should be considered, provided pupils, teachers, and parents, based on scientific evidence, consider this to be safe. At-risk groups must be specially protected and exempted from face-to-face teaching for a longer period.

Invest billions in safe and good education! To ensure safe conditions in the face of reducing infection rates, billions must be invested in schools and day-care centres and especially in the recruitment of thousands of new teachers and educators. Their wages must be increased significantly.

Full compensation for parents who must care for

their children! Parents must receive full compensation for caring for their children. Workers, the self-employed and small businesses must also be compensated for any loss of income. Poorer families must be given special support and high-quality equipment for digital learning.

No exam pressure and learning stress during the pandemic! While the pandemic rages in Europe and worldwide, regular exams are not possible. Deaths, financial hardship and the risk of infection have hit hundreds of thousands of families hard. Despite the best efforts of teachers and many students, adequate learning conditions are not achievable. The decision on alternative grading and final examinations must be made by the students as a whole.



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