

Education crisis

The strong protest movement which has been hitting the sector of education across Europe for at least five years proves that the neo-liberal education policy has failed. Not only is there a crisis related to the adaptation of content and methods to the needs of the modern world, but also a crisis of democratization of a formal system incapable to guarantee everyone access to culture.

The General Agreement on Trade in Services signed in 1994 at the WTO, the strategy elaborated by the European Summit of Lisbon in 2000, OECD recommendations, PISA evaluations of the European education systems ... all have they accused the current educational system of being too expensive, of not responding to the needs of the economy, and of being not competitive enough. Moreover, and thanks to a commercial opening of the education system by liberalization, multinationals are able nowadays to sell their school supplies, services and modules.

The regression caused by the neo-liberal policies endangers all achievements of the past years. Indeed, these policies create a formal education system that advances at different speed rates, leading to the fragmentation of national education under the pressure of competition, and destroying the very idea of culture. Numerous protest movements try to resist the process all over Europe.

1. Restore the right to public and free education

The claim for a right to public education first and foremost implies that all services in this sector should be free of charge, from day-care-centres and nurseries to universities. Therefore, sufficient public financing is needed, amounting to at least 6 % of the European Union's GDP. The Party of the European Left (EL) is against the appropriation by charity and religious institutions of early childhood education. Policies aiming at minimizing public financing in the educational sector lead to university privatizations. They make progress in fundamental research (especially in the field of education) almost impossible and dilute universities' independence by submitting them to sponsorship and partnerships with private firms.

Public education is only possible if there is a responsible government, and responsible school managing. Moreover, the statutes of the teaching staff and all other personnel members must guarantee their independence. The EL therefore opposes all sort of management based on the model of private companies, including elements such as almighty headmasters able to recruit and fire teachers and students as they feel fit, competition between schools for available resources, and control over scientific knowledge. The EL demands solid and stable recruitment plans.

2. Fight all forms of inequality and exclusion

In order to fight inequality and exclusion, the education system must be reunited under one single main branch, or one single school model, bringing together all students of the same age. Such a school should welcome children as off the age of three months, proposing a network of day-care-centres and nurseries everywhere in the country. Furthermore, the choice of a specific study subject must be postponed to the end of compulsory education, i.e. to the age of 18. Schools and other educational institutions don't have the right to get rid of their responsibility by accepting the failure of their students, and by displacing them to educational ghettos. The EL demands an education system which takes into account the diversity of students, gives everyone access to the same knowledge and culture, fights

inequality, and doesn't choose delay and failure as central elements of their action. Schools must promote culture in a positive and heterogeneous way.

3 - Guarantee access to knowledge to everyone

The EL struggles for an education system which allows students to develop a critical spirit. This requires, at university level, a link between research and teaching as well as a research system independent from market needs. In the field of vocational education, the EL refuses the fragmentation of the system into several independent modules, and supports an integrated education, preparing both for university studies and lifelong learning.

Education should not be submitted to the demands of the labour market. Moreover, there should be a stronger stress on active learning methods, experimentation and collective elaboration. Schools should promote culture and artistic education, without marginalizing any form of expression (corporeal, dramatic, plastic, musical etc.) or any form of knowledge. In a democratic schooling system, students should be granted their rights, and dialogue with parents intensified. Finally, all university diplomas should guarantee professional rights all over Europe.

The EL fights against the neo-liberal education policy. The EL wants to:

- Guarantee and rebuild a public education service, liberated from political, religious and economic power.
- Avoid all privatization. The investments in the field of education are insufficient and oriented at a private school and university system. This trend has to be inverted.
- Guarantee free and secular education for all, without exception, independently of social origin, class, ethnic origin or religion.
- Ensure coeducation among men and women at all levels.
- Fight discrimination in relation with migration and urbanization conditions, integrate immigrated students, and guarantee the respect of their linguistic and cultural characteristics.
- Guarantee an inclusive education for all handicapped persons as well as infrastructures which allow access and care adapted to their special needs.
- Compulsory education until the age of 18.
- Guarantee access to knowledge and techniques necessary to understand the world, in order to allow everyone to actively take part in it.
- Put an end to job flexibility and precarious labour relationships in education.

Fight against neo-liberal agenda as an anti-crisis programme, fight for education.