

Education is a Human Right

GEW Message of solidarity for the European Day of Action

The global financial and economic crisis is now in its fifth year. In Southern Europe in particular, people are suffering from the effects of a crisis for which they are not responsible. It is above all working people, pensioners, women and children who have to bear the main burden of the crisis, whereas the wealthy and those in the financial sector who caused it have been allowed to escape unscathed. Public services of general interest – a cornerstone of the European social state model – are being challenged in principle.

The harsh austerity policies pursued by governments merely exacerbate the crisis and put an unreasonable strain on working people. Staff reduction in the education sector is disastrous. Education and science threaten to drain. Teaching staff, educators and academic staff are confronted with unemployment. At the same time a whole generation's educational opportunities dwindle. Education is a human right. The degree of youth unemployment is alarming.

Workers' rights are fundamental human rights, too. We strongly condemn the current attacks on education, on the collective bargaining autonomy and the dismantling of workers' rights. What we need is not fewer

rights and less protection but more democracy, social security and justice. Instead of wrecking Europe with austerity policies, what we need are solutions based on solidarity and a programme for education, growth and employment. And we are not just talking about working conditions and future prospects for our colleagues in Spain, Greece, Ireland or Portugal or the educational opportunities of millions of young people in Southern Europe – the crisis does not stop at national frontiers. If equal opportunities and basic human rights are being undermined, when poverty finds its way into Europe, the crisis will sooner or later arrive at our own doorstep.

European integration is based on a common commitment to the creation of a democratic and social Europe. Only if we close ranks and work together will we be able to halt the intolerable cuts in social benefits and the dismantling of workers' rights. Together we call for a fair, democratic and social Europe and declare our particular solidarity with colleagues in education in all the countries of Europe.