

Letter of Support and Solidarity with Protesters and Strikers in Serbia

In Slovenian public educational institutions and professional associations, we are following with concern the months-long police violence and the arbitrary actions of political authorities in Serbia, aimed at suppressing protests. Over the past months, these protests have been joined not only by students but also by many of our colleagues, high school students, and other citizens of Serbia.

As the ruling regime remains deaf to their demands, students – as well as high school pupils – are unable to fully participate in the educational process. This is obstructed by violence, often brutal, repression, and pervasive threats. Since March of this year, higher education teachers who have publicly supported student protests and their demands have been subjected to severe economic coercion, including the withholding of a significant portion of their salaries, as their right to strike has been revoked. Parts of the teaching staff across the entire educational spectrum, committed to their professional and ethical mission, face threats of dismissal and actual termination of employment, aiming to discipline those who protest. Both educators and students are exposed to police violence, detentions, and interrogations. Educational institutions that refuse to comply – those fighting for their autonomy and the ethical integrity of their work – are threatened with the elimination of enrolment slots; some schools have not received sufficient funding to cover basic monthly expenses (e.g., electricity). A regime that claims to be democratic treats educational institutions as instruments for securing its own rule – rather than as a key mechanism for social reproduction and building social ties and strengthening solidarity.

The problem does not lie with the students, pupils nor with the educators who refuse to participate in the educational process under the current socio-political and institutional conditions. The problem lies with the authorities, institutions, and their actors who actively reject the establishment of conditions that would allow education to take place in a manner and form worthy of its name. Educational processes cannot be conducted under the dictates and heavy hand of a regime that claims the right to arbitrary political and violent interventions. They must instead be carried out in safe infrastructural conditions and under the guidance and judgement of those professionally qualified to plan and implement education. To echo the call of those from teaching profession in the University of Novi Sad: in an atmosphere of violence and repression, the educational process cannot proceed in accordance with the standards required by the field of education and the teaching profession itself.

Our expression of support and call for solidarity comes late. We believe that professional integrity, vocational solidarity, and solidarity with students cannot – and must not – remained confined within national borders. Only a transnational commitment to the fundamental principles of autonomy, professional ethics, and social equality can ensure that education, knowledge, and learning remain a public good for all, rather than a privilege accessible only to a few. The very existence of international associations, with whom we share this statement in the hope and expectation that these principles will be actively upheld, serves as a testament to these shared commitments.

In solidarity,

Slovenian Sociological Association

Slovenian Association of Pedagogues

Higher Education Union of Slovenia

Trade Union of the University of Maribor

Student Sociological Association Socioklub

Centre for Educational Policies Studies and Social Innovation – CEPS

Slovenian Psychologists' Association

Education, Science and Culture Trade Union of Slovenia – ESTUS