

Greece: "We're going to do like the French" - Greek students

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There is currently the most important student mobilisation to have happened in Greece since the 1970s. The target of the mobilisation is the draft law that would:

- make private universities possible (they even propose to amend the Constitution to remove all legal obstacles);
- require public universities to function on the basis of private sector management criteria;
- challenge university "asylum" (ban on police intervention on university campuses without the agreement of the university's ruling body);
- drastically reduce the possibilities for students to resit their exams and move up from one year to the next.

On the 31st of May, 194 departments were occupied. Thus almost all universities were paralysed. University lecturers, in line with the position of their powerful union POSDEP, are voting in mass meeting after mass meeting, in favour of all-out strike.

There was a demo on the 28th of May of 8,000 people and an even bigger demonstration on the 1st of June.

One of the main slogans of the students is "We're going to do what they did in France". As the final sentence of the statement by the Athens students' coordination says, "This slogan asserts our commitment to continue the students' struggle to victory". We call for a coming together of this struggle for the right to education, jobs and our living standards with all the sectors of the education system (teachers and school students) and all workers."

The movement is structured by mass movements by department (the biggest since the 1970s) and city-wide coordinating committees.

There is a radical rejection of the privatisation logic in higher education, in a sector that has not been really mobilised for the last 15 years.

The breadth of this can already be compared to that of the (successful) 1979 movement that shaped a whole generation. Politically it is led by a grass-roots united front between the EAAK (which brings together most of the far-left organisations, including the Greek section of the Fourth International OKDE-Spartakos, which won 8.5% of the vote in the student elections in March 2006 [1]), the DARAS (the youth list of Synaspismos which won 2.5% in the same elections) and the small but well-organised forces of Genoa 2001 (the student union front of the SEK, Greek organisation of the IST, 0.3% in the last elections).

The Greek CP, the main force to the left of social democracy in the universities (15% in the last student election), is following a very sectarian line, trying to organise its own forces and the very few mass meetings that it controls around separate "coordinating committees" are completely illusory.

Its line is against occupations and all-out strikes. It seems very isolated and unable to grasp what is at stake in the movement.

The PASOK (25% in the last student elections) essentially supports the government's privatisation project, at the cost of some internal disagreements, mainly in its youth organisation, which is currently being "brought back into line" by the party leadership.

Notes

[1] With more than 70% participation, the student elections, which take place every March, can be considered as a valid indication of the relationship of forces. The main force is the right (ND), with almost 40% of the votes.

P.S.

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