

FLC CGIL APPEALS TO EI/IE TRADE UNION AFFILIATES FOR SOLIDARITY

FLC CGIL, the trade union of Knowledge - primary education, secondary education, higher education and research – **appeals to all EI/IE affiliated unions** to join our struggle **to prevent** the dismantling of the entire Knowledge sector and **to oppose** the laws that the Italian government now wishes to pass.

Day after day, the government of Berlusconi and his Minister of Education, Mrs Gelmini, are proceeding to destroy public education and remove this term from the Ministry's official name, which is becoming simply that of Education, Higher Education and Research.

The government's sole objective is to reduce resources in the education sector, whereas resources are never lacking when it comes to favouring the interests of social strata who do not need them.

The Berlusconi government is proceeding without the participation or involvement of the trade unions or of the opposition, governing by decree and thus making it impossible for Parliament to perform its function.

It is forecast that the education sector will suffer over 140,000 job losses, of which 80,000 teachers' jobs, and have a budget cut by some 8 billion euros.

In primary education, which for us used to be a source of pride, one of the leading systems at international level, comprising a methodology and group teaching responsibilities with a **team of teachers** for the same class, capable of meeting pupils' new requirements and coping with the host of diverse subjects to be taught, will lose its **team work** approach and become yesterday's school again.

The measures provide for:

- a reduction in assistance for children with a disability;
- an increase in the number of pupils in each class;
- the disappearance of many school establishments throughout Italian national territory without taking the reality on the ground into account, even though Italy is not a homogeneous one-dimensional country and has numerous communication problems;
- a reduction in the number of special classes in hospitals for sick children;
- the abolition of full-time work.

In addition, school establishments would become foundations, managed by a private board of directors and dependent on resources which would come no longer from the State but from the good will of the country's big families, which inevitably implies that schools would be under their influence.

Furthermore, the collective bargaining provided for in each establishment would be abolished and referred to the regional level, which would leave room for decisions imposed by the laws of the central government.

Finally, in practice the age limit for compulsory school attendance would fall from 16 to 14 since it would include vocational training and would oblige families to decide on their children's future far too early.

For research, the government plans:

- a reduction of at least 10% in the number of researchers in all research institutes, whereas in fact we need to increase staff levels to resolve the problem of precarious jobs and auxiliary staff;
- the possibility of recruitment and therefore a stable job for researchers would be exclusively dependent on turnover;
- an effective reduction in salaries and career prospects. In the event of illness, the measures provide for a reduction in salaries through measures concerning the public administration and therefore all Knowledge sectors;
- a reduction in the autonomy of research institutes through changes in the sector limiting the independence of researchers and imposing the authorities' omnipotent and omnipresent hold over research.

And also, attacks on and destruction of public universities

The measures provide for a reduction in resources over four years, equivalent to a third of all financing planned for universities.

Costs for families and students would rise dramatically.

With a large number of retirements, the government plans just one possible recruitment to a stable position to replace five departures.

Consequently, access to university education would become impossible for the new generations, which would entail a risk of the university system collapsing within five years.

Moreover, turning universities into foundations under private law would entail:

- less freedom of research and education;
- less quality in education, greater recourse to precarious employment conditions and intellectual exploitation of the new generations.

The measures taken by government will further reduce salaries, even though Italy is already well below the European average.

Once again, we are faced with measures aimed at reducing the rights of those working at universities.

Women's conditions have become a matter of national urgency

Part-time work, which concerns women more than men, would lose all semblance of free choice and could be arbitrarily imposed by the management.

The new restrictive measures concerning sick leave, prevention and parental care directly affect women, limiting their careers and their possibilities of finding a place in the Italian world of labour, where they already suffer considerable discrimination compared to other European countries.

With these new rules, maternity is in danger. Italian women, who already have less than one child each on average, will have to choose between work and family.

Precarious employment affects women in particular. Women in Italy are paid 25% less than men for equal jobs and equal responsibilities.

The already meagre fund which served to support women who are the victims of violence has been used to cut taxes for the rich.

All these measures:

- take Italy further away from the Lisbon objectives and European standards relating to education and training;
- erode equal opportunity and the right of citizens to social mobility;
- block the economic growth and cultural development of our country.

A country turning its back on youth and ignoring the Lisbon objectives is a country without a future.

We are witnessing an authoritarian and populist evolution of Italian society.

Our country is becoming more and more anti-social and anti-democratic and it is women who are affected most of all.

Protecting rights, promoting employment and meeting citizens' needs are no longer priority objectives for this government.

FLC CGIL intends to fight until its last breath to ensure that Knowledge is within the reach of everyone, men and women, rich and poor, Italians and immigrants, and **has just called for 30 October the first national strike against the Berlusconi government**, which is destroying the Italian public education system and thus violating the fundamental principles of our Constitution.

We therefore appeal to all our colleagues to support us and endorse our demands to prevent Italy from moving away definitively from the objectives of Europe and a "Society based on the Knowledge Economy".

Your messages of solidarity will be read out on 30 October during the national strike and demonstration in Rome.

Thank you for responding to our appeal.

Please return to

Joëlle Casa
FLC CGIL National Secretary
Head of the European Policies Department
j.casa@flcgil.it