

## **SINDEP Report on the Social Dialogue in Education in Portugal**

The recent changes on Education in Portugal in these last two years have caused a terrible atmosphere among teachers at the Portuguese schools. The Ministry of Education first political actions were to ruin and to harm the teachers' character, social image and role towards the society. From the very beginning the Government and the Ministry have given no signs of willingness towards a real and respectful negotiation with the Unions.

On 27<sup>th</sup> May 2006, the Ministry of Education, introduced to the media the Revision of the Career Statute for Teachers and Education Personnel, only 2 days after, did the Unions receive the first, out of six versions, of this document. The Statute is one of the most important documents on the working conditions of the teachers that is why it is a document of compulsory negotiation respecting the Collective Negotiation Act for the Public Servants.

1. The calendar for negotiations was imposed by the Ministry with only 6 meetings with the social partners, starting on 4<sup>th</sup> September and finishing on 24<sup>th</sup> October;
2. The Unions were left no time to dialogue with teachers at schools and to make matters worse, in two months, 5 versions of the Statute were issued by the Ministry;
3. Facing such reality 14 Education Trade unions joined together in an united Platform to strengthen the teachers' rights towards the discussion of the Statute of Teachers;
4. The Ministry of Education accepted such Platform to dialogue just to perform an image to the media that the Ministry was open to negotiate, however such meetings were held under no legal basis and worse than that at a certain phase of the dialogue the Ministry blackmailed the Unions;
5. The Unions organized a number of actions: demos, press meetings, press releases, street actions, etc. to force the government to change at least the attitude of aggressiveness towards teachers;

6. The atmosphere in the Portuguese schools is dreadful! Teachers don't accept this "negotiating process" and above all many of the changes in their Statute that question their career and its progress. The Decree Law made by the Department of Education regulated 2 hierarchical categories of teachers: Teacher and Senior Teacher. The access/vacancies to the latest are limited by the Financial and Education Ministries;
7. The Senior Teachers will have a bureaucratic career above all;
8. The Decree Law is an insult to all teachers, but even more so to human rights, because it violates explicitly several fundamental, constitutionally acknowledged rights, such as the right to equal treatment, the respect for health, family and social life, etc., rights that were implicitly protected in the current legislation for teachers, till now.

As it can be seen from this report we cannot talk about a social dialogue on Education in Portugal. We are now following the regulation on the Statute, meeting with the Ministry but under the same rules, that is to say, till now the Ministry has not accepted a single suggestion from the Teachers' Unions that drives them apart from their goals.

The Education Trade unions Platform is still on, trying to find the best ways of pressing the Department in order to follow a social dialogue. At schools the fear and panic among teachers is a reality. One cannot even dare to pronounce a word against the Government or the Department of Education because there may be some disciplinary actions.

This is the state of the art in Portugal towards a social dialogue in education.

Lisbon, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2007