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The Teachers' Strike Goes On in Slovakia

Bratislava, Jan 29, 2016 – Slovak teachers continue their strike, planning to carry on until their demands are fulfilled by the government.

The Slovak Teachers' Initiative (ISU) was founded in October 2015 by teachers in Bratislava who invited other regions to participate in activities that aim for saving the education in Slovakia. The reason for its founding was a **long-term dissatisfaction with the education system** that has been going on for twenty-five years. This dissatisfaction is directed at the regulations of the education system, the salary system of the teachers, the underequipment of schools, the urgent need of repairs of school buildings, but also at the very high fluctuation of ministers of education – since **25 years** ago, there have been **17 ministers** of education in the country.

Since last autumn, ISU has organised **several events and activities** that pointed at the poor state of the education system, among which were various discussions, **The Long Nose Meetup, Teachers' Blood Donation Day, Babysitting Day** or **The Empty Pocket Meetup**. Since these activities were largely ignored by the government, they resulted in **the teachers' strike** that has currently no planned end. The strike began on January 25 in Bratislava with a **mass protest** at Slovak National Uprising Square, known for the protests during the so-called Velvet Revolution that led to the fall of Communism in the former Republic of Czechoslovakia in 1989. The protesters then marched to the building of Slovak parliament.

Currently, there are protests and meetings organised by ISU and regional initiatives taking place in several cities of Slovakia and the initiative plans to carry on in these activities until the teachers' demands are fulfilled by the government of Slovakia. What seems to be alarming is the fact that the mobbing, **bossing** and **intimidation** that seeks to **suppress the constitutional right of the employees to strike** takes place all around the country. The teachers responded by **turning to Strassbourg human rights court for support**.

On Thursday, January 28, the representatives of ISU were **received by the Slovak president**, Andrej Kiska, who expressed his **full support** for the activities and confirmed that the Slovak education system is in poor condition. Kiska stated that the demands of the teachers are aimed at all Slovak political parties that compete for the votes of the electorate in the upcoming parliamentary elections (March 5, 2016) and at the new government. The president also **condemned the mobbing and intimidation** which the teachers have to face at some schools and which comes from some school founders and headmasters.

The **Slovak Ministry of Education does not react** to the demands, claiming that it is impossible to fulfil them in a short time and **continually publishes statistics with an unobjective, lower number of schools that participate in the strike**. The ministry also **misinterprets the data related to teachers' salaries**. Nevertheless, **the public shows growing support for the teachers on strike**: there are various parental initiatives and other citizens also express their strong support at personal meetings or on social networks.

These are the teachers' demands: **to have the salaries raised** by €140 in 2016 and then by €90 in 2017, **to expand the budget of Ministry of Education** by €400,000,000 with an aim to erase the differences in the schools' equipment throughout the country, and **to pass an amendment to the law no. 317/2009** (Paedagogical Employee Law) that would reintroduce the option to acquire continual education credits, which may contribute to a rise in pay, by evaluation of the teacher's competences and skills.

More information about ISU, its activities and the teachers' strike is available at www.isu.sk.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/iniciativa.slovenskych.ucitelov/?fref=ts>

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Video (EN subtitles): <https://youtu.be/WpXaxTe2D9M>

Source: ISU (you can use and share this video)



Photo: January 25 – the mass protest in Bratislava

Source: <http://www.topky.sk/gl/339183/1700617/SPRAVA-DNA-Strajk-ucitelov--VIDEO-z-demonstracie--Minister-sa-im-vysmial-a-utiekol-z-tlacovky>