

## **EUROPEAN SCHOOL STUDENTS DEMAND CONSTRUCTIVE MEASURES TO COUNTERBALANCE VIOLENCE IN HUNGARIAN SCHOOLS**

The Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions- OBESSU, the platform for cooperation for school student unions from all over Europe, expresses its deepest concern with the educational measures proposed by the Hungarian Government, thereby on the impact that might be produced on the Hungarian school students. The Government of Hungary expressed its intention to deploy police forces in 500 schools across the country- the measure, according to the government, aims for prevention of violence towards teachers and educational personnel.

Gergely Gulyás, the current Minister of the Prime Minister's Office announced on the 28th of May that the Government is willing to set up a school guard in around 500 schools, including general education and vocational education. Besides introducing the presence of the school guards, the government plans to extend the range of criminal offences and set the minimum age limit of punishability at 12 years, hence all crimes committed against teachers would fall into this category. As far as the position within the school, Gulyás highlighted that the guards will be part of the educational personnel, therefore present in the educational environment and in the school activities. The guards will be authorised to act on the basis of the law presented by the Minister, taking action in the situation in which the school students do not behave accordingly.

On the perspective of defending the rule of law, the idea of introducing the police in schools is threatening, especially with the concrete possibilities of arbitrary punishment against young learners, clearly not put in conditions of adequately defending their rights. Furthermore, the presence of state guards in schools will undoubtedly undermine the right to freedom of thought and freedom of expression of educational institutions, teachers and school students. The measure taken contradicts international and European law, violating the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and The European Convention on Human Rights, each one stipulating the right of children to be protected against any form of violence, abuse, maltreatment and discrimination and declaring everyone's right to freedom of expression.. State parties have the duty to ensure that human rights, rights of the child, are protected, respected and promoted. Hungary not only breaks international laws, but also promotes violence against children as means of education, taking a step back from the progress made at European and international level on promoting child's rights. Creating such a measure will create imbalances between children and adults, permitting the adults to use force as coercive methods and leaving school students without any power to defend their rights.

On a pedagogical level, increasing the gap between learners and teachers and the school institution through the use of violence against school students is absolutely against the creation of a safe space and productive learning environment. Therefore, the teachers will be regarded as an authoritarian power, hindering the entire educational process of the school. Consequently, the learning-pace, the adaptability to school and the general view towards education will be drastically altered and replaced with resistance. It also will negatively affect the right to democratic participation of learners, making it harder to feel safe while showing dissent and opposition to policies or decisions from the school bodies and the teachers. If implemented, this measure could also result in a form of censorship from the teachers, the school students and the educational institutions themselves, due to the reasons mentioned above, and consequently lead to a generalised feeling of fear and distrust which can be detrimental to pedagogical objectives.

Protecting the rights of children, from any background, should be the priority of the Hungarian government. Violence is replaced with violence, instead of community interventions, counselling with school students and their families and financial and educational support. With a conjugated effort of the community and school, supporting school students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds should be emplaced. It is crucial to abolish all forms of violence from school; school students, teachers, educational personnel, parents should not be subject to any form of force or abuse. Protective measures have to be implemented and an educational environment based on equality should be established, respect amongst its members should be at the core.

Given the context of the proposal, we urge international and European actors to monitor the actions taken by the Hungarian government and act accordingly. We believe that the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the European Union and their bodies have the judicial competence and the ability to act upon the legislative proposal in the unlikely event of it being passed.

As the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions, we stand with the school students of Hungary, asking for the abolition of the approval process of this obsolete and coercive measure. We express our full solidarity to all learners whose needs are not taken into account, and as continental platform of School Student Unions we call for action at all levels (international, European and national). It is crucial to create a common ground of understanding between all members of the education community and create feasible and student-centred measures to counterbalance violence within schools. A halt to this authoritarian path is needed and the Government of Hungary must be asked to be accountable for the policies implemented against learners. Education should be based on human rights, mutual respect, quality and inclusiveness in both secondary and vocational education.