Hungarian teachers’ protests

Hungarian teachers have been openly protesting for almost a year now. The formal protests began in January. As a response, Orbán, Hungary’s Prime Minister, basically took away the teachers' right to strike (they cannot skip their teaching obligations while they “strike”), and quite a few protesters have been fired from their jobs. Just this week, 8 teachers were fired since they protested during school hours.

Why the protests? I think Hungarian teachers used to have a pretty good job. But in recent years, their load increased a great deal, more testing was introduced and kids need to go to school more. I have to say, I see the US influence, which shouldn't be a surprise to anyone after seeing in the news that Orbán was invited to the US to give the keynote address at CPAC, and then he paid a visit to Trump.

I have many teacher friends and they say the main issue is not just about money but the general worsening conditions of teachers, and as a result, there is a huge teacher shortage.

Though numbers don’t tell everything, they clearly indicate serious problems. For example, here is a chart showing teachers' salaries relative to other college educated people's salaries (I think most of the countries' names are recognizable; EU22 is the EU average). Note how the US (*Egyesült Államok* in Hungarian) and Hungary are the last two

<https://flo.uri.sh/visualisation/8468807/embed?auto=1>

The next chart shows the mandatory classroom hours in several European countries. Hungary is at the top (meaning, most hours) and in fact, since there aren't enough teachers, the average teaching load is close to 27 hours. (US teachers teach even more, like 6 classes per day which means a 30 hour load)

<https://flo.uri.sh/visualisation/8570101/embed?auto=1>

Below, I put together some reports of the protests in the international media in the last two months.

*Bloomberg* writes this about today’s (Dec 2) protests

*Hundreds of Hungarian teachers joined a widening strike action across the nation’s school system following a government decision to fire more educators for protesting low pay.*

*Almost 700 teachers from 71 schools walked off the job on Friday, forcing several institutions to suspend classes, according to the Teacher for Teachers Facebook page, which compiles the information.*

*Thousands of students joined in solidarity, many of them placing black tape over their mouths. They decried what they called a hardline response by Prime Minister Viktor Orban’s government to silence teachers who earn among the lowest wages in the European Union.*

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-12-02/hungarian-teacher-strike-grows-as-firings-trigger-backlash>

**Nov 18**

*BUDAPEST,**(Reuters) - Hungarian teachers, students and parents stepped up their protest calling for higher wages and education reforms on Friday, forming a 10-km (six-mile) human chain in central Budapest, with smaller rallies held across the country.*

*Teachers launched their "I want to teach" movement in September, calling for civil disobedience to demand higher wages for teachers and an adequate supply in the workforce. They are also protesting against restrictions on their right to strike.*

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/hungarians-widen-protests-over-teachers-pay-cost-of-living-crisis-deepens-2022-11-18/>

Here is a video of the protests a few weeks earlier. As you can see many students support the teachers.

<https://youtu.be/SiKQV1GLD_Q>

**Oct 6:**

*Wednesday's rally, which started with students forming a chain stretching for kilometers (miles) across Budapest in the morning grew into the biggest anti-government demonstration since nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban's April re-election.*

*Protesters carrying banners saying "Do not sack our teachers" and "For a glimpse of the future, look at the schools of the present" crammed a Budapest bridge near parliament, blocking traffic amid light police presence.*

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/students-form-human-chains-across-budapest-supporting-teachers-strike-2022-10-05/>