



**Συντεχνία Διδακτορικών Επιστημόνων
Διδασκαλίας και Έρευνας (ΔΕΔΕ)**
website: <http://www.dede.org.cy/>
email: info@dede.org.cy

Nicosia, 11 December 2017

Press Release

Strike action at the University of Cyprus

Following its general meeting (7/12/2017) DEDE has decided to take strike action at the University of Cyprus in response to the University's unwillingness to implement the agreement concluded between the trade union and the Rectorate last June. The members of the trade union authorized the Board of Directors of DEDE to announce the 48-hour strike if the Management of the University of Cyprus does not immediately proceed to implement the agreement, and continue the dialogue in good faith on the outstanding issues. The strike measures, which involve both researchers and lecturers, will take place in the beginning of the next semester and will affect dozens of research programs, as well as undergraduate and postgraduate courses across several departments at the University of Cyprus.

DEDE is a pan-Cyprian trade union, representing academic PhD holders employed in irregular working positions. It has many members at the University of Cyprus, who cover a large part of the University's constant and permanent needs in research and teaching with hourly and fixed term contracts. Our members receive very low wages and in the form of successive, yet interrupted, contracts. Their employment is subject to particularly precarious working conditions, without fundamental employment rights, such as maternity leave, medical coverage or 13th salary, and without academic rights, such as for example the right to be represented in the collegiate bodies of the university.

All attempts aimed at engaging in a democratic dialogue with the University authorities were futile. While our academic status should have been self-evident and acknowledged on the basis of our contribution to the quality work undertaken at the University of Cyprus in recent years, this, unfortunately, has not been the case. The University has refused to discuss core issues pertaining to our status, and failed to understand that precarious work conditions undermine the quality of research and teaching. The University must take action and address the rationalization of its human resources.

Some examples should illustrate this point. Special Scientists (teaching staff) at the University of Cyprus are not paid at all for the research they conduct, despite the fact that their research output helps improve the University's position in international rankings. Also, their salary accounts to only one fourth ($\frac{1}{4}$) of the lowest salary compared to that of Teaching and Research Faculty (Lecturer), and despite the fact that they share the same amount of teaching load. In addition, following the financial crisis, the University of Cyprus chose to further target this group of low-paid academics, cutting almost 20% of its annual salary, even though the group's income was within the threshold of the minimum wage in the Republic of Cyprus.

Furthermore, the University instituted a regulation that forfeits the right to teach after 6 consecutive semesters, something that runs against every quality criterion and principle of meritocracy. After the two successive salary cuts of 2013 and 2015, an adjunct lecturer who holds a PhD and teaches 4 courses (as many as an academic in a regular working position teaches) receives an annual salary of only €9,570. At the same time, the University of Cyprus attempts to establish annual post-doctoral researchers' salaries of €20,000, which is 30% less than the salaries determined in existing regulations, as well as European standards and directives.

Negotiations between DEDE and the Rectorate of the University of Cyprus began in 2016. In June 2017 we reached an agreement on seven points that would be directly implemented, while we committed to

continue negotiating on outstanding issues. The fundamental agreement includes lifting salary cuts to adjuncts, setting €25,000 as the minimum annual salary of postdoctoral researchers, the increase of Visiting Academic posts (9-monthly contracts) to satisfy the fixed teaching needs instead of the employment of hourly-paid staff, the creation and advertising of 5-year positions for Lab Scientists, and the financial support for all contracted academics for participation in international conferences.

Six months after the agreement the University administration has not implemented any of the agreed and has not entered a dialogue on the other outstanding issues. Instead, it has announced new positions with terms that violate the agreement, leaving us no other choice than strike measures.

We informed the University of Cyprus management that our strike action is a warning, and that the failure to observe the agreement as well as a refusal to engage in good faith on the outstanding issues will force our Union to escalate its strike action.

We ought to stress that the right to trade union activity is protected by the constitution and the legislation in force of the Republic of Cyprus. We call on all our colleagues, regardless of membership in DEDE, to participate in the strike that concerns our self-evident rights, without fear of any possible consequences for their employment status. We ask our students and society at large to understand that the university administration is solely responsible for this labour dispute and that they should seek explanations from them.

We, as academics who care for the future of the university itself, must defend our rights to jobs with safe employment status and decent employment conditions.