

Press release, 26.10.2009

Students protest at the University of Vienna  
Audimax occupied for days, Movement spreading

The 26<sup>th</sup> of October is Austria's national holiday. While the Austrian military is conducting its traditional parade on Vienna's Heldenplatz (meaning *Square of the Heroes*) with tanks and jets, students from the University of Vienna fight for reforms in the educational sector only a few meters further down the road. Since Thursday evening hundreds of students keep the Audimax, the biggest lecture hall of the University, occupied. They want to draw attention to the continuously worsening conditions for students and present tangible suggestions for reform to the government.

Starting point for the movement was the protest of students of the Academy of Fine Arts which was joined by hundreds of students from different faculties.

The protestors have organised themselves well in short time: workgroups are formulating tangible demands which are discussed in an open plenum and then finalized on grass-root democratic principles.

The demands of the students are:

(Extensive description in German to be found on [www.unsereuni.at](http://www.unsereuni.at))

- Education instead of job training
- Free university access for everyone
- More democracy in the organisation of the universities
- Adequate budgeting of the universities
- Barrier-free studying
- Putting an end to the precarious employment status at the universities
- A women-quota of 50% on every employment level at the universities

While minister of science Johannes Hahn is still talking about a "local ad-hoc action" at the University of Vienna the protests expand. At the University of Graz a lecture hall has been occupied as well and statements of solidarity, national and international, continue to come in.

The students are using social networks like Facebook and Twitter to network with other groups and several thousand supporters. The website created specifically for the protests is used to inform about the latest developments as well as to stream the discussions from the plenum live.

Austria's boulevard media meanwhile is trying to degrade the protests and display them as a simple fun and party movement while the work did not stop at the University during the weekend: students continuously conduct workgroups meetings and plenary sessions. Professors hold lectures and a creative programme with forum theatre and movie screenings provide a change in activities.

For the upcoming days several protests are planned with a call for a mass rally on Wednesday, 28.10.

Links: *etc. etc.*