

# *Thousands Rally Against Spending Cuts in France*

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Paris, May 16 (RHC)-- Thousands of civil servants in France have held a one-day strike over pay and working conditions. The demonstrators marched in several cities on Thursday to protest against the government's planned spending cuts.

The strike came after the government last month announced a series of spending cuts, including a freeze on public sector pay, for the next three years. French Prime Minister Manuel Valls came under criticism after unveiling details of the plan.

Valls, who was appointed prime minister on March 31st, said the government is prepared to target politically sensitive areas of France's welfare state to achieve the savings, including freezing benefit and pension payments at current levels for the next year. He added that a freeze in the basic pay of civil servants would remain in place. The pay freeze for France's five million public sector workers has been in place since 2010.

France saw no economic growth in the first quarter of 2014 and prospect of its economy is still grim, while other eurozone countries have had a better performance over the same period. Eurozone's second-largest economy has been struggling to cope with an increasing debt problem in recent years.

France suffered two recessions in past years and is currently coping with an unemployment rate of over ten percent. Growth was also calculated at 0.2 percent in 2013.

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