

# *Teachers in France on Strike Over Reforms*

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Paris, May 21 (RHC)-- Protests are taking place in France against plans to reduce the teaching of Latin and ancient Greek and instead focus on classical culture. Seven teaching unions, representing 80 percent of the country's middle school teachers, have joined the strike.

French Education Minister Najat Vallaud-Belkacem's proposal also includes reforming classes for students aged 11-15, after the age group performed poorly in international tests. She has come under pressure from critics in the weeks leading to the start of the strike.

Although the ruling Socialists say the reforms would give schools more freedom on teaching, the country's conservatives have labeled the reform a "shipwreck for France."

French Prime Minister Manuel Valls has also defended the reform plan, saying Paris seeks "to change an education system that reinforces inequalities. We want to improve everyone's level across the board."

However, the country's 840,000 teachers argue that the reforms will increase competition between teachers and could lead to further inequalities. And some 230 French MPs have signed a petition demanding the government to withdraw the bill.

Recent polls indicate that more than 60 percent of people in France oppose the reform plan.

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