

For Romanian Students, the Right to Protest is All They Have Left

October 7,
2025

Document Type **Statement** ▾

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The European Students' Union (ESU) condemns the Romanian authorities' disregard for the supportive measures needed to ensure accessibility to higher education, as well as for the student protests advocating these measures.

ANOSR (The National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania) is organizing massive protests and marches across the country as the new academic year begins. The protests are taking place in Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Iași, Galați, Suceava, Baia Mare, Alba Iulia, Sibiu, and Timișoara.

Between December 2024 and August 2025, ANOSR led a sustained campaign against a series of austerity measures affecting students in Romania, including the Emergency Ordinance 156/2024, which limited access to subsidized transportation. Despite collecting over 50,000 petition signatures and addressing multiple decision makers, students' demands were repeatedly ignored. The adoption of Law 141/2025 formalized the austerity measures, including a 40% cut to the national scholarship fund, prompting widespread protests in June 2025 across university centers. Students condemned the state's neglect of an already struggling education system with a dropout rate exceeding 40%.

In August, ANOSR published a report exposing the chronic underfunding of student scholarships over the past decade. At the same time, students took their frustration to the streets. In Timișoara, over 500 student leaders gathered to protest, later going to the country's border, to express that they are driven to consider leaving the country due to the government's continuous ignorance.

Looking at all the efforts initiated by students through ANOSR and the academic community over the past year, we face a state in which education is the lowest priority. The Romanian state disregards the needs and rights of its direct beneficiaries of education, the voices of stakeholders and civil society, which have repeatedly warned over the past months that these measures are destroying the education system.

In the absence of the state-guaranteed rights and measures ensuring equal access for students facing difficult socio-economic situations, special educational needs, or medical problems, these individuals find themselves unable to sustain their studies and are forced to drop out, excluding them from higher education. **This contributes to the growing phenomenon of university dropout, which currently exceeds 40%**, posing a serious problem for Romania's education system and systematic failure to uphold the right to education.

ESU supports ANOSR's demands to reverse austerity measures affecting students, including:

- reinstating the allocation of the scholarship fund for the entire calendar year (12 months);

- restoring the payment of scholarships to students over the entire calendar year (12 months);
- increasing the percentage of the net minimum wage used to calculate the standard cost for establishing the scholarship fund from 10% to 17.5%, to return to a scholarship fund value similar to that of 2024, when the standard cost represented 10% of the gross minimum wage;
- reintroducing the possibility for students enrolled in fee-paying positions to receive scholarships from state budget funds;
- encouraging higher education institutions to diversify support mechanisms for students through their own income, including via institutional projects;
- increasing the own-contribution of higher education institutions to the scholarship fund to supplement the number of scholarships awarded, especially to meet the demands of students eligible for social scholarships;
- repealing Article XXIX, paragraph (1) of Emergency Ordinance no. 156/2024, which limits students' rights to access domestic rail transport facilities on all routes.

ESU stands in solidarity with Romanian students and firmly supports their right to protest, be heard, and exercise their fundamental right to access fair and inclusive education. We call on Romanian authorities to immediately reconsider the harmful austerity measures, engage in meaningful dialogue with student representatives, and prioritize education as a public good. The future of higher education in Romania depends on investing in students.