Mass protests across several European countries against rising living costs and poor public services

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News

In October 2026 large protests broke out in several European countries against rising living costs, rents, low wages and under-funded education and public services, peaking over the weekend of 17–18 October. In France more than 550,000 people marched nationwide on 17 Oct (Interior Ministry count) against the 2027 budget's €54 billion package of spending cuts and tax measures, a freeze on civil-servant pay and fuel prices; violence hit several cities and Limoges town hall was burnt; President Macron announced talks with students, teachers and unions. Portugal (Lisbon, Porto) – housing crisis; Italy (Milan, Turin, Bologna) – clashes, and on 20 Oct the Meloni government approved a decree with tougher penalties; Belgium (Brussels, Liège) – education costs; Albania (Tirana) – student-led protests since 13 Oct demanding PM Edi Rama's resignation; Greece (Athens, 21 Oct) – about 10,000 students and teachers marched for school funding.

Key facts

Peak days	Weekend of 17–18 Oct 2026; France's main protest day was Sat 17 Oct

France	550,000+ marchers (17 Oct); about 1,800 arrests that day (Interior Minister) – about 2,400 over the unrest (media reports); about 1,500 shops damaged (retail federation)
Italy	20 Oct decree – up to 5 years' jail for violent group protest; 500 troops in Milan till end-2026
Portugal	Lisbon, Porto protest camps cleared on 20 Oct; 55 arrested
Albania	Tirana – student protests from 13 Oct over education costs and corruption; earlier protests against a luxury resort plan on the southern coast
Prices	EU food prices up 34% between Aug 2021 and Aug 2026 (Eurostat)

Background

- This is not one coordinated Europe-wide movement; each country has its own triggers (Euronews). Common threads: rising food, housing and energy costs, youth job anxiety and under-funded education. France's 'Yellow Vest' (Gilets jaunes) movement began in 2018 against a fuel-tax rise; its activists joined this time too.
- European Union (EU): formally created on 1 Nov 1993 when the Maastricht Treaty (signed 7 Feb 1992) came into force; 27 member States; main institutions in Brussels. European Central Bank (ECB) – 1998, headquartered in Frankfurt (Germany); sets monetary policy for the euro area. The EU statistical office, Eurostat, is in Luxembourg.
- Albania is not an EU member – a candidate country since 2014; currency 'lek'. PM Rama says joining the EU by 2030 is the goal. France, Italy, Belgium, Portugal and Greece are members of both the EU and the euro area.
- Economy: inflation caused by rising input costs (fuel, wages, raw materials) is 'cost-push inflation'; that caused by excess demand is 'demand-pull inflation'. Even when inflation slows, the price level stays high, so household purchasing power falls. In India the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is released by the National Statistics Office (NSO, MoSPI).

Tamil Nadu link: the Public Distribution System (PDS) is a key shield against rising prices. Even after the Centre introduced the 'Targeted PDS' (TPDS) in 1997, Tamil Nadu has continued a 'universal PDS' covering all ration-card holders; since 1 June 2011 free rice is given to all rice-card holders.

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