



The ongoing student uprising in France is a direct response to severe public education underfunding and sweeping austerity measures in the proposed 2027 draft budget, which critics and public sector workers have condemned as a structural “starve the beast” strategy. Triggered by deteriorating school conditions, the nationwide demonstrations have seen over 250,000 participants, resulting in the closure of nearly 2,000 schools and more than 6,500 arrests amidst intense clashes between youth and riot police.

The movement began to gain significant momentum in late September 2026. High school and university students blockaded hundreds of campuses across major cities like Paris, Marseille, Lyon, and Toulouse.

The primary triggers for the outrage include:

- **Dilapidated Infrastructure:** Students are protesting dangerous, unhygienic environments featuring leaking roofs, rodent infestations, and classrooms lacking basic furniture.
- **Severe Staffing Shortages:** Thousands of classrooms are missing regular teachers, leaving students facing canceled classes and extended gaps in instruction.
- **Extreme Overcrowding:** Class sizes have ballooned up to 35 pupils per room, further compounded by mandatory, grueling daily schedules that stretch from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m..

So what does the strategy called “Starving the Beast” entail?

The core strategy of “**Starving the Beast**” is a political and economic tactic aimed at shrinking the size of government by deliberately **cutting taxes to create budget deficits**, which then forces spending cuts on public services and social programs. The aim is to ease the transition into the privatisation of core public services.

Here are the main points of how the strategy operates:

- **Tax Cuts as the First Step:** Proponents pass aggressive tax cuts, particularly targeting corporate and high-income rates. The explicit goal is to dramatically reduce the amount of revenue flowing into the government’s coffers.



Deliberate Deficit Creation: Rather than balancing the budget, this strategy intentionally starves the government of funds, creating deep fiscal deficits.

- **The “Beast” Metaphor:** In this framework, the “beast” represents the state, public sector bureaucracy, and regulatory agencies. The theory states that the beast has an insatiable appetite for spending, and trying to control it through standard legislative debate is impossible.
- **Forced Austerity:** Once the deficit becomes a political crisis, proponents use the lack of revenue as leverage. They argue that the government is “broke” and has no choice but to eliminate or privatize social safety nets, education, healthcare, and infrastructure spending.
- **Shifting public perception:** By defunding public institutions, those services naturally deteriorate over time. Proponents then point to the failing systems as proof that the government is inherently inefficient, building public support for privatization.

The result is that private corporations make massive profits by invoicing both individuals and the public sector. The US is a prime example of this nightmare scenario, where the government pays twice as much per patient as e.g. in Norway, a country with free public health services—in addition to individual having to pay for private health insurance. In other words, it becomes more expensive for both private citizens and state or municipal governments.

A few individuals become incredibly wealthy from this system—as we have already witnessed in countries that have transitioned to private schools and kindergartens, where the owners draw enormous salaries, bonuses, and profits, while simultaneously receiving substantial public subsidies.

PROUT is crystal clear in its advocacy that core public services like education and health should never be privatised.