

# Greeks have no reason to celebrate

*Last week, Eurozone finance ministers offered Greece a 10-year deferral and maturities extension on a large part of past loans as well as 15 billion euros in new credit. This is supposed to ensure Athens can stand on its own feet after it finally exits its bailout in August, eight years after stringent austerity measures were imposed on the country. On hearing this news, many Greeks celebrated. Even Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras appeared wearing a tie! However, as **Ambassador Leonidas Chrysanthopoulos** explains, the country has nothing to celebrate.*

Greece was obliged to submit to EU programs in 2010 so that the public debt could be reduced. In 2010, this debt was 262 billion euros. In 2018 it is 323 billion euros and growing. To put it another way, debt was 120% of GDP in 2010 and 185% in 2018. So the objective of the program failed: the public debt was not reduced. And after eight years of measures, the country has been destroyed and the people continue to suffer.

To present the completion of the fourth and final review of the growth strategy as a victory and a story of success, the Eurogroup statement of 22 June 2018 congratulated the Greek authorities and the Greek people on the successful conclusion of the ESM program. The statement is a masterpiece of manipulation of public opinion, presenting a disaster as a success. It might have been more honest to present it as a successful disaster.

The Eurogroup did not give Greece a debt relief or reduction as had been promised in the past. The unsustainable debt magically became sustainable. What was given to Greece was an

extension of debt interest repayment and maturity for Greek bonds for 10 years.

Not many observers paid attention to a document called Annex A in which six specific commitments are mentioned in order to ensure the continuity and completion of reforms adopted under the ESM programme. These commitments concern:

1. **Fiscal retrenchment** where Greece assumes to fully respect its commitment to ensure that its annual budget achieves a primary surplus of 3.5% of GDP over the medium term. This means constant over-taxation of the Greek people and no relief in sight.
2. **Social welfare**, where Greece will continue with efforts to modernise its social welfare system, health care system, pensions and proposing a new approach on disability benefits. Modernisation in euro-jargon means collapse through financial squeezing, as we have seen from the last eight years.
3. **Financial stability** obliging Greece to continue implementing reforms aiming at restoring the health of the banking system. This health is more important than the health of the Greek people and obliges Greece to implement the comprehensive action plan on household insolvency with the objective to eliminate the backlog of cases by end 2021. This means that more people will be rendered homeless in order to restore the health of the banking system.
4. Greece will safeguard competitiveness of its **labour market** through an annual update of the minimum wage in line with the provisions of law 4172/2012. In other words, a continuation of low minimum wages and poverty for the people.
5. **Privatisation**. Greece confirms its intention to complete a large number of privatisations including airports, ports, marinas. Actually most of the country becomes privatised as the state is stripped from its assets and

this “with a view to swiftly attract investment to support a sustained economic recovery”.

6. The implementation of reforms to modernise the **public administration** will be sustained. In other words, more civil servants will be fired so unemployment will increase.

What is totally surreal and shows the true face of the EU is the paragraph of the Eurogroup statement that intervenes into the Greek justice system and tries to influence it. There have been court proceedings that have started against members of the Committee of Experts of TAIPED for violating Greek law. TAIPED is an institution created by the Troika that acquires public property and sells it within the framework of the privatisation policy that is being imposed upon the country.

The former president and some senior staff of the Greek Statistical authority ELSTAT have had proceedings opened against them for falsifying statistics. The blatant intervention into the Greek justice system mentions:

*“We recalled that the ongoing legal proceedings against the members of the Committee of experts of TAIPED are a matter of very serious concern and we reaffirm our full confidence in the work of the experts, which was also confirmed by the Hellenic Court of Auditors. Preoccupations also concern the proceedings against the former President and senior staff of ELSTAT, notably as regards the alleged falsification of fiscal data. The Eurogroup continues to have full confidence that the data validated by Eurostat and delivered by ELSTAT since 2010, including the 2009 general balance outturn is in compliance with the rules that are applied in all Member States. The Eurogroup mandates the institutions to continue monitoring the developments in those cases and the supporting actions taken by the Greek authorities, including legislative actions if needed, for instance strengthening the independence of ELSTAT, in full respect of the independence of the judiciary, and report*

*back to the Eurogroup in the context of the post programme surveillance."*

This paragraph is a masterpiece of hypocrisy that undermines the judiciary system of what is left of a member state. Our Brexit friends should be informed about this.

In these eight years, Greece has been destroyed systematically. Thanks to the austerity measures, people have died, unemployment has soared, poverty has increased and basic human rights have been violated. Meanwhile, in Brussels the politicians and technocrats have been congratulating themselves on the 'progress' achieved in Greece.

So what can be done? Nothing, unless we have regime change in Greece. Once that is done, then the Loan Facility Agreement of May 2010 can be unilaterally denounced according to UN procedures. The country could then leave the eurozone and the EU.

Criminal charges should be raised against the Greek regimes that collaborated with the Troika and against the the Troika itself for crimes against humanity. Article 41.3 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU must be implemented. It stipulates: "Every person has the right to have the Union make good any damage caused by its institutions or by its servants in the performance of their duties, in accordance with the general principles common to the laws of the Member States."

And finally, Greece should claim reparations from Germany for the loan that it made during the occupation of the country from 1941 to 1944, which it never paid back and which created the famine in the country that killed thousands of persons then. The amount with interest is more than the public debt of Greece.

Only by taking these measures can Greece be saved.