



Strasbourg, 06.04.2017

Solidarity Statement: "Stop Damaging Greece"

44 MEPS from different political groups and members of the Progressive Caucus of the European Parliament signed a common solidarity statement "Stop Damaging Greece" before next Eurogroup of 7th April on the Greece's economic adjustment programme.

The European institution and IMF are acting beyond their mandate and are demanding that Greece implements a reduction to the tax-free threshold, further cuts to pensions, and even greater liberalisation of labour laws.

There is no doubt saying that Greece is still being held by hostage by the dogma of austerity. Beyond the legal and normative question, the image of Europe imposing on a Member State an arbitrary derogation from social rights can only reinforce citizens' disappointment in European institutions and democracy, contributing further to the Union's disintegration, in a moment that EU is facing enormous challenges within and around its borders.

That is why we need to finally get rid of the austerity policies and instead find the strength to advocate for substantial debt relief that would pave the way for Greece's economic recovery and inclusive growth.

The open letter has been signed by the following MEPs:

Marina Albiol Guzman (GUE/NGL, Spain), **Martina Anderson** (GUE/NGL, United Kingdom), **Lucy Anderson** (S&D, United Kingdom), **Eric Andrieu** (S&D, France), **Guillaume Balas** (S&D, France), **Hugues Bayet** (S&D, Belgium), **Lynn Boylan** (GUE/NGL, Ireland), **Matt Carthy** (GUE/NGL, Ireland), **Nessa Childers** (S&D, Ireland), **Kostas Chrysogonos** (GUE/NGL, Greece), **Sergio Cofferati** (S&D, Italy), **Karima Delli** (Greens/EFA, France), **Pascal Durand** (Greens/EFA, France), **Cornelia Ernest** (GUE/NGL, Germany), **Ismail Ertug** (S&D, Germany), **Ana Gomes** (S&D, Portugal), **Sylvie Guillaume** (S&D, France), **Yannick Jadot** (Greens/EFA, France), **Eva Joly** (Greens/EFA, France), **Agnes Jongerius** (S&D, Netherlands), **Dietmar Köster** (S&D, Germany), **Stelios Kouloglou** (GUE/NGL, Greece), **Kostadinka Kuneva** (GUE/NGL, Greece), **Patrick Le Hyaric** (GUE/NGL, France), **Curzio Maltese** (GUE/NGL, Italy), **Florent Marcellesi** (Greens/EFA, Spain), **Edouard Martin** (S&D, France), **Marisa Matias** (GUE/NGL, Portugal), **Emmanuel Maurel** (S&D, France), **Liadh Ni Riada** (GUE/NGL, Ireland), **Dimitrios Papadimoulis** (GUE/NGL, Greece), **Georgi Pirinski** (S&D, Bulgaria), **Christine Revault d'Allonnes Bonnefoy** (S&D, France), **Michèle Rivasi** (Greens/EFA, France), **Virginie Rozière** (S&D, France), **Elly Schlein** (S&D, Italy), **Barbara Spinelli** (GUE/NGL, Italy), **Bart Staes** (Greens/EFA, Belgium), **Josep-Maria Terricabras** (Greens/EFA, Spain), **Isabelle Thomas** (S&D, France), **Ernest Urtasun** (Greens/EFA, Spain), **Monika Vana** (Greens/EFA, Austria), **Marie-Christine Vergiat** (GUE/NGL, France), **Julie Ward** (S&D, United Kingdom).



Please find below the statement:

STOP DAMAGING GREECE

At Friday's Eurogroup meeting (7 April) the Eurozone finance ministers will discuss the second review of Greece's economic adjustment programme.

The institutions [International Monetary Fund (IMF), European Central Bank (ECB) and the European Commission] are demanding that Greece implements a reduction to the tax-free threshold, further cuts to pensions, and even greater liberalisation of labour laws. It is, therefore, clear that in spite of opposite statements, Greece is still being held hostage by the dogma of austerity.

More than one out of three (35.7 percent) of the Greek population is at risk of poverty and social exclusion and unemployment at 23%– the highest levels in the Eurozone ¹–, whilst state spending has been cut by 31% (2009 -2014)² and yet the IMF and some member states are demanding more and more cuts.

They ask for further reductions in pensions, as they say that the Greek pension system is too generous and pensions too high. The truth is that Greece's old people are much worse off than elsewhere in Europe. 43% of pensioners receive less than 660 EUR per month, while the per capita annual income for individuals aged over 65 is about 9000 EUR compared with 20.000 in the Eurozone.

The Greek government is also forced to accept by the IMF and other institutions acting beyond their mandate, such as the ECB, a complete dismantling of collective bargaining and other labour laws on collective dismissals and trade unions protection. As also the European Commission has repeatedly underlined, this runs against European social rights law and the European social model. And while the common rhetoric is that Greece does not follow European rules, ironically it is being asked to deviate from these same rules.

But beyond the legal and normative question, the political crux is evident: The image of Europe imposing on a member state an arbitrary derogation from social rights can only reinforce citizens' disappointment in European institutions and democracy, contributing further to the Union's disintegration, in a moment that EU is facing enormous challenges within and around its borders.

We need to finally get rid of the austerity policies and instead find the strength to advocate for substantial debt relief that would pave the way for Greece's economic recovery and inclusive growth.

The concrete results from the sacrifices of the Greek people are now in danger because of damaging delays caused by the differences among the creditors and ever new demands, which jeopardize the economic and political environment both in Greece and the Eurozone.

¹ The average rate for the EU28 has remained at 23.7 percent between 2008 and 2016 (ELSTAT data)

² Eurostat data



It takes courage to argue that we're all going to benefit in the long run from strengthening each other instead of cutting the ground under our feet. To show solidarity instead of contempt. But this courage is necessary if we want to build our common future.

**The Progressive Caucus is a space of dialogue based on confidence-building and open debate. It aims at analysing differences and building bridges between progressive allies in the European Parliament and across Europe. It has been established by progressive MEPs of different political groups and is open to everyone in the community of the European Parliament standing for solidarity, democracy, social justice and sustainability.*

Website of the Progressive Caucus: www.progressivecaucus.eu