

## Trade Unions and Greece

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### Statements of Solidarity

*Through its campaigning work, Transform! seeks to gather trade unions' statements in solidarity with Greece, and to circulate them as great an extent as possible.*

#### **International Trade Union Confederation – June 29<sup>th</sup>**

##### **“Greek Bank Closures: Political Failure, Economic Fiasco”**

The closure of Greece's banks, at least until after the surprise 5 July referendum announced by the Greek government on the demands set by the “troika”, underlines the folly of putting ideology ahead of economic sense, according to the International Trade Union Confederation.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said: “Years of failed austerity policies imposed on Greece have impoverished millions and actually worsened the debt crisis.

The troika's recipe has been a disastrous failure, and risks exposing not only Greece but potentially other eurozone countries to profit-gouging by global financiers and speculators. Intransigence on all sides needs to give way to a re-start of negotiations which focus squarely on helping Greece rebuild its economy and thereby reinforcing the eurozone as a whole. Debt re-scheduling and debt relief are central to achieving that objective.”

Bernadette Ségol, European Trade Union Confederation General Secretary, today called on the EU and the IMF to “think long and hard, show more flexibility and reach a compromise with Greece which includes debt rescheduling and debt relief, and finance for social emergencies and reviving investment.”

#### **Call by French trade unions to support the Greek people (CGT, FO, FSU, Solidaires) Île-de-France Region – June 29<sup>th</sup>**

The regional bodies of the CGT, FO, FSU and Solidaires trade unions call for a demonstration in support of the Greek people and the respect of its sovereignty on Thursday July 2. Greece is today in a catastrophic situation, since it has been one of the laboratories of the implementation of austerity policies imposed by the IMF, the European Commission and the [European] Central Bank.

Last Friday those same institutions remained intransigent in the negotiations: implementation of neoliberal policies or nothing.

The Greek government having decided to subject the draft agreement to a vote, the Eurogroup immediately reacted by cutting off Greece's supplies on June 30, calling the referendum a violent move and excluding the Greek finance minister from the meeting!

The masks have fallen. The European leaders are up to everything, including disregarding popular expression, in order to prevent the implementation of policies different than those of austerity. Union forces that wage the struggle against the establishment of liberal policies that question social rights, dismantle labour rights and privilege finance at the expense of the working and unemployed people cannot remain passive.

On April 9 already, at the CGT-FO-FSU-Solidaires unitary demonstration, we had installed a giant banner reading “From Athens to Paris, throughout Europe, no to austerity policies”. Demonstrating our support to the Greek

people that clearly expressed on January 20 its refusal of the strangling of austerity policies, is to refuse a new denial of democracy in Europe after those rejecting the vote against the European Constitutional Treaty in France, Ireland and the Netherlands. But it is also vital for the union movement that fights to smash the baseless plugging insinuating that there are no other possible choices in France as well as everywhere in Europe.

Respect for the democratic choices of the peoples and rejection of austerity policies are two slogans raised by the Île-de-France (Paris region) regional bodies of the CGT, FO, FSU and Solidaires trade unions.

They call for massive participation in this demonstration.

Paris, June 29, 2015

This article was first published in Avec les Grecs <http://aveclesgrecs.com/2015/06/30/appel-cgt-fo-fsu-et-solidaires-idf-manifestation-de-soutien-au-peuple-grec-jeudi-2-juillet-a-18h30/>

**CGTP - IN National Council (Portugal) – June 30th**

## **“Against the interference of the European institutions and of the International Monetary Fund”**

The CGTP-IN condemns the interference of the European institutions and of the IMF and their policy of blackmail, humiliation and crushing of the Greek workers and people's rights.

After two programmes of aggression that sunk the country, placing it in a deep social and humanitarian crisis, the attempt of imposing a new package to perpetuate exploitation and impoverishment, is an attack on democracy, dignity and sovereign will of a people and nation.

This is a process which, under the pretext of overcoming economic and financial difficulties, is used by the European institutions and the IMF impose major policies that aim at –in Greece, like in Portugal –continuing to transfer income from labour to capital, with the deepening onslaught against labour and social rights and the extortion of the countries' wealth.

In the current Greek situation, it is crystal clear that capital and the major European powers are not interested in solving the economic problems of this country, but on the contrary, they are increasingly committed to intensifying the policy of social and civilizational regression, which is hitting, although with variable dimensions, the whole European Union.

In this context, the CGTP-IN strongly condemns the PSD-CDS government and the President of Portugal for their slavish behaviour regarding the European institutions and the IMF, concerning the Portuguese process and the support given to the blackmailing, with new and more harmful measures against the Greek people, a stance that clashes with the provisions of the Portuguese Constitution and the interest of Portugal.

The CGTP-IN reaffirms its unequivocal solidarity with the Greek workers, trade union movement and people, who are resisting and do not stop fighting against the interference of the EU institutions and of the International Monetary Fund, in defence of their legitimate rights and of Greece's sovereignty and future.

**General Confederation of Labour (CGT – France) – June 30<sup>th</sup>**  
**“Greece: who is afraid of democracy?”**

Ever since last January, the Greek people has been subjected to unbearable pressure and blackmail from the European institutions, Eurozone governments and the International Monetary Fund. They refused to respect the verdict of the polls and the democratic election of a new government which is proposing credible alternatives to austerity policies imposed by the financial sector.

Ever since his elections, the newly elected Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras has been challenging austerity packages affecting millions of Greek citizens. He proposes economic and social measures together with reforms aiming at a fairer distribution of wealth in order to foster genuine social justice, equal rights, political and fiscal transparency – in a word, democracy. The increase in the minimum wage, the restoration of pensions' thirteen month, the strengthening of public services, the development of housing and education policies belong to the urgent measures that the Greek people needs.

But first there must be a moratorium on debt servicing, so that the retained amount can be allocated to economic recovery and that the repayment of the debt doesn't hinder the very possibility of economic recovery. This requires also the recapitalisation of banks, without recognising these sums into the country's public debt.

Since several months, the Greek government and the European institutions have engaged in a “negotiation” to find a way to solve the crisis. Compromises were accepted, and the reform calendar was revised. But as a conclusion, what Merkel, Hollande and Lagarde are proposing is a true diktat. To them, only one solution: submission to banks' demands!

Referring to the people, it's only natural! That is exactly what the Greek Prime Minister is proposing by holding a referendum on July 5<sup>th</sup>. However, once again, this democratic act is contested. It is as if the best solution would be to let the European Council decides on the question that will be submitted to the Greek people.

Behind the pressure exerted on the Greek people, that is all the citizens of Europe that they want to gag! The IMF and the European leaders want to make an example out of Greece, an example for all those who want to break with this austeritarian logic and to make another voice heard. They are jeopardising the very principle of democracy!

The CGT condemns this blackmail and supports once again the Greek people and workers. In Greece as in France, we demand a genuine social and political democracy that gives a voice to the workers in their companies and to the citizens in their country.

That's why the CGT calls the workers to massively take part in the gathering that will take place in Paris on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> July, Bastille Square, at 6:30pm, as well as in all the forthcoming demonstrations in France.

<http://cgt.fr/Grece-qui-a-peur-de-la-democratie>

**Joint statement by the chairmen of the German and Greek trade union confederations**  
DGB / GSEE – June 30<sup>th</sup>

**“Extend the Aid Package for Greece by the End of the Referendum”**

With regard to the negotiation between the government of the Hellenic Republic and its lenders, the chairmen of the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) and the Greek Trade Union Confederation (GSEE), Reiner Hoffmann and Yanis Panagopoulos, declared together on Tuesday 30 June that:

“The holding of a referendum is an inalienable democratic right in a country of European tradition. Its timing and the question it raises require however a broad consensus with the political and social forces in order to prevent that the time pressure leads to an exit from the Eurozone and that the right decision is made. We demand of the

lenders to extend the current aid package until the confirmation of the result. This implies a moratorium on the repayments to the IMF.

The negotiating positions of the two parties have strongly converged since early last week's Greek proposals. We call the institutions and the European governments – including the Greek one – to do everything to prevent a Grexit. We are utterly convinced that only a sustainable solution to the Greek debt is viable.

The negotiations have to be resumed immediately, so that a balanced solution can be found. Such a solution cannot put the burden of the adjustment on the workers and the pensioners, and must lead to a sustainable solution to the debt problem. Such a solution must provide an investment plan for growth, sustainable primary surpluses and employment.

<http://www.dgb.de/presse/++co++03827148-1f29-11e5-a6c5-52540023ef1a>

### **ver.di (Germany) – July 1<sup>st</sup> “Eat or Die, Greece”**

The Troika has put a gun on the Greek government's head. Once again, the lenders want to force Athens to cut pensions, limit wages, and increase VAT. On the other hand, a special tax on particularly high profits was refused.

The forced policy of budgetary cuts has already driven the country in a deep crisis. No other industrialised country had to slash its public budget to such an extent in a few years – with devastating consequences: the economy contracted by a quarter, the revenues by a third, poverty skyrocketed, unemployment doubled, the burden of the debt increased ever since. The requested measures would exacerbate the crisis and wouldn't offer any perspective of development whatsoever.

Therefore, the Greek government has good reason to oppose these demands. It won the elections with the promise of putting an end to the failures of austerity. Nevertheless, the Greek government was ready to compromise on wrong and damaging demands. But this wasn't enough for the Troika. That's the reason why Tsipras announced that he will ask the people if they want to submit to this diktat. As a result, the EU finance ministers broke off the negotiations. The majority of the EU heads of states want to hold on “cuts diktat” by hook or by crook. They fear nothing much than seeing Spain, Portugal or Ireland vote for a change of political course. The message is clear: who wants to stay in the Eurozone must embrace neoliberal policies and sacrifice democracy.

<http://wipo.verdi.de/publikationen/++co++fce841d2-1f0a-11e5-8da7-525400248a66>

### **Unitary Union Federation (FSU – France) – July 1<sup>st</sup> “Listen to the message of the Greeks at last!”**

The Greek government has decided to call for a referendum on July 5<sup>th</sup> to obtain the opinion of the population on the agreement proposal drafted by the European institutions. This procedure has nothing to do whatsoever with an exit from the Eurozone or the EU.

Greece stands in a dramatic economic and social situation whose main cause is to be found in austerity policies that have been imposed for years by the ECB, the EC and the IMF.

Europe and its institutions must take the necessary measures to put a sustainable end to the Greek crisis and to rebuild the economy, which involves debt restructuring.

Today, many are speaking out to say that other policies than those of austerity.

What's happening in Greece isn't only the Greek people's business. It concerns Europe as a whole. It is about demanding everywhere a fairer, more solidary and more ecological social Europe.

The FSU supports the democratic process engaged by the Greek government.

We are calling to participate in the gatherings and actions of solidarity with Greece that will take place in many cities of France on July 2<sup>nd</sup>. It is about supporting the Greek people who took a clear stand on January 25<sup>th</sup> against fiscal waterboarding, and making sure that its democratic choices are respected.

<http://fsu.fr/Entendre-enfin-le-message-des.html>

**Solidaires (French union) – July 1<sup>st</sup>**

## **“Against Austerity, Solidarity with the Greek People”**

European Governments and the IMF have decided to actively prevent the Greek people to determine its future.

- By refusing a negotiation on the debt, they have been ruining Greece's public finance for months.
- By pushing for austerity policies – and therefore a further impoverishment of the people –, they refuse the implementation of measures for which the Greeks gave a clear mandate.
- And today, they are openly blackmailing to exert pressure on the referendum to be held on Sunday

By doing this, the Troika is warning and threatening all the peoples of Europe.

We, too, refuse that austerity and cuts in public expenditure become the sole horizon of European policies – and therefore French ones as well. We, too, refuse the authoritarian and anti-democratic will to throw to the ground working classes.

The union Solidaires is calling its activists and the workers to gather together in solidarity with the Greek people, everywhere where initiatives will take place in the coming days. It demands from the French government and the European institutions to put an end to which is nothing less than a financial coup

<http://www.solidaires.org/article51397.html>

## **The Scottish Trade Unions Congress (STUC) supports SYRIZA Scotland NO rally – July 2<sup>nd</sup>**

The STUC will be speaking at and supporting the Syriza Scotland 'No' rally outside the office of the European Commission in Edinburgh at 12 noon on Saturday the 4th of July.

STUC Deputy General Secretary Dave Moxham said:

"The question of how to vote on Sunday is ultimately of course a decision for the people of Greece. But they will vote on Sunday in circumstances which are unprecedented. It has become increasingly clear that the international financial institutions and the EU hierarchy are prepared to contemplate acts of extreme economic incompetence and social vandalism in their attempts to crush opposition to austerity from ordinary working people and the elected government of Greece. Greece is their current target, but their aim is far wider and encompasses all those who would stand against austerity. It is now, therefore, more vital than ever, that workers and progressives in Scotland show their solidarity."

<http://www.stuc.org.uk/news/1171/syriza-scotland-no-rally>

IUT

## What is really at stake in the Greek crisis

(deutsche Version: <http://www.iuf.org/w/?q=de/node/4329> )

1 July 2015 **Editorial**

A spectre is haunting Europe - the spectre of a democratic alternative to austerity. The Syriza government of Greece incarnates that alternative, which is why the European Commission and the European Central Bank (ECB) have allied with the IMF to exorcise the challenge it represents. With few exceptions, political parties of every persuasion have tacitly or actively supported the anti-Syriza coalition.

Since its election victory in January, Syriza has fruitlessly sought to negotiate relief from the ruinous austerity imposed on previous governments, a program which has wreaked levels of economic and social destruction normally associated only with wartime, postponed recovery to a distant future and added to the burden of debt.

The government, despite its electoral pledges to end austerity, scoured the country for all available cash, slashed expenditure to achieve a budget surplus and met its payments to creditors. The Commission, the ECB and the IMF (now known as 'the institutions' rather than the Troika) made it clear from day one that debt reduction, the only realistic solution to the enduring crisis, was not on the table. While the government patiently sought to negotiate, and even agreed to a continuation of the ruinous bailout on terms which would have sucked additional billions of euros out of the economy, their proposals met with dismissal, contempt and insults.

The 'institutions' cynically refuse all responsibility for the predictably massive economic collapse. Limited government measures to ensure basic nutrition and continued access to electricity for the most vulnerable parts of the population were denounced as unacceptable 'unilateralism'. For Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker, whose previous claim to distinction was consolidating Luxembourg as a tax haven for multinational corporations, no Greek tax proposal was regressive enough. Government proposals to maintain skeletal systems of collective bargaining and social protection were repeatedly condemned. The ECB orchestrated capital flight and a run on the banks by limiting Greek banks' access to loans while spooning out just enough emergency liquidity to maintain permanent pressure.

Now the 'institutions' have taken new measures to sink the Greek economy in response to the government's decision to call a July 5 referendum on the bailout terms. The goal is to reinforce rule by banks and so-called technocrats (who are in fact highly political) and remind the citizens of Greece they must never imagine they might challenge the power of finance.

The simple truth is that the social savagery called [austerity](#) could never produce the result it was ostensibly intended to deliver.

The negotiations were never about economics, but about regime change - and eliminating possible political contagion elsewhere in Europe.

In 1953, the London conference of Germany's creditors agreed to write off half of Germany's sizeable pre-war debt and made payment of the remainder contingent on Germany's ability to pay by running a trade surplus. No surplus, no payments. The

London Agreement was political; it was intended to fortify Germany's position in the Cold War. The decision to undermine a government of the left in Greece is equally political. The assertion, endlessly repeated during 6 months of negotiations, that Europe can weather a Greek default and exit from the euro, can be turned on its head. Europe can digest a substantial write-down of Greek debt - in fact it would be beneficial to everyone - but the 'institutions' are determined to deliver a political lesson, and not just to Greece.

Throughout the negotiations, the government has defended its position patiently, at times eloquently. Its proposals for limited measures to defend workers, pensioners and the poor from the ravages of an unprecedented depression would have appeared as the most moderate Keynesianism three decades ago. That they are now denounced as a threat to the European order tells us a great deal about that order and about the underlying crisis of European and global politics. Syriza's election victory has shown the potential power of a broad movement of the Left which is prepared to contest the status quo. Solidarity is crucial, now more than ever, for Syriza to continue fighting. Unions should be organizing that solidarity.

<http://www.iuf.org/w/?q=node/4328>