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'Bankrupt but Free': Greeks stage nationwide anti-austerity rallies

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Eurozone finance ministers have made progress in discussions with Greece following hours of talks on Wednesday. The talks on whether to extend an international bailout to Athens will continue during the next scheduled meeting on Monday, as the sides could not agree on another meeting before then.

*"We explored a number of issues, one of which was the current program," Eurogroup chairman Jeroen Dijsselbloem said. "We discussed the possibility of an extension. For some that is clear that is preferred option but we haven't come to that conclusion as yet."*

Greece has confirmed there was no agreement, adding that *"negotiations will continue with the goal of a mutually beneficial agreement."*

*"An extension of the memorandum cannot be accepted,"* a statement from Athens reads. Greece's new finance minister, Yanis Varoufakis, is negotiating to adjust conditions of the \$284 billion bailout memorandum, agreed by a previous government in 2012.

According to his recent statements, Varoufakis is looking to scrap about 30 percent of the conditions, which came attached with the previous loans. He is also seeking to secure an extension for further talks, funded by a loan that will allow the government to fulfill its obligations.

After seven hours of talks, Varoufakis said it was a *"good discussion"* that will continue on

Monday, adding he believes a *"healing deal"* on Greece's finances could be reached next week.

### **'Bankrupt but Free'**

Standing in front of the parliament building in central Athens – the traditional place for public demonstrations – a peaceful crowd held placards with the slogans *"Bankrupt but Free"* and *"Stop Austerity, Support Greece, Change Europe."*

*"In the cities of Greece and Europe the people are fighting the negotiation battle, They are our strength,"* leftist Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras tweeted along with a picture of the rally in Athens, which attracted at least 15,000.

Other large rallies took place in Kalamata, Thessaloniki, and Crete, with smaller solidarity demonstrations occurring in major European capitals.

A recent poll said that 75 percent of all Greeks support the actions of Syriza since it assumed power as the dominant part of the coalition, following early elections on January 25.

Most EU officials were skeptical about agreeing to any deal on Wednesday, with German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble saying the talks would give a chance to demarcate *"red lines."*

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