

Greek pharmacists & civil servants launch 24hr strike, protesting austerity measures

15/07/2015



A few thousand protesters hit the streets of central Athens, holding banners reading, "Cancel the bailout!" and "No to the policies of the EU, the ECB and the IMF."

[#athens](#) [#bailoutgreece](#) protests getting bigger by the hour, set to continue well into the evening [#GreekCrisis](#)

ADEDY, the civil servants union, called for the strike on Monday, stressing its opposition to the measures required for a eurozone bailout deal to go ahead.

Those measures include raising taxes, as well as the country's retirement age – conditions that were rejected by voters in the July 5 referendum.

"After five years of salary cuts and harsh measures the Europeans still want more," ADEDY spokesman Stavros Koutsioubelis told Reuters, urging lawmakers to reject the deal.

Pharmacists are also participating in the strike, angry at plans to de-regulate their profession to allow people without a degree as a chemist to own pharmacies.

The government has committed to adopting a timeframe for a reform of pharmacy ownership, in an effort to liberalize the economy as a condition of open aid talks.

Pharmacists are also worried that the EU statement anticipates talks on opening up the sale of over-the-counter drugs. Such drugs can currently only be purchased in pharmacies and constitute around 25 percent of pharmacists' income, the Health Ministry said.

Those involved in the profession are already struggling to get their hands on medicines amid capital controls and a row over exports. The Health Ministry has decided to ban the export of 25 drugs, following warnings of possible shortages.

In order to receive €86 billion (\$95 billion) from the EU over three years, Greece would have to make a number of changes. These include raising the retirement age to 67 and increasing taxes and VAT. It's a prospect that many in Greece have called a *"humiliation."*

Lawmakers are due to vote on those conditions on Wednesday.

But despite the opposition seen on the streets, many are pushing for parliament to approve the austerity measures. According to an opinion poll published late Tuesday by Kapa Research, 72 percent of Greeks are in favor of the deal.

Approval of the deal by Athens must be completed before the other 18 eurozone leaders begin negotiations on a Greek bailout which would provide the country with a three-year bailout totaling 86 billion euros (US\$95 billion). The deal would be the country's third rescue program in five years.



"NO to new or old memorandums"-a still from the strike demo organised earlier by unions [#Greece #AthensLive](#)

Under the plan, eurozone governments will contribute between 40 and 50 billion euros. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) would give another chunk, and the rest would come from selling off state assets and from financial markets, an unnamed European official told AFP.

However, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras said he "cannot say with certainty" that it will be enough to prevent a 'Grexit' before until the final agreement is signed. He also admitted that he "signed a text he doesn't believe in" because it was "the best the country could get."

Tsipras, who reluctantly agreed to the deal, must now face rebellion from his anti-austerity Syriza party.

Dozens of MPs – including senior Syriza figures – could partially or fully reject the bailout, forcing Tsipras to rely on pro-European opposition lawmakers to carry the vote, which is expected after midnight.