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Press release | 02.12.2016

Greece

Eurogroup reform proposal on collective bargaining is against EU law

This week has seen a series of meetings between Greek government officials and representatives of the institutions as part of the second bailout review negotiations. These talks take place ahead of the Eurogroup meeting of 5 December, where discussions on an agreement on the restructuring of Greek public debt will open. According to Greek sources, both the IMF and the European institutions will insist on their views on further dismantling collective bargaining processes, despite the fact that this right is protected by the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

A group of Green MEPs (1) has written to the President of the European Commission and others, making clear that any debt relief measures must not be made contingent upon labour reforms or limitations of fundamental labour rights. The letter can be read on the Greens/EFA website: /legacy/fileadmin/dam/Images/Letter_-_labour_market_reforms_by_Green_MEPs_to_EU_Commission.pdf

Commenting before the Eurogroup meeting, Greens/EFA economic and finance spokesperson **Sven Giegold** said:

“The institutions’ plans for labour market reforms in Greece are blind to fundamental European law. They aim to ignore the legally grounded role of the social partners by excluding any discussion on bringing back the determination of the minimum salary to the partners’ jurisdiction. This legal blindness is compounded by their insistence on limiting sectoral agreements and enabling agreements at the enterprise level to set lower wage levels.

“These positions violate the spirit of Article 28 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and Article 6 of the European Social Charter and are an attack on the rights of workers and employers to negotiate and conclude collective agreements. Beyond the legal considerations, the practices of social partner cooperation of most EU member states are being ignored. The Eurogroup should take the International Labour Organisation (ILO) seriously: the ILO’s Committee on Freedom of Association has already provided a strong hint towards the problem by condemning the reforms in the labour market by the previous Economic Adjustment Programmes.”

Greens/EFA’s Financial Assistance Working Group member, **Ernest Urtasun**, added:

"We strongly urge the European Commission, in line with its efforts to create a European pillar of social

rights, not to push ahead with proposals for Greece that run counter to the European social model. Debt relief measures must not be conditional upon reforms that would push Greece further away rather than closer to the rest of Europe. The role of collective bargaining should be fully restored, in accordance with EU legislation and in the spirit of safeguarding the European social model."

(1) Sven Giegold, Ernest Urtasun, Philippe Lamberts, Jean Lambert

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