

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

Greece Braces for New Troika Onslaught on Workers' Rights

Brussels, 20 July 2016 (ITUC OnLine): Greek workers are preparing for yet more attacks on their fundamental rights as the IMF/EU/European Central Bank 'Troika', at the urging of the IMF, prepares to impose a new round of cuts to minimum wages, weakening of laws protecting workers facing dismissal and further erosion of trade union rights as creditors position themselves in advance of an Autumn review of the "adjustment programme" for Greece.

Greece's national trade union centre GSEE has learned that a 21-page directive sent to Greek officials includes measures that would cut the minimum wage for skilled and experienced workers by around 30% as from 2017. Other measures include increasing the voting threshold for strike action, new "lock-out" provisions for employers even though the Greek employer organisations have not sought such a measure, interference in the collection of membership dues by unions, and changing the rules for union representation. On 19 July, an agreement was reached between the GSEE and the country's three employer organisations <http://www.ituc-csi.org/joint-statement-of-the-greek> following up on a 2014 agreement reached between them in Geneva with the assistance of the ILO. The Geneva agreement called for a "stable and uninhibited disbursement system of workers' contributions", identified key areas of common ground between the unions and employers, and included a commitment to social dialogue on issues where agreement had yet to be reached.

ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow said "The austerity measures already inflicted upon Greece's workers have been a fiasco from an economic point of view, and have meant impoverishment and hardship for millions of Greek people, with the unemployment rate at 24%. The prescription has already failed, but the IMF seems to think that administering even more toxic medicine will somehow bring the economy back to health. Despite its assertions that it would consult with unions, the IMF has not done so. It simply seems intent on driving yet more destructive deregulation which would drive domestic demand further downwards and do nothing to help Greece onto a pathway of sustainable and equitable growth. Instead of dictating change based on outdated economic thinking, the IMF and the European institutions should engage in a constructive and serious dialogue with the Greek government, unions and employers, to build a positive pathway for recovery and prosperity."

The ITUC represents 180 million workers in 162 countries and territories and has 333 national affiliates.

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