

**"Our lives begin to end the day
we become silent about things that matter¹"**

**There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic,
nor popular, but he must take it because conscience tells him it is right**

**What is the situation in Greece? Read it from the grass root level
experience².**

The last year Greece had no financial support from the Troika and had to pay almost 14 billion euros debt repayment to avoid default from our own resources. That meant that the basic services of our country, hospitals, schools, universities, etc functioned with almost nothing.

Whatever happens, at least in short and medium term, the fierce suffering for the already devastated by austerity society of Greece will continue. It is very hard to accept this after 5 years of such sacrifices. So the question is how we can get out from this vicious cycle but remain in EU and the eurozone ?

Let me explain this from a personal note. The proposed plan was cutting the 6% VAT offered to all remote islands for food and electricity... I live regularly in Samos, a beautiful but poor, mainly farming, island very near to Turkey; even with 6%VAT as it is now, food and basic goods are more expensive in Samos than in Athens because of the transport costs of goods; if VAT went to 23% the farmers (the plan proposed increase at their income tax of 20%) in the island would have been totally destroyed, people were saying, better shoot us to finish with it.... Let's be clear, VAT is the most unfair taxation, especially for the poorest.

Other measures included prepayment of 100% of tax income for small business, already most of them either closed or in the verge of closing. What the institutions have strongly opposed to was the Greek government's proposal to put the burden to the rich, 'to the haves', to tax profits of very big companies, to tax gambling, to keep the tourist industry and the islands alive, to commit to development measures and reforms in favor of the poorest.

What the creditors' plans succeeded, the previous 5 years, was to increase the national dept. to more than 170%, to cut the deficit by destroying the social fabric and have this nation hostage as an everlasting debt colony. This proposed plan was the same and much more worse.

Indeed, there is the 'carrot' of a 35 billion share from the Juncker plan, but the 'stick' was an unresolved growing debt and continuous austerity for many years

¹ Martin Luther King Jr., I Have a Dream: Writings and Speeches That Changed the World

² Combined EAPN national network concerns about troika approach 'helping' countries in trouble.

to come. I am wondering in what ways it can be secured that the Junker plan for Europe's boosting of economies would be made to reach the really needy ones.

For the Greek people, indeed we have been punished for saying NO to austerity by voting a left wing government. As we have been a **guinea pig** for the most cruel neoliberal experiment in an Euro country (alas, we can't escape the pigs taxonomy), similarly now we are becoming an example for the voters in Portugal, in Spain, in Italy, etc not to dare to follow the same path. Because for the European elites, including the Greek ones, there is not an alternative. And they will do anything to prove that they are right.

I just heard Mr Juncker's press conference on Greece's referendum decision. It seems we live in parallel universes, it seems that we were given the Eden and it has been rejected because it had many apple trees, it seems that the best advice to the Greek people is "do not commit suicide, because you are afraid to die". Indeed, **more than 3.000 suicides** in the last two years have missed in that advice, but not because they were afraid to die.

I do not have answers, I do not even have anything to ask you as expression of solidarity. You know better what EAPN could do; I only hope and wish that no other peoples of Europe have to face such a future. But even at this dreadful moment, I still believe that we should continue, the peoples united, fight for social justice, rights, equality, democracy and freedom. That is the only way, if we believe that there is something more than individuals and families, something called society and we all part of it on equal rights.

As I am writing this message to you, history is writing a new page for my country. This message is personal, but I believe to a certain extent most people today in Greece feel similar feelings.

Fear, despair, anger, betrayal. But let's not forget, hope springs eternal....

Responses from the National Networks within EAPN.

My heart is bleeding for you and for the People of Greece who are not to blame for any of this. We can only join hands and our hearts and stand together in raising awareness for the horror the Troika is creating.

I hope you know Eapn NL is and always was solidary in your struggle. You're right: we should continue, the peoples united, fight for social justice, rights, equality, democracy and freedom. That is the only way, if we believe that there is something more than individuals and families, something called society and we all part of it on equal rights.

Say NO to austerity and YES to the people! Say NO to austerity and YES to the people. Not only for now but forever.

With Love and Light. EAPN NL

We stand – always – in solidarity with you, not only for sentimental reasons (we are Greeks after all!) but because we totally agree that what is going on in Greece is unfair, unjust and mean...

We do not claim that Cyprus is in the same state, but we do understand what austerity measures result in: cuts in education, healthcare, pensions... they indeed destroy the social coherence and leave people devastated – in every sense of the word...

We cannot but stand by your side – we do not have answers either – and hope that whatever comes after the 5th will give back to the Greek people its dignity and wellbeing.

For EAPN Cyprus

You write it is a personal message. But I think it is important translate it in our languages to inform the people in Italy and European countries what happens in Greece from a voice involved in this terrible time. I will ask to my network to forward your letter, EAPN Italy

I was very touched by your mail. If you agree, I will offer its translation to the editor of the daily Pravda to which I regularly contribute instead my Tuesday opinion column. I need however your approval also with cutting your mail to 3000 signs (spaces included) and also I will need your photo. Please, could you respond to me before the noon? Slovak EAPN.

I think the GA in Bilbao will be a good moment for EAPN to issue a strong opinion. Just for your information. "Our" Commissioner Marianne Thyssen made a shocking appearance on Belgian TV. Apart from blaming the Greeks for the dreadful situation they are in, she said that the Troika made 35.000euro for every Greek citizens available. A shocking and deliberate distortion of the truth. She is the social face of the European Commission, and shld be defending the social values the EU shld adhere to. There is not much we can do, but we can at least call the Social Affairs Commissioner to account. I wish you much courage in difficult times, and hope to see you again some time in future. FEANTSA

It is so sad to see, what is happening in the EU right now. On behalf of the Danish Network, I would like to express our solidarity and deepest felt sympathy with the Greek People. The members of the Troika are indeed behaving like old school Imperialists! EAPN Denmark

Sure this is not the EUROPA of citizens, the Europa of democracy and of social model, of right and solidarity that – together - we will build, without borders, without inequalities, where the DIGNITY of each person will be respected and WELL-BEING will be insured!

BUT we really need of a serious reflection, discussion, evaluation on the original causes of this dramatic situation that could be reproduced for other countries in the near future.

Why EUROPA UNION arrived in this situation? What kind of union we were building until today?

Which are the co-responsibilities of each of the European Countries and of Each European Institution policy?

Santé Mentale and Exclusion Sociale, SMES-Europa, support warmly EAPN in order to take a very clear and strong position against all kind of 'poverty & exclusion', focusing not only on financial & economic development, but more on promotion of social & solidarity development in favour of all European Countries.

I'm very much agree with consequences SMES-Europ wrote..... We feel the result, when people followed requests of creditors and what the "Latvian European success story" we got..... Especially pensioners, families with children, people working in nongovernmental and private sector - salaries around 300EUR/month..... pensions around 200EUR/month, state guaranteed benefits 50EUR/month and remember we are northern Europe country with about half a year heating season, what also cost a lot.....

EAPN Latvia

On behalf of EAPN Serbia I express our strongest solidarity with Greek citizens, with EAPN Greece and with you personally.

It is hard to find words of criticism for this non-precedent crash of global economic, political and above all moral order in a single country. I would like to call it political dilettantism, but it is apparent that everything is planned and purposeful. Therefore it is crime, whether there is a legal name for it or not.

Stay brave and keep your heads up, we are with you!

Amongst the crisesful development deliberately produced by policies we would like to express our respect and admiration for Greek people.

They said loudly OXI (No) at the beginning of the Second World War and later on turned this day - 27 October in Greek National Celebration.

These days again their voices tried to say OXI (No) to the policies that lead our societies to nowhere.

And this is not only for Greece. It is also for EU and for other countries that followed silently the neoliberal policies that are killing our societies.

We would like to express our support and really hope someday the EU suicide will come to an end. We hope as well that we and EAPN will contribute in the struggle between the European citizens and the bureaucracy.

EAPN Bulgaria

A core value of EAPN is the ability of expressing solidarity. I agree with EAPN NL, I think it is time to take action and speak up for Greece, and speak up for the European Social Model we believe in. If there is a socio-economic crisis in any of the member states, there is a crisis in the EU.

EAPN has the ways to communicate this message by the press and by taking actions, and together we can make it Europe-wide.

We are sending our strong support to Greece! Hungarian Anti-Poverty Network

It seems it has only been important to save the banks. We (EAPN) have to take action and speak up for people in Greece. We can communicate this message by the press, and by every national network we can make it Europe-wide. Finnish network is sending strong support to people in Greece!

Here is a message of solidarity with Greek people by the European Civic Forum.

With Greece, we say YES to democracy and social justice!

During the last decade, popular trust in the European project is going records low, alongside decrease in living standards and raising poverty for large swaths of the population.

The institutional responses to the financial and then economic crisis, based on austerity for the poor and middle class, resulted in raising inequalities, limiting solidarity and denying the primacy of effective access to Human rights.

Regarding more specifically the Greek situation, five years of austerity have exposed large part of the population to poverty and high level of social exclusion through unemployment, shrinking revenues and deprivation of access to basic rights such as health care, education and housing.

In this context, it is alarming to notice how democracy turned into a concept void of content for European leaders, how radical seems to be the chance given to Greek people to decide on their own future, in the light of recent [declaration](#) of "treason" by European Commission President, referring to the breakdown of

bailout negotiations by the Greek government.

It is indeed intolerable that Mr. Juncker, who claims to speak on a political mandate, patronises Greek people, and treat their democratic aspiration for dignity of “national egoism” and “suicidal”.

Today, we are living crucial moments in the European Union.

What means equality and solidarity when Europe has to address the financial and economic situation of Greece and ***the social situation of the people living in Greece?***

What means solidarity when Europe has to address the consequence of ***migrations coming from countries hit by war, poverty and dictatorship?***

What means the European project when European leaders are obviously tackling those issues against its ***claimed values and goals***?

In this context of turmoil, it is difficult to address all issues with a “one size fits all” approach. The Greek government made a decision: ask people to vote on Institutions’ requirements in exchange for releasing financial means Greece needs for the repayments of its loans.

For us, European citizens, this vote is about Democracy, about Equality, about Solidarity.

This is not just a conflict between Greece and Europe. Our European common future is at stake !

Stand with Greece and SIGN [**here**](#) a petition for democracy and social justice!

*“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies,
but the silence of our friends. Martin Luther King Jr.”*
