

Greece: Eurozone ministers delay decision on vital loan

Eurozone finance ministers have postponed a final decision on a 12bn Euro (£10-bn) loan to Greece until it introduces further austerity measures

The ministers said they expected to pay the latest tranche of a 110bn Euro EU and IMF aid package by mid-July. But it will depend on the Greek Parliament passing 28bn Euros of new spending cuts and economic reforms. The ministers also committed to put together a second bail-out to keep the country afloat over the coming years.

The Greek Government expects it to be similar in size to the first one. Athens has said it needs funds by July to avoid defaulting on its debt. Earlier, thousands of people gathered outside the Parliament building in Athens to oppose any further cuts. Waving banners and Greek flags, they shouted: 'Thieves! Traitors!'

Inside, Prime Minister George Papandreou urged MPs to accept his programme of tax increases, spending cuts and privatisation — expected to raise 50bn Euros by 2015. "The consequences of a violent bankruptcy or exit from the Euro would be immediately catastrophic for households, the banks and the country's credibility," he said at the start of a three-day debate.

After a seven-hour meeting in Luxembourg, the finance ministers said they would not approve the disbursement to Greece of the 12bn Euros — 8.7bn Euros from Eurozone governments and 3.3bn Euros from



Protesters gather in Athens' central Syntagma (Constitution) Square

the IMF — until the country's Parliament passed the fiscal strategy and privatisation laws. "To move to the payment of the next tranche, we need to be sure that the Greek Parliament will approve the confidence vote and support the programme, so the decision will be taken at the start of the month of July," said Belgian Finance

Minister Didier Reynders.

A statement issued by the ministers called on all political parties in Greece to 'support the programme's main objectives and key policy measures to ensure a rigorous and expeditious implementation.' The ministers also concluded that because Greece was unlikely to return to the com-

mercial money markets by early 2012, a second bail-out would be needed.

The new aid package, to be outlined by early July, will include loans from other Eurozone countries. It is also expected to feature a voluntary contribution from private investors, who will be invited to buy up new Greek bonds as old ones mature.

England's primaries to be made academies

Two hundred of England's worst performing primary schools will be closed next year and re-opened as academies

Education Secretary Michael Gove says this will force schools which have failed to get their pupils to expected levels in maths and English to improve. The new academies, taken out of local authority control, will be run by more successful local schools. Another 500 will be told they have three years to improve their standards.

Mr. Gove wants secondary schools to secure five good GCSEs for at least 50 percent of pupils. At present, a school is assessed as under-performing if fewer than 35 percent of pupils get five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including maths and English.

Russell Hobby, General Secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said, "If a school makes great progress with pupils from low starting points, it should be feted, not condemned," he said. "But, yes, if a school remains far below the floor standards for years, with no sign of improvement, and if it has had good quality support, then of course we need a radical solution."



Lorries travel northbound

They are expected to get the EU member states' final approval soon. The controversial 'Eurovignette'

Trucks to pay more to use EU roads

New EU rules to allow governments to charge trucks for air and noise pollution receive final backing

laws were a three-year fight. Belgian MEP Saïd el-Khadraoui, who guided the legislation through the institutional process, said, "There is pollution, there is noise, there is congestion and so on. We need to tackle these things. Otherwise, at some point, we won't be able to move anymore. So, pricing is one element, among, many others, which can help to create this more sustainable transport system. It will be also good for the transport sector itself. One of the goals of this is to have a better, level playing field between

the transport modes. Those who pollute more have to pay a little bit for those who pollute less."

Marc Billiet, with the International Road and Transport Union Permanent Delegation to the EU, said, "The consequence will be extremely negative because it will increase the tax burden on the road transport sector, and it will also decrease the possibilities of road transport operators to reinvest in the cleanest technologies, and thus to 'green' the road freight transport sector at source."

Apple strikes a chord with its new iCloud service

Apple has ratcheted up the competition with rivals Google, Amazon and Microsoft to provide services to consumers over the Internet with its new cloud product

The centrepiece of iCloud offers users the ability to synch, store and listen to their iTunes music library from any device that connects to the Web. The free service will also allow consumers to use the Web to access eight other key applications including photos,

documents, books, contacts, calendar and e-mail.

Apple Boss Steve Jobs has noted that iCloud was necessary because we were living in a post-PC world. "It worked for the better part of 10 years but it has broken down in the past few years," he said, adding that synching everything from smartphones to tablets to iPods was driving people crazy. "We're going to demote the PC and the Mac to just be a device, just like an iPhone, an iPad and iPod Touch, and we're



going to move your digital life into the cloud," said Mr. Jobs.

The jewel in the crown of iCloud is seen as a new version of iTunes, which eliminates the need for Apple's 200m iTunes users to manually transfer songs among devices by synching them with their PCs. Analysts believe the iTunes feature will help drive adoption of the cloud among consumers.

Anthony van Dyck painting to be auctioned at Sotheby's

Sotheby's London is to auction a portrait of a monk, credited to Anthony van Dyck, that was previously thought to have been painted by Rubens

Portrait of a Carmelite Monk was known as *Confesseur de Rubens*. Sotheby's experts noticed brushwork more characteristic of Rubens' pupil Van Dyck. The auction house's George Gordon said that the way the monk's head was turned to one side created an impression of spontaneity as opposed to the more formal composition of Rubens' portraits. He also said the brushwork was clearly legible throughout — a trait of Van Dyck's when he was working in Rubens' studio.

Sotheby's said a large number of scholars now agreed with the view that it was painted by Van Dyck towards the end of his time working with Rubens, around the period from 1617 to 1620.

Ministers back binding European forest agreement

Ministers agree to back plans to introduce a legally binding agreement to protect Europe's forests

Delegates also agreed to adopt resolutions that would help shape forest policy over the next decade. A report concluded that sustainable forestry management was essential if the EU was to reach its emission goals. The ministerial agreement was signed at the sixth Forest Europe conference in Oslo, Norway.

The Norwegian host Chairman, Rural Affairs Minister Lars Peder Brekk, said the signing of two ministerial declarations was a fitting end to Norway's four-year leadership of the Forest Europe process. As well as signing the declaration to begin negotiations to establish a legally binding agreement (LBA), delegates also agreed to set a number of targets to be achieved by 2020.

These included all European countries implementing a national forest programme, which needed to contain climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. Ministers also agreed to cut the rate of biodiversity loss within forest habitats by half, and take steps to eliminate illegal logging. Poland's Minister Janusz Zaleski said that the LBA declaration presented a 'new chapter' in the management of Europe's forests. However, he added that nations needed to ensure that any agreement would need the legal weight required to deliver progress on the ground.

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