Agreement reached in principle on the measures to be implemented in Greece to unblock the review of the Athens rescue program

Negotiations on the exit of the United Kingdom from the European Union will have to be approved by the MEPs. The European Parliament has already set the minimum principles necessary for this green light.

Also in this program, we analyze the impact of the United States attack on a Syrian military base in relations between the European Union and Russia

Welcome to the Europe Magazine,

Greece and the Eurozone Finance Ministers have agreed to unlock the review of the Athens bailout process. The two sides reached what they called the "principled agreement" on policies that will have to be implemented by Athens over the next few years.

Journalist Marta Melo of Radio Macau summarizes some of the main points of this agreement:

RM – Marta Melo
"Among the new commitments made by Greece is to reduce pension expenditure from 2019 onwards. Another commitment is to collect more income taxes from 2020 through a reduction in the tax exemption threshold.
The introduction of these two measures is estimated at a global figure corresponding to 2 per cent of the country's gross domestic product.
If Greece's financial situation improves more than expected, Athens has the green light of the Euro Zone to take measures to stimulate the economy.
The agreement was praised by Eurozone Finance Ministers meeting in Malta after months of negotiations on the next phases of Greece's rescue program.
Eurogroup President Jeroen Dijsselbloem has already said that the agreement sets "all the big issues" for an essential reform package to ensure the financial participation of the International Monetary Fund in the rescue program.
An IMF spokesman said "there are good prospects for the successful completion of negotiations" on these policies during the agency's next mission to Athens. "

On the telephone, from Brussels, is the commentator resident of Magazine Europe, Victor Ângelo, international consultant based in the Belgian capital.

Hello, Victor, how do you assess this agreement in principle?

RM – Victor Ângelo:
"Greece and the Eurogroup have a balancing of interests that I consider negative. That is, the Greeks need money from other members of the Eurogroup and the Europeans, on the other hand, can not drop a country that belongs to the Euro. So, for different reasons, and all of them negative, you have to come to an agreement. And that's what's going to happen again. Also because Greece will have to repay around 7 billion euros this summer, and desperately needs a third bailout to be able to make that repayment. "

Is it to be hoped that Greece will honor its commitments or, on the contrary, will it be expected that the European Union will block payments to Athens due to a possible lack of guarantees on the part of the Greek Government?

RM – Victor Ângelo:
"Greece has been linked to a life support machine for about six years. If the European Union, and in particular the Eurogroup, shut down the machine, Greece collapses altogether. So what will happen is that we are going to witness a situation that is being repeated. That is to say: every year it will be necessary to negotiate a new agreement, each year it will be necessary to push the debt further forward, and each year Greece will have to take austerity measures. There is no other solution. Greece, at present, does not have sufficient savings to be able to repay its debt or repay interest on debt. Greece has debt that is twice as high as European public debt. On the other hand, Greece has an economy that weighs very little on the whole Eurogroup economy. The Eurogroup is interested in not letting Greece fall for political reasons and not for economic reasons. If it were for purely economic reasons, the Eurogroup has long been reported to have told Greece to exit the Euro. This negotiation with Greece is the most blatant example that the Euro is a political project. "

We have already spoken of the need to have some form of Greek debt forgiveness. This agreement of principle now reached does not address this issue. But the question remains ...

RM – Victor Ângelo:
"Yeah, exactly. Greece's debt is downright unpayable, it is an unsustainable debt. Never in the next decades Greece will be able to pay the debt. But the Eurogroup countries, and in particular Germany, can not in any way recognize this reality. And so they are pushing the problem forward and putting off, so to speak, the hour of truth. The economic and financial costs at present are relatively modest and the richest countries in the European Union can afford to be ambiguous vis-à-vis Greece. They are pretending that Greece is paying the interest and forget the principal, that is, no one speaks of repayment of principal, because in reality the main part of the debt will never be repaid. "

The Basque separatist organization ETA released last weekend details of the weapons it had hidden in France. The action marks the total disarmament of the terrorist group, as it promised last month. The organization announced in 2011 the end of terrorist actions in Spain, aimed at the independence of the Basque Country - actions that over 50 years resulted in the death of about 850 people.

Terrorism has, however, returned to Europe in recent days - as a result of other motives. It happened in Stockholm, Sweden, when an alleged sympathizer of the self-proclaimed Islamic State drove a truck in a pedestrian area of the city, running over people. The attack killed five people and injured several. The attack in Stockholm came days after a bomb attack on a subway in St. Petersburg, Russia, which resulted in more than 10 deaths.

MEPs adopted a resolution setting out the necessary conditions for the European Parliament to give the green light to a final agreement on Brexit to be reached between the European Union and the United Kingdom.

The journalist Hugo Pinto, of Radio Macau, tells us some of the points:

RM – Hugo Pinto:
"For MEPs, the negotiations on Brexit should ensure fair and equal treatment for European citizens living in the United Kingdom and for British citizens living in the European Union.
Members of the European Parliament also point out that until the United Kingdom's de facto exit from the bloc, the country remains a Member State of the European Union - and this implies not only rights, but also financial obligations, some of which may have to Even after the departure of London.
MEPs also point out that the four freedoms of the single market - the freedoms of movement of goods, capital, services and persons - are indivisible.
Members of the European Parliament do not want to see security being negotiated in exchange for economic relations between the European Union and the United Kingdom, nor do they want economic agreements in specific sectors.
The resolution was approved by an overwhelming majority of MEPs, with 516 votes in favor, 133 against and 50 abstentions.
The document further argues that it is only after the UK has effectively abandoned the European Union that the future relationship between the two parties can be discussed."

This last idea was also defended by the President of the European Council. Donald Tusk, presented a document to guide the negotiations on Brexit after the United Kingdom invoked Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon, which marks the formal start of the process of leaving a European Union country:

RM – Donald Tusk:
"We will have to ensure that the UK will honor all its commitments and obligations in the financial field as a member state. It is simply fair to all those people, communities, scientists, farmers, etc., to whom all of us, the 28 member states, pledge and owe that money. Only when we can make enough progress on the way out will we be able to discuss the framework for the future of our relations. Let's not start parallel discussions on all subjects at the same time, as was suggested by some in the UK. Let me conclude by saying that the negotiations we are about to start will be difficult, complex, sometimes confrontational. There is no avoiding it. The EU27 does not adopt and will not adopt a punitive approach. "

Victor, let's start with Donald Tusk's directions. How do you interpret this position?

RM - Victor Ângelo:
"I think that the position of the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, is a balanced one, and it shows clearly that from the European side an agreement will be sought with the United Kingdom, provided, of course, on the UK side too Moderate position. The phase that Teresa May lived in which she said that a bad agreement would not interest Britain and therefore it was

preferable to have no agreement than to have a bad agreement - this is no longer the British position. At this time, on both sides, there is an understanding that agreement must be reached. This agreement is likely to take some time. First, it will be necessary, over the next two years, to agree on the conditions of exit from the United Kingdom, and also to define the very general lines of the future. Then there will be a transition period which, at the moment, I foresee - after two years - to last about three to four years. And finally, we will only enter a new level of relations between the United Kingdom and the European Union within, say, seven to eight years. We are engaged in a very long period of discussions with the United Kingdom and it is in the interest of both sides that agreement is reached and that no extreme positions on these issues are taken. One of the great concerns of Donald Tusk and the other European leaders is to make it clear to the European people that they can not be better off outside the European Union than within the European Union.

The European Parliament has made it clear that it has the last word on the Brexit negotiations. Does the resolution adopted complicate the process?

RM - Victor Ângelo:
"I do not think so. I think that the European Parliament's resolution is a balanced resolution, it puts the emphasis on the issue of citizens' rights - which is indeed an excellent starting point. It also states that security issues should not be treated as a matter of exchange in the negotiations on the future of the relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom - security is a separate issue. And, on the other hand, the European Parliament acknowledges that the issue has to be dealt with in stages. That is, there must first be an agreement on the conditions of exit; Then an agreement on the transitional period; And finally the definition of what will be the relationship between the UK and Europe in the future. At the level of the European Parliament there is also a concern at the moment not to complicate things, especially since we are already in a process that is quite complex and the issue of Ireland, for example the Gibraltar issue, are important issues, are issues Political sensitivity and, on the other hand, there is also great concern at the level of the European Parliament and at the level of the institutions in Brussels which is to prevent the UK from dividing Europe. "

Several European countries have expressed "understanding" of the US President's decision to attack a Syrian air base after an alleged chemical attack by the Syrian army - an attack that has led to the deaths of several civilians, including children.

This was the first time the United States launched a direct attack on the Bashar al-Assad regime since the war in Syria began. Donald Trump justified the decision with the need to ensure the security of the country:

RM - Donald Trump:
"It is vitally important for the national security of the United States to prevent any deadly chemical weapons attack. Syria violated its obligations with regard to chemical weapons and ignored the United Nations Security Council. "

The European Union has issued a statement saying it understands Washington's action to discourage further chemical weapons attacks in Syria. But the 28 Member States have pointed out that the solution to the conflict in the country must be political rather than military.

London went further and expressed "full support" for the United States decision. Russia has condemned the American action, saying that it represents "a violation of international law" executed "under a false pretext."

Victor, does the European Union's "understanding" of this US military initiative make sense?

RM - Victor Ângelo:
"The European Union had no other solution if it did not express understanding. The European Union does not yet know exactly what the US position will be in relation to Europe's defense, and in particular with regard to the future of NATO, and so it has to play very prudently - and that is what it did . That is, it could not in any way appear as hesitant in supporting the initiative that the American President has taken in relation to Syria. "

How will this military action affect relations between the European Union and Russia?

RM - Victor Ângelo:
"Russia sees the European Union as aligned with the United States. For Russia there is no doubt that the European Union, if it had to choose, would choose the American side. And, indeed, that was very clear with regard to the United Kingdom. Boris Johnson, the British Foreign Minister, has decided to cancel his trip to Moscow, which should have taken place Monday, and this shows the Russians that not only is the European Union very much in line with the American position, Above all, those who weigh heavily in security matters in Europe, who are the English, follow in a practically blind way, so to speak, the American position. This will not further aggravate relations between the European Union and Russia, because relations are already tense. Now what is needed is to avoid escalating the situation. At the moment, there is a great deal of tension and the aim is for this tension to become a negotiating process in Geneva that will fuel the negotiations in Geneva and not serve an even greater deployment of military forces to the Middle East. "

The position taken by Donald Trump represents a new strategy of the American Administration?

RM - Victor Ângelo:
"The American line is still unclear. Although I do not see in this attack on the Syrian airbase a change of strategy. I think that at this moment, the US strategy towards Syria and against Iraq is the fight against the Islamic State. However, we will see what is going to happen because there are contradictions within the US Administration itself, for example, the position of the State Department - which thinks that all US forces and initiatives must go in the direction of defeating the extremists and Islamic radicals - and the American ambassador to the United Nations who speaks in broad terms, namely, the fall, say, of President

Assad and his replacement by more democratic forces. There is a certain contradiction here within the American administration, although it seems to me that at this stage, and bearing in mind the growing weight of President Trump's national adviser, General McMaster, we will continue towards a military presence in the Middle East that is intended Only to fight terrorists and extremists. "

The analysis of Victor Ângelo, resident commentator of Magazine Europe.

To close our program, we'll tell you about a fish. It is the first fish found to live in a cave in Europe. Around 200 species of this type have been identified in the rest of the world, but this is the first time on European land.

The scientific discovery took place in southern Germany. The fish was found by divers in a huge underground cave. It is believed that this species has spread from surface fish sometime in the last 20,000 years.

See you next week!

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