



MANIFESTO

The state of permanent debt bondage, which threatens Greece with desertification, is in the mind of every Greek. Imposing emigration on our young, and indignity to those who stay behind, it hangs over the country like a thick, dark cloud.

Unable to discern any light in the long night of our Great Depression, the Greeks' humiliation is reinforced every time they hear the powers-that-be tell them, gleefully, that the crisis will come to an end as a result of the enthusiastic implementation of the policies that caused it.

Their discontent rises to new heights as they witness the degeneration of our courts and the disgrace of our Parliament – with prosecutors unable to prosecute blatant corruption, government parliamentarians voting in favour of laws they disagree with (coerced to do so by Brussels and Frankfurt), and opposition MPs voting against, while promising to implement these same laws!

Nothing threatens a country, a people, more than the sense that there is no alternative to a path leading nowhere.

No hope can take root in a land where those who were elected to break away from a non-viable past are reproducing it daily.

No relief can be had from an opposition issuing promises whose delivery necessitates the rupture with the European Union that they are committed against!

Our long night has lasted long enough. This is why we are, now, inaugurating **MeRA25 – the *European Realistic Disobedience Front***: We are stepping to the fore so that hope, and a feeling that realistic alternatives *do* exist, can return to Greece's arid political landscape.

OUR NAME

Why a front?

- Because Greece is suffocating and in a process of desertification within a Europe that is rudderless and in a process of deconstruction.
- Because, as long as countries like Greece are suffocating, Europe will remain rudderless – thus reinforcing our country's suffocation.

Only a broad, unifying, paneuropean front against the dominant oligarchy-without-borders, which is responsible for our debt bondage, can allow Greece to breathe and return hope to its citizens.

This is precisely what MeRA25 represents: the *Greek patriotic front of responsibly disobedient Europeanists* – an indivisible part of DiEM25, the first in history transnational paneuropean movement to democratise Europe in general and each of our countries in particular.

Why European disobedience?

- Because the only way one can be responsible today is by disobeying the irrational policies that are wrecking our country and turning it into a desert.
- Because respect for our Parliament, our Constitution, logic itself, can only be reinstated by ending the blind obedience to the directives of the troika and our oligarchy.

Today, authentically Europeanist citizens refuse slavishly to obey the incompetent pseudo-technocrats who, on the altar of the narrow oligarchic interests they serve, are destroying Greece while de-legitimising Europe.

Why realistic disobedience?

- Because disobedience is not enough!

To have a positive impact **disobedience must be accompanied by a realistic, constructive, comprehensive, responsible policy agenda.**

Why MeRA25?

- Because Greeks have had enough of the endless night of our Great Depression. 'Mera', after all, means 'day' or, in Latin, 'diem' and, thus, MeRA25 symbolises the links with DiEM25 and our new party's Europeanist Internationalism.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF GREECE'S DEBT BONDAGE

Greece's debt bondage has its roots in its oligarchic history but also in the economic architecture of the European Union (and the eurozone in particular). Escaping it will not be a simple matter. However, nothing less than a successful escape from their debtor's prison is required before the majority of Greeks can hope to regain dignity and a modicum of shared prosperity.

In the post-Civil War era, Greece's growth occurred in the context of a totalitarian political framework adorned with a veil of parliamentarianism. New industries were erected in the 1950s under the protection of a paternalistic and authoritarian state. Uncompetitive and on flimsy foundations, they could simply not sustain the 1970s shock waves from the oil price hikes, the international economic crisis that ensued, and the removal of tariff protection mandated well before Greece could join the European Union (the EEC at that time) in 1980. Our industry's demise led to a recession and hordes of unemployed workers who (in the absence of a welfare state) were gradually re-employed by the state – the beginnings of the public debt crunch.

Greece's accession to the EU (EEC) in 1980, and especially the eurozone in 2000, created new enrichment opportunities for the Greek borderless oligarchy: Their pre-existing political clout helped the upper class to transform themselves from *protected capitalists* to *well-connected rentiers* aiming at the rents now available from European Community sources. And when the euro arrived, and rivers of private loans from the inane Franco-German banks began to flow, Greece entered the phase of Ponzi growth on which feasted the Triangle of Sin: Developers-Bankers-Media Owners. While the weaker citizens increasingly struggled to make ends meet, our new 'entrepreneurial' class were celebrating the myth of Greece's 'new paradigm' and its accession to 'Europe's hard inner circle'.

When the debt-fuelled bubble of Greece's 'new paradigm' burst, following the 2008 global crash, Europe's Powers stepped in to bail out the bankrupt Franco-German banks by imposing history's largest loan upon the, by then, bankrupt Greek state – under conditions that guaranteed the collapse of the private sector and Greece's conversion into a debt colony. This is how Greece turned into a permanently insolvent Bailoutistan founded on a quadruple bankruptcy: a bankrupt state, bankrupt banks, bankrupt families, and bankrupt companies: *Everyone owes to everyone and no one can pay!*

A tragedy for the vast majority of Greeks was, of course, recognised as a splendid opportunity by the borderless oligarchs: Domestic kleptocrats saw the bailout loans as manna from heaven. Foreign 'investors' were inspired by the fire sales of public assets. The eurocrats realised that the troika process allowed them massive room to create new jobs, new powers, and new rents for themselves. Whoever dared challenge (or say NO to) them was demonised. Lies and distortion became a new art form, not so much in order to hide the truth (which can no longer be hidden) but so as to impose their right to create the cacophony necessary to drown sensible public debate and, thus, facilitate the reproduction of Greece's debt bondage.

GREECE'S ESCAPE: THE IMPORTANCE OF A BROAD FRONT

No insolvency has ever been overcome by new loans or by elongating existing ones. To escape from its quadruple bankruptcy, Greece needs a substantial restructuring of its public and private debts. It is the *only* way for terminating the country's self-reinforcing austerity and for giving its people a chance to breathe again. Of course, while a debt restructure is necessary for Greece's genuine recovery, it is not a sufficient condition. We also need interventions that:

- protect waged labour from the relentless class war waged against it by the oligarchy, with the ample support of the troika
- shield creative and productive entrepreneurs from the predatory rent-seeking of the oligarchic establishment
- place public assets in the service of the common good
- convert the state from a predator to the citizens' ally.

The escape from debt bondage demands the formation of a broad front of active citizens and political movements from different (even competing) ideological points of departure. While preserving our ideological differences and visions of the good society, we have converged on MeRA25, determined to fight together the common struggle against the current impasse. To begin, we have identified the seven immediate policies that define our initial, urgent policy agenda.

SEVEN URGENT POLICIES

1. *Public debt restructuring* based on linking of (a) the size & repayment rate of public debt, with (b) the size & growth rate of nominal national income
2. *A long term primary government budget surplus target* (between 0% and 1.5% of national income, depending on the economic cycle) *that terminates austerity*
3. *Private debt restructuring* by a Public Financial Assets Management Company, with an immediate 5-year moratorium on foreclosures/auctions
4. *Large reductions in tax rates*: Maximum VAT and small/medium sized business tax rate of 15-18%, termination of tax prepayments, greater progressivity in income tax rates
5. Setting up of a *Public Non-bank Payments System*, based on the tax authorities' web interface, to allow for multilateral arrears settlements, free transactions, and to fund (partially) an Anti-Poverty Program
6. *Protection of waged labour and creative/productive entrepreneurship*: No longer will waged labour be paid under the provisions for 'service providers'; a 5-year moratorium on social security contributions by start-ups; a ceiling of 50% on profits for a company's total tax & social security payments bill
7. *Conversion of Greece's fire sales* (aka privatisation) *outfit into a Development Bank* – by granting it a banking licence, ending all fire sales, and using public assets as collateral for the purpose of creating investment flows into the same public assets, as well as to the private sector. The new Development Bank shares will be transferred to pension funds to bolster their capital base.

CONSTRUCTIVE DISOBEDIENCE – RESPONSIBLE DISOBEDIENCE

Saying ‘No’ is not enough. Disobedience must be accompanied by a coherent, credible, convincing alternative program – the integrated but minimalist economic and social policy agenda Greece needs. The **SEVEN POLICIES** that MeRA25 is proposing is the minimalist foundation of every responsible proposal for Greece’s recovery **either within or without the eurozone**. Their implementation will empower Greece with the minimum it needs to stop its people’s suffocation.

Responsible, credible, constructive proposals are not enough. No logical economic or social policy (e.g. the reduction in VAT rates) stands a chance if its implementation is made conditional on Eurogroup approval. Whichever Greek government goes to the Eurogroup with responsible proposals will hit the wall of the **creditors’ lack of interest in Greece’s recovery**. The creditors’ functionaries care deeply only about one thing: How to reproduce their new power grid and rent-seeking practices at a paneuropean level, based on the new structures and ‘rules’ they constructed during the past decade in the wake of the troika & the Eurogroup.

The 2015 experience will not be repeated. The SEVEN POLICIES will be legislated in Greece’s Parliament without any prior negotiations at the Eurogroup. And when the threats begin to be issued by Brussels, Frankfurt and Berlin, the answer they will receive is: **CONSTRUCTIVE DISOBEDIENCE!** This means:

- Immediate legislation of the SEVEN POLICIES
- While the Eurogroup refuses to accept our SEVEN POLICIES as Greece’s basic development plan, the Greek government will follow General De Gaulle’s ‘empty chair’ policy: it will refuse to send a representative to the European Council or to the Eurogroup. Meanwhile,
 - All repayment to the IMF, ECB and ESM-EFSF are suspended
 - Domestic transactions continue unimpeded by means of debit/credit cards, web-banking and the activated *Public Non-bank Payments System* (See Policy 5 above)
 - Existing euro liquidity will be used judiciously to import essentials and to support Greece’s exporters

Thus, Greece will be kept within the eurozone as long as it is necessary before “official” Europe chooses, once and for all, between: (a) the huge cost of Grexit (that will be incurred if they insist on their rejection of our SEVEN POLICIES); and (b) accepting the SEVEN POLICIES as the basis of Greece’s recovery within the eurozone.

While (a) would be mutually advantageous, there is no guarantee that Europe’s political establishment will act in the interests of a majority of Europeans. Nevertheless, from Greece’s perspective, while (a) is far superior to (b), the implementation of the SEVEN POLICIES is our best strategy whatever ‘official’ Europe’s response might be (see next section).

OUR POSITION ON THE EURO

Greece should never have entered the eurozone. The euro's design guaranteed the eruption of banking crises that (in the absence of institutional shock absorbers) were always going to turn the European Union into an iron cage of self-reinforcing austerity. Behind its iron bars, forged by Europe's self-serving pseudo-technocracy, a relentless class war and the ritual humiliation of Parliaments were inevitable. The idea of Europe as a democratic realm of shared prosperity was, therefore, doomed the moment the ink dried on the Maastricht Treaty.

However, once inside the eurozone, the cost of exiting is very large, both for the exiting country and for Europe at large – as its disintegration threatens the Union with a postmodern version of 1930s-like deflation. This is why DiEM25 has produced an economic and social agenda framework, our EUROPEAN GREEN NEW DEAL, whose purpose is to demonstrate how existing institutions can be redeployed, within the existing legal framework, to civilise the eurozone – to turn it from an iron cage into an area of recovery and green development.

DiEM25's EUROPEAN GREEN NEW DEAL will be put to European voters, across Europe, **in the next European Parliament elections.** In the meantime, as far as Greece is concerned, our position is simple: The extension until... 2060 of our debt bondage (which is what 'official' Europe is proposing) is Greece's worst fate; a prospect far, far worse than the threat of Grexit.

Political parties that have capitulated to Brussels' and Frankfurt's directives (e.g. SYRIZA, New Democracy, PASOK) may disagree with one another as to how therapeutic these directives are¹ but, nevertheless, agree that the worst possible outcome for Greece is an exit (or expulsion) from the euro. Other parties (e.g. KKE, Popular Unity) consider Grexit the optimal solution. MeRA25 disagrees with both of these rankings: **Grexit is neither the optimal nor the worst possible outcome for Greece!**

More precisely, we rank the three potential outcomes as follows:

1. Our most preferred outcome would be the implementation of the SEVEN POLICIES within the eurozone (while progressive European forces cooperate to implement DiEM25's EUROPEAN GREEN NEW DEAL across Europe)
2. Second best (or worst!) would be the implementation of the SEVEN POLICIES followed by the expulsion of Greece from the eurozone by the unbending Deep European Establishment
3. Our worst scenario, indeed our nightmare, is the perpetual reproduction of Greece's debt bondage within the eurozone, as guaranteed by the current policies and political system.

¹ For example, some in New Democracy and PASOK, even within SYRIZA, consider the implementation of the troika's directives as the best available strategy for Greece's recovery. Others (e.g. the majority of those who remain in SYRIZA) consider it a necessary evil.

HOW THE TROIKA-DOMINATED POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT WILL REACT

“Here they go again!”, we already hear them mock us. “They want to take us back to 2015. Another Kougi, another Zalogo.² Another supposedly heroic negotiation that risks Greece’s place in Europe.” They will call us naïve, if not treacherous. They will accuse us of wanting to push Greece in “jeopardy”, yet again.

However, they forget that:

- Kougi, Zalogo, the resistance to the Nazis in the 1940s, the Athens Polytechnic uprising of 1973 – none of those acts “put Greece in jeopardy”. It was the Ottoman & Nazi occupations, the Colonels’ Junta, that did!
- Clashing with the troika and the oligarchy does not imperil Greece. Succumbing to their ludicrous tax rates and their austerity, accepting their annulment of workers’ rights, yielding to their Bankruptocracy, nodding to their narrative of the Bailout’s end (just because the troika will change its name) – that’s what imperils our country and its people!

The worst kind of adventurism is, to sum up, the ossification of Greece’s debt bondage!

Greece’s Triangle of Sin (Developers-Bankers-Media Owners), and the political establishment representing their interests, will lash out against us. Their loathing will, however, prove our strength.

- We understand that the loans afforded by the troika (directly or indirectly, though the money markets) are essential to them, as they draw their power from them
- We recognise that the troika process underpins the mechanics of their power, erected upon our debt bondage
- We sense their need to demonise CONSTRUCTIVE DISOBEDIENCE so as to save themselves while sinking the country – like stupid viruses who kill the organism in which they nestle
- We look sympathetically upon the urge of those who have surrendered to hate those who refuse to capitulate.

For this reason, stoically, without fear, passion or loathing, we welcome *their* loathing, *their* hatred, *their* contempt as omens that we are on the right path.

² Kougi and Zalogo refer to two episodes in the Greeks’ resistance to the Ottoman Empire, well before the Greek Revolution of 1821. On both occasions, the rebels met their heroic deaths, after having lost battles against the Epirus’ based occupying forces.

WE ARE NOT JUST STAYING IN EUROPE. WE ARE EUROPE!

MeRA25 comes out of the flesh and bones of the first authentically paneuropean internationalist progressive movement: DiEM25. As a radically Europeanist party, we highlight the anti-Europeanism of those who identify Europe with the Unholy Alliance (of Europe's Deep Establishment and the rent-seeking pseudo-Technocracy) that is damaging Europe daily.

Those who wrap themselves in the European flag, before threatening us Greeks with all sorts of awful punishments if we dare legislate our SEVEN POLICIES, must surely have a terrible view of... Europe! **The Europe of its peoples**, that DiEM25 is part of, **is as one with us** and struggles tooth and nail against their Unholy Alliance.

MeRA25 will not accept policies that sacrifice the Greek people in the name of supposed European interests. Nor will we propose policies that aim at benefitting the Greeks at the expense of other peoples, in Europe or beyond.

- Our policies will always be in sync with those DiEM25 proposes in the interests of all European peoples – policies that will allow the Greeks to breathe in a European Union that recovers socially and morally
- As an internationalist front, MeRA25 sees the interests of the people of Greece as fully in sync with the needs of people in need from across the globe. To this effect, **MeRA25 will never accept European policies that cause Europe's humanism to evaporate and injure the Greeks' soul** – e.g. the scandalous EU-Turkey Treaty on the treatment of refugees being washed off on Greek islands.

Many argue that the disintegration of this, wildly authoritarian, European Union is the solution. It is not! However flimsy its foundations, authoritarian its ways, and classist its policies may be, the disintegration of the European Union boosts bigotry, reinforces deflationary forces, and strengthens the most regressive political forces on our continent. This is why, today more than ever, radical democrats must also think and act like radical Europeanists.

Others claim that, whatever we may think, the disintegration of this European Union is inevitable. They may be right. **The European Union will be democratised or it will disintegrate!** In both cases, Greece's suffocation must end. Greece's democrats will work in unison with progressive democrats from across Europe whether the European Union disintegrates or not.

It is this paneuropean, radical democratic project that MeRA25, today, makes its own by adopting DiEM25's strategy of: **IN & AGAINST – In the European Union. Against this European Union!**

OUR TRIPTYCH

European Internationalism | Economic Rationality | Social Emancipation

Patriotism and European Internationalism are indivisible prerequisites for the Economic Rationalism that Greece and Europe lack so very badly. As Greeks, we need to realise that **no one owes us anything**. The rest of the world, the rest of Europe, have no obligation to cover our deficits, especially when those are used up to feed our oligarchy. However, at the same time, **no one has the right to hold the people of Greece in a debtor's prison** in which our young can neither dream nor create, caught up in the steely clasps of a deep, multiple insolvency. In turn, Economic Rationality makes possible the popular democratic sovereignty without which it is impossible to achieve Social Emancipation from:

- the belief that there is no alternative to a path leading to oblivion
- the lack of personal prospects independently of effort or talent
- the brutal exploitation of waged labour
- punitive taxation that kills off productive entrepreneurship
- the sight of young people abandoning our country in droves
- the fire sales of our public property
- the sacrificing of our environment in the name of fake development
- the low expectations over ourselves, over Greece, over Europe
- the blight of a permanent bankruptcy that empowers predatory lenders
- a state that punishes and marginalises productive, diligent civil servants
- a sense of surrender to situations that only seem convenient after we have become alienated from our potential capacities
- the absence of *Isigoria*³ in public debate
- the humiliation of our Parliament and the squalor of our democratic process
- the inevitable rise, in times of crisis, of bigotry
- the generalised indignity.

DEMOCRACY BEGINS AT HOME: MeRA25's internal organisation

MeRA25 is an inseparable part of DiEM25. Our aim is not only to devise the right policies but also to educate ourselves in the democratic ethos that our members must cultivate before giving voice to the needs and aspirations of the despairing majority. Our policy framework, as well as the selection of office holders sitting on the local, regional and national bodies of MeRA25, will be chosen by DiEM25 members according to our Organising Principles via **universal, all-member, paneuropean votes**. Additionally, MeRA25 members will be subject to the Code of Comradely Conduct that is approved of, and amended, in the same manner.

³ *Isigoria* was an Ancient Athenian term (and a counterpart to Democracy) meaning the right of each opinion to be judged entirely on the basis of its value, rather than on who uttered it.

OUR VISION FOR GREECE AND FOR EUROPE

We envision a Greece and a Europe that, when looked at by its citizens and the rest of world, the following can be discerned as its properties:

Democratic, in that political and economic power originates from the many (who “happen” to be the poorer), rather than from the well-connected few (the oligarchs)

Isigoria, in that every view or opinion is judged on the basis of its worth, rather than who put it forward (or which interests it serves)

Social, in that its members judge our society’s civility in terms of how it treats the weakest citizens, the ‘other’, the ‘different’

Authentically Liberal, with a sense of liberty that goes well beyond the freedom from external interference, offering as well (a) protection from the exploitation caused by wholly uneven options, and (b) the material means (and the time) necessary to develop the talents and personality of citizens

Realistic, setting feasible economic targets

Innovative, focusing on open source, freely accessible research, in the interests of science, applications, the environment, health and collective knowledge

Cartel-weary, recognising that the concentration of economic power undermines not only democracy but also prosperity

Tolerant, with maximum degrees of freedom afforded to each person regarding their actions and their choice of partners in life, work and play

Equality of Opportunity, demanding constant, multipronged vigilance against social, ethnic, racial and gender-based discrimination

Decentralised & Pluralistic – a Greece and a Europe of diverse regions, ethnicities, philosophical views of the good society, languages, cultures, identities of persons and groups

Cultured, i.e. a society enriched by cultural difference and proud of not only its ancient cultural traditions but also of its contemporary, even its ‘heretical’, creators

Participatory, utilising central authority to guarantee democratic, participatory management in places of work, in our cities, in our regions

Open, because it appreciates that walls, barbed wire and electrified border fences are inconsistent with proud, confident countries

Sustainable, recognising the natural limits to economic growth, and minimising our ecological footprint of its activities

Ecological, setting Green Global Transition in energy, transport and material production as one of its foreign policy aims

Peaceful, resisting destabilising forces, the sirens of militarism and all kinds of expansionism upon European soil and beyond; while positing cultural engagement and exchanges as the appropriate tool for de-escalating geopolitical tensions

EPILOGUE

In any 'normal' country the distribution of benefits & burdens, income & losses, wealth & poverty is determined by the class struggle – from the tug-of-war between wages & profits, labour & capital, landlord & tenant, creditor & debtor. But Greece ceased to be a 'normal' country years ago. Since it fell in the trap of debt bondage, insolvency has gripped workers & employers, landowners & tenants, importers & exporters.

In this strange new-fangled regime, the only beneficiary is the parasitic domestic oligarchy that identifies its interests with those of Greece's creditors, exploits ruthlessly the troika process and, by so doing, maintains its power over citizens that it lambasts for the new debts it bequeaths them.

The parties of government, of the Right and the Left, have sacrificed their own ideology on the altar of their acquiescence to this new regime: Both, the neoliberalism of New Democracy and the Marxism-with-Keynesian-undertones of SYRIZA were jettisoned in all but name along the path of their capitulation to the troika.

MeRA25 is founded today as a broad, progressive, alliance of Left, Green and Liberal Greeks who are, and will remain, members of the first transnational radical Europeanist movement – DiEM25. Our foundation stone is the common determination to put an end to Greece's debt bondage, as well as to the strange regime that reproduces it. Our only real foe is the disappointment that pushes wonderfully politicised citizens to stay on the sidelines of politics, convinced that 'there is no hope' from their re-engagement in politics.

Greece's history teaches us that our people's best moments happen at the height of our worst crises. Precisely when everything seems too dark, glum and desolate for words, the Greeks somehow find the courage to reject the fear of another defeat and to embrace **responsible disobedience** to the things that oppress them.

Today, Greece, facing the threat of desertification, finds itself at such an historic moment. This is the darkest hour of our dreadfully long night. **This is the time to act! This is the moment when hope must be revived.**

We do not fear failure. We fear capitulation, submission, surrender. And we are terrorised by the current radical absence of hope or of an escape plan from their 'bailouts', their 'measures', their 'conditionalities', their post-crisis narratives, their definition of 'responsibility'.

We do not fear putting the bar too high and failing. We fear the prospect of training our eyes too low and ending up, again, on our knees.

This is why, today, we are founding MeRA25.