

Nationwide strike over inflation disrupts transport across Greece

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A man sits next to a moored passenger ferry as a woman walks past during a strike at the Port of Piraeus [Stelios Misinas/Reuters]

Athens, November 9 (RHC)-- Greek workers have begun a 24-hour nationwide strike demanding higher wages to match surging inflation, disrupting ground transport, flights and ferry services. High energy prices and soaring living costs have triggered strikes and protests across Europe this month, including in Germany, France and Spain.

The nationwide walkout in Greece – the second this year called by private and public sector unions representing more than 2.5 million workers – was expected to culminate in rallies outside parliament on Wednesday evening. Ferries were docked at ports and work stoppages by bus, train and metro staff were expected to cause travel chaos in the capital. Some flights were grounded as air traffic controllers planned to join the walkout from 08:00 to 14:00 GMT.

While the Greek economy is growing at nearly twice the eurozone rate this year thanks to a rebound in tourism, inflation is near a 30-year peak at 12 percent, among the highest in the 19 countries sharing the euro. “Workers ... are battling against the inflation suffocating Greek households, the jungle-like conditions in the labour market, against the burdens they have been carrying on their backs for years,” said the General Confederation of Greek Workers (GSEE), the main private sector union.

The GSEE said it was “imperative” for the government to take measures to tackle inflation as the high costs of energy and basic goods were eating into people’s disposable income. Together with the public sector Civil Servants’ Confederation (ADEDY), it is demanding an increase in the minimum wage, which currently stands at about 713 euros (\$717) per month, and the restoration of collective labour law.

The conservative government has spent more than 9 billion euros (\$9bn) since September 2021 on power subsidies and other measures to alleviate the burden of rising energy and fuel costs for farmers, households and businesses.

It has promised to increase pensions next year for the first time since the country’s financial crisis and boost the minimum wage further.

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