

Greeks Rally Against Austerity

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Thousands of Greeks rallied in support of the new Syriza-led government Thursday night, backing Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras' pledge to dismantle austerity.

"The new government of Syriza supports the society, the working class, the youth people, against the austerity measures which destroy, the memorandums, which (have destroyed) Greek society in the last five years," one Athens resident told CCTV at a rally outside Parliament.

Around 4,000 Greeks turned out to the rally; though unlike previous demonstrations in Athens in recent years there was no tear gas or street barricades. Just a handful of police were present.

Demonstrators chanted, "Syriza, Podemos. Venceremos!" Podemos is a left-wing party in Spain that has been compared to Syriza for its opposition to austerity.

"The will of the Greek people is to say 'No' to the troika and austerity measures. We can't take it any more," Athens resident, Anastasia Vernardou told Reuters. Vernardou was one of a slew of public sector workers that lost their jobs in government cutbacks.

School teacher Eleana Vlavianou said Syriza is the first government in decades "making a decision."

"At least, to draw a line and say that the people can't take it any more and that a very serious effort needs to be made to liberate an entire nation and all the people of southern Europe from

these vices that have been put in place by Germany. Not all of Germany, but by (German Chancellor Angela) Merkel and her entourage," she said.

The rally in support of Syriza came just hours after a [blunt confrontation](#) between Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis and his German counterpart Wolfgang Schaeuble. Schaeuble rejected calls from Varoufakis for a renegotiation of Greek debt to its troika of creditors – the European Central Bank (ECB), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and European Union.

"Greece must continue to work with the International Monetary Fund, the European Central Bank and the European Commission," Schaeuble said.

However Varoufakis, who is ending a five day tour of Europe to shore up support to slash Greece's 240 billion euro (US\$270 billion) debt, said he and the German minister "didn't even agree to disagree."

Documents leaked to Reuters Wednesday revealed Germany's wish for Greece's radical new government to revoke its anti-austerity promises. The documents – a policy paper circulated to European leaders by Germany – said Greece must not roll back previously promised cuts to welfare, the minimum wage, government workforce and new privatizations.

The same day, the ECB announced it would no longer accept Greek bonds as collateral for loans to commercial banks. The move was been widely interpreted as a [shot across Syriza's bows](#), and has already rattled Greek stocks.

At Thursday's rally, Athenian pensioner Melina Kotzaki told Reuters, "(The ECB) can do whatever it wants. We are not afraid of them."

"We have a young, brave boy (Tsipras) that is smart and good. I'm very optimistic about this government," Kotzaki added.
