

## Man arrested in Kilkis on child porn charges

A 50-year-old man has been arrested in northern Greece on suspicion of possessing indecent images of children. Police said the unnamed man was taken into custody at his home in the village of Axioupoli, near Kilkis.

Officers found two memory sticks containing 469 indecent images and a small amount of hashish at the suspect's property.

## DIAS policemen attacked in Agrinio

Five officers of the motorcycle-riding DIAS squad were on Monday attacked by unidentified assailants wearing masks and helmets in Agrinio, western Greece, police said. An investigation is under way.

## Talks between ministers, farmers break down

Talks between four ministers and unionists representing farmers who have been pushing for tax breaks and other concessions broke down on Monday, prompting producers to herald further protest action.

Finance Minister Yannis Stoumaras, who met the farmers along with his counterparts holding the labor, agriculture and environment portfolios, said that the government "listened to the farmers' demands" but noted that the "possibilities, within the constricting fiscal framework, are small."

"Nevertheless, efforts are continuing," Stoumaras told reporters.

He said the government aimed to offer farmers a special card that would give them discounts on a special consumption tax on fuel and was also considering introducing legislation that would allow all farmers to retire after 40 years of service.

Unionists were less positive. "The government gave us nothing," said Vangelis Boutas, who heads the association of farmers from Karditsa in central Greece. "For us this is a struggle for survival; we will scale up our action," he said, referring to the roadside blockades that farmers have been holding for several weeks in a bid to wrest concessions.

Last Friday Prime Minister Antonis Samaras met with protesting farmers and expressed satisfaction after talks, fueling hopes of a resolution to the impasse.

## Man, 23, arrested on suspicion of being part of 'sledgehammer' gang

A 23-year-old man suspected of being part of a gang known for robbing banks with sledgehammers has been arrested in Katerini, northern Greece. Police said they caught the man, for whom there was an arrest warrant, on Sunday. He is alleged to have been involved in a bank heist in October 2010 in Pieria.

Authorities are also examining whether he took part in a robbery in Farsala that netted some 300,000 euros and during which shots were fired at police officers. Three people have been arrested in Athens in December 2011 in connection to these robberies but one was released after spending 12 months in pre-trial custody only to be rearrested a month later.



## Tip-off may have helped avert prison breakout with helicopter in central Greece

Justice Minister Antonis Roupakiotis said on Monday that authorities had been tipped off that crime boss Panayiotis Vlastos would try to escape from Trikala prison, central Greece.

Armed men attempted to help Vlastos break out from the jail on Sunday afternoon with the help of a helicopter. Prison guards exchanged fire with Vlastos's accomplices, foiling the escape.

Some 500 shots were fired, forcing the helicopter to touch down outside the prison. Three armed men, a Greek, a Romanian and an Albanian, were arrested. They were armed with a Kalashnikov assault rifle and two Uzi submachine guns.

The helicopter's pilot and engineer were also taken in for questioning. Vlastos was injured during the escape. He climbed onto a rope ladder thrown from the helicopter but fell from a height of about 5 meters.

"We had information that there were some jails we needed to keep an eye on, including Trikala prison," Roupakiotis told Mega TV on Monday.

Vlastos is serving a life sentence for his involvement in the so-called "crime syndicate," which was responsible for a range of felonies, including blackmail, kidnapping and murder. Vlastos attempted to escape from Korydallos prison in December 2011, when he took hostages, but he gave in.

Sunday's attempted escape was the third time that a helicopter has been used in a prison breakout in Greece. In 2006 and 2009, serial robber Vassilis Palaioostas and his accomplice, contract killer Alket Rizai, successfully escaped from Korydallos prison in a helicopter. Rizai was recaptured a few months later but Palaioostas is still at large.



EU Commissioner Damanaki sparks fresh debate about minimum wage

Comments by EU Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Commissioner Maria Damanaki sparked a new round of speculation about a possible further reduction to the minimum wage in Greece.

In a newspaper interview on Sunday, the Greek commissioner suggested that Brussels is still keeping its options open on whether the basic pay in Greece needs to fall below 586 euros per month.

"With regards to reducing the minimum wage in Greece and adopting new measures, all options are open and it is totally dependant on the implementation of the December agreement," Damanaki told Sunday's Eleftherotipia.

"The Commission leaves the issue open and focuses mainly on the need for there to be a dialogue with social partners before

any changes."

The commissioner's comment prompted Labor Minister Yiannis Vrotsis to insist that there is no discussion about the minimum wage being reduced.

SYRIZA, however, said Damanaki's comments left Prime Minister Antonis Samaras "exposed" and insisted that reducing the Greek minimum wage to the "eastern European" levels are part of the government's commitments to its lenders via its bailout agreement.

Last week, European Commission Economic and Monetary Affairs spokesman Simon O'Connor stressed that there is no pressure on Greece to reduce the minimum wage after a 22 percent cut last year but he added that Athens has agreed to review the way that basic pay is agreed next year.

## Half of Greeks contribute to tax evasion

It is believed that at least half of all Greeks do not pay the entire amount of taxes that they should, while given the option, nearly one in two would refuse a receipt, thereby contributing to tax evasion by others too, according to a survey by GPO for the National Confederation of Greek Commerce (ESEE).

The findings point to the fact that many Greeks still do not see tax dodging as a bad thing, even now that the country is trying to emerge from its deepest financial crisis in recent memory. Crucially, 94.1 percent said they would collect receipts if it were to their own benefit.

The 1,600 people and 1,000 enterprises surveyed suggested that over half of Greeks (53 percent) systematically evade paying taxes by hiding their true incomes, although only 16.4 percent admit to doing so, while 46.3 percent responded that they had allowed other people to avoid paying taxes by not getting receipts.

Topping the tax evasion list, as the respondents see it, are doctors (according to 88.6 percent of those surveyed), followed by tradesmen (85.4 percent), law and notary firms (75.2 percent), food catering stores (57.9 percent) and fuel stations (44.1 percent). Supermarkets were put at the bottom of the list with 17.7 percent.