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Hellenic News, Culture & Lifestyle



## Visitors to get new angle on Greece

«Greece: All Time Classic» is the motto of the Greek National Tourism Organization's new campaign for the promotion of the country abroad as a holiday destination, it was announced on Tuesday during a press conference at the Acropolis Museum by the GNTO's general secretary, Panos Livadas.

The drive will focus on sharing the country's lesser-known facets with potential visitors rather than what most foreigners are already aware of.

The press conference included the screening of two advertising spots that were created in association with Aegean Airlines and will form part of carrier's inflight entertainment.

Livadas also presented a book on promoting the country's tourism identity abroad, to be used by public and private bodies involved in outward-looking activities. During the presentation, representatives of GNTO employees expressed opposition to the government's decision to reduce the size of the organization.

## Greek coalition fears fallout from sacking civil servants

Greece is hoping that the quicker-than-expected departure of civil servants from the public sector will help convince visiting troika officials that there is no need for the coalition to sack public sector workers in the coming months. Finance Minister Yannis Stourmaras and Administrative Reform Minister Antonis Maniatakis met Tuesday to discuss the government's position on the downsizing of the public sector.

Leading officials from the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund are due to hold talks with the two ministers on Sunday and Monday to discuss civil servant numbers.

The coalition is worried about having to sack public sector workers as it fears the backlash from unions and society given that unemployment is at 27 percent. There is also concern that such a move could destabilize the coalition. Fotis Kouvelis, the leader of junior coalition partner Democratic Left, is strongly opposed to firing bureaucrats.

However, Athens is concerned that the



troika, particularly the IMF, will pressure Greece to commit to specific steps to reducing the number of bureaucrats ahead of a decision next month by the Euro Working Group to reduce the final sub-tranche of 2.8 billion euros from the latest bailout installments.

In a TV interview on Monday night, Stourmaras admitted that the firing of civil servants could not be ruled out. SYRIZA accused the government of backtracking

on its pledge not to.

The Greek government is going to defend its position not to proceed with direct sackings in the public sector by arguing that civil servant numbers are falling faster than expected thanks to early retirements and the non-renewal of contracts. Sources said that as many as 37,000 workers left the civil service last year when the target was to reduce the amount of bureaucrats by about 20,000.

## Crime boss undergoes medical tests

Convicted crime boss Panayiotis Vlastos was taken to hospital on Tuesday to undergo medical tests after falling more than 5 meters from a helicopter during a thwarted attempt to break out of Trikala Prison in central Greece on Sunday. According to sources, Vlastos had a CAT scan, X-rays and various other tests before being returned to the prison escorted by armed police officers.



## Over 8 in 10 are unable to repay loans

At least eight in every 10 citizens who have taken out a loan are having trouble with repayment, while the problem is greater among households with children and those from the lower social strata, according to a survey conducted by Public Issue for the 2012 period.

Over three in four households (78 percent) said they are having problems in paying their installments to banks, while 6 percent say they are totally unable to do so. Given that there are some 1.5 million households in Greece with debts to banks, the survey found, this means that about 1.2 million families are unable to pay installments on time.

This total of 84 percent is far higher than the respective rate of 60 percent in 2009, before the country entered the fiscal streamlining process. Ninety percent of corporate loans are facing servicing problems while 86 percent of consumer loans are not paid on time. Regarding house repair loans, 82 percent are having trouble with their repayments. Surprisingly, 68 percent of borrowers say they have not attempted to have their loans restructured, against just 29 percent who said they have secured a settlement and 2 percent who tried but failed.

## Building permits destroyed by flooding at Aghia Paraskevi town planning office

All building permits issued by the Aghia Paraskevi town planning office in northeastern Athens in the last eight years were destroyed in flooding last week, Skai reported on Monday.

Authorities said that the water level reached 1.5 meters in the basement where the files were kept after heavy rain on Friday.

Athens saw its heaviest rain for more than 50 years on Friday morning, causing flooding in various parts of the capital.

Building permits issued more than eight years ago by the Aghia Paraskevi office have been transferred to a warehouse in Aspropyrgos, west of Athens.