

## Editorial

# NEW MAJOR CHALLENGES IN 2021

The past year has left behind great problems, especially the catastrophic pandemic resulting to unprecedented consequences on societies and the economy globally.

At the same time, fundamental human values such as solidarity and cooperation were brought to the fore along with the role of public services, especially public health universally provided.

However, neoliberal policies continue unabated in most parts of the world and authoritarian government practices emerged as is the case of the Mitsotakis government in Greece.

The European Union and its institutions are also being tested making more obvious the serious shortcomings of the European integration process. The European Parliament, as before, has been more sensitive than other EU institutions to people's concerns and demands, with the GUE-NGL group playing a very positive role.

The hopeful vaccine production and supply throughout the EU has become a disputed issue because of the failure of certain pharmaceutical multinationals to honor their agreements with the EU Commission. Across the Atlantic, a political crisis in the USA came close. The international opinion was shocked 6 January 2021, when extreme right supporters of Trump invaded the Capitol.

However the inauguration of Joe Biden happened as programmed, followed by positive certain policy statements.

Jan - Feb 2021

## 200th Anniversary of Greek Revolution

During 2021, many events will take place nationally and locally in celebration.

WE  
SHALL OVERCOME!



# NEWSLETTER



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# ALEXIS TSIPRAS: VACCINES ARE A PUBLIC GOOD

**T**he well known site Politico, published on January 28, 2021 an article of SYRIZA-Progressive Alliance, president, former prime minister, who pointed out the following:

Europe's strategy to depend on the capacity and business plans of a few pharmaceutical companies to develop vaccines for its entire population was always a weak one — both practically and in principle.

We're now at a point where the most needed and valuable product in the world — whose research and development was funded to a great extent by European taxpayers — cannot be distributed as widely as possible because of the corporate priorities and naturally limited production capacities of the pharmaceutical companies that developed it.

This situation can't be allowed to continue.

There are plenty of EU pharmaceutical companies with production facilities inside and outside the EU that could be codeveloping vaccines and contributing to the effort.

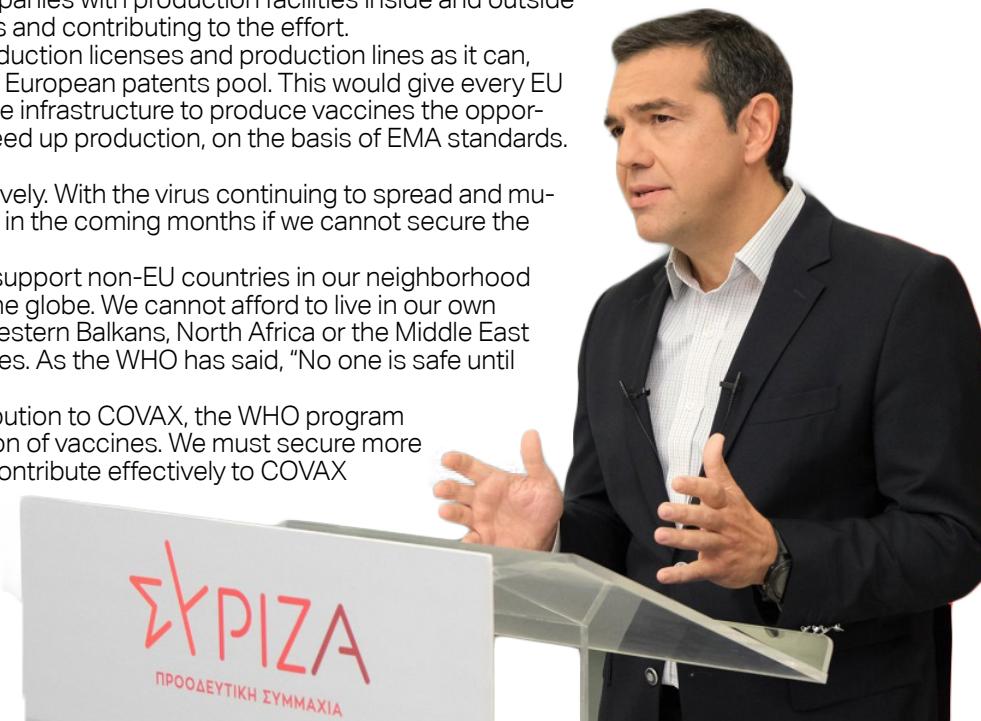
The EU should secure as many vaccine production licenses and production lines as it can, and acquire the relevant patents to create a European patents pool. This would give every EU member country that has the means and the infrastructure to produce vaccines the opportunity to mobilize its resources and help speed up production, on the basis of EMA standards.

It is imperative that we act swiftly and decisively. With the virus continuing to spread and mutate, even more families will lose loved ones in the coming months if we cannot secure the proper amount of vaccines on time.

It is also of paramount importance that we support non-EU countries in our neighborhood and the development of countries across the globe. We cannot afford to live in our own European bubble as our neighbors in the Western Balkans, North Africa or the Middle East face even more severe shortages of vaccines. As the WHO has said, "No one is safe until everyone is safe."

The EU urgently needs to step up its contribution to COVAX, the WHO program whose goal is to ensure equitable distribution of vaccines. We must secure more production lines of the vaccine in order to contribute effectively to COVAX and the vaccination programs of non-EU countries.

Showing that the EU is ready to offer tangible support beyond its borders is particularly important at a time when there are question marks about the EU's role in its neighborhood and its commitment to enlargement to the Western Balkans. (...)



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*In our discussion with the General Director of the W.H.O., Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, we focused on the need to manage the vaccine as a global public good. He underlined his support for our initiative on acquiring patents and creating a patents pool to ensure faster vaccine production by a greater amount of pharma companies.*

*On this basis, the EU should support COVAX more, for equitable and universal access to vaccines.*

ALEXIS TSIPRAS



## WHO SUPPORT FOR TSIPRAS PROPOSAL ON PATENTS

Former Greek prime minister Alexis Tsipras, held a telephone conversation on 31 January 2021, with WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom, who agreed with Tsipras' initiative to release patents of COVID-19 vaccines to scale up production. Subsequently, Alexis Tsipras stated: "Dr. Tedros Adhanom stressed that he supports Syriza's initiative to secure patents and create a pool of patents, in order to have greater and faster production of vaccines by as many pharmaceutical companies as possible."

## GREEK "METOO" GROWS, GOVERNMENT ACCUSED OF COVER UP

It all started when Olympic champion Sofia Bekatorou announced publicly that she was a victim of sexual harassment from a Sailing Federation official.

Inspired by her courage and angered by the federation's cynicism, more athletes began going public speaking of similar experiences using the hashtag #metisofia (on Sofia's side). The President of Hellenic Republic praised Sofia for ending a "conspiracy of silence".

The Greek MeToo movement spread in other areas and testimonies were officially submitted on rape, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, against professors in universities by students, against actors and theatre directors.

During February developments were stormy in connection with the Greek National Theatre director Dimitris Lignadis appointed directly by PM Mitsotakis.

### Lignadis arrested

Mr Lignadis, former artistic director of the Greek National Theatre, appointed by the government, was arrested on February 20th on rape charges. The issue has sharpened political confrontation as SYRIZA and other democratic parties accuse the Culture Minister for inactivity in the case of Lignadis, laying blame also to Mitsotakis and asking him to assume his political responsibility for the delay in taking action and attempt to cover up this case.

## GREEK POLICE IN UNIVERSITIES

February 11, 2021 the New Democracy party and the extreme right Greek Solution party, passed in Parliament a new law for permanent police presence inside the university campuses. Earlier, Mitsotakis government had legislated to restrict the university asylum.

It is the first time in post dictatorial Greece that such measures are legislated on the pretext of lawlessness and criminality and providing security. This new law was totally rejected by the democratic opposition parties.

In addition, certain modern right politicians such as former Education minister George Souflis, rejected the police presence in universities, but also the Council of Greek University Rectors opposed it, declaring that it is a violation of university autonomy and may cause more problems than it can solve.

Broad opposition was manifested by students and teachers, despite police violence. In addition, the Mitsotakis government characterized the protests "corona demonstrations" to discredit them. Condemnations of the law came also from abroad, as hundreds of university teachers signed a relevant protest.

## GREEK-TURKISH RELATIONS AT A CROSSROADS

After a year of tension, explorative talks resumed between Greece and Turkey aiming to negotiations for determining both the continental shelf and the exclusive economic zone in the Aegean and the Eastern Mediterranean.

The SYRIZA-Progressive Alliance party supports this process and in case it fails, we are in favour of taking the dispute to the International Court of Justice of the UN at the Hague. The Mitsotakis government has opted such a course but inside his government and the ND party there are strong tendencies to the opposite, led by former prime minister Antonis Samaras, who also led the violent opposition against the Prespes Peace Agreement between Greece and North Macedonia.

Therefore, our party is on the alert to save guard that dialogue succeeds and is not extended to include issues of national sovereignty. In parallel, we support a fruitful EU-Turkey dialogue and reject demands for Turkey's accession course to be cancelled, an option favored by the extreme right in Greece and the xenophobic as well as islamophobic forces in the EU, some of the in national governments. Defending the secular character of the Republic of Turkey, progressive and peace loving forces in the country do not want isolation from Europe.

As far as our party is concerned, we want to set in motion "peoples diplomacy" for Greek-Turkish relations, aiming to building bridges and demolishing walls across the Aegean. In this direction, we propose to the EL to include in its 2021 action program a Greek-Turkish peace forum.

The SYRIZA five-year government in Greece followed consistently an energetic pro-peace multi-dimensional foreign policy aiming to promoting peace and cooperation in the entire Balkan region as well as in Greek-Turkish relations.

## MEPs APPEAL ON VACCINES



**COVID-19 vaccines to be treated as public goods that are guaranteed for all.**  
**The EU should overcome the barriers & restrictions arising from patents & intellectual property rights, in order to ensure the widespread production and distribution of vaccines in all countries and to all citizens.**



**“**It is time for COVID-19 vaccines to be treated in practice as public goods that are guaranteed for all. The EU should overcome the barriers and restrictions arising from patents and intellectual property rights in order to ensure the widespread production and distribution of vaccines in all countries and to all citizens”.

In the Appeal, which was an initiative by the Vice – President of the European Parliament and Head of SYRIZA – Progressive Alliance delegation, Mr. Dimitris Papadimoulis, the co-signed MEPs point out, among others, that “the EU should overcome the barriers and restrictions arising from patents and intellectual property rights in order to ensure the widespread production and distribution of vaccines in all countries and to all citizens” and request from the European Union Leadership to “take radical measures to avoid delays in peoples’ access to the new vaccines, overcoming any impasse. In this way, public health but also the economy, employment and social cohesion in Europe could be effectively protected”.

## European Left Campaign on vaccines



GO TO [NO PROFIT ON PANDEMIC.EU](http://NO PROFIT ON PANDEMIC.EU)

European LEFT

The European Union must pay more attention to the health of citizens rather than on its own mediatic and financial successes! Citizens can obtain more transparency and accountability of the strategy adopted towards the big pharma by the European Commission. It is time to bring back public healthcare systems into the hands of the people.

Add your signature and join the European Citizens' Initiative:

[www.noprofitonpandemic.eu](http://www.noprofitonpandemic.eu)

## COUNCIL OF EUROPE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY ADOPTS LEFT'S PROPOSAL

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has adopted (January 27 2021) by a large majority (72 in favor – 16 against) an amendment of the Group of the United European Left to the Resolution “Covid-19 vaccines: ethical, legal and practical considerations”. The amendment calls on the states of Council of Europe to treat Covid-19 vaccine as a global public good. According to it, “European Union authorities and states should overcome the barriers and restrictions arising from patents and intellectual property rights, in order to ensure the widespread production and distribution of vaccines in all countries and to all citizens”.

<https://gue-uel.org/>

## Katrougalos to chair Council of Europe Committee



The Shadow foreign minister of SYRIZA, George Katrougalos, former foreign Affairs minister of Greece, has been elected President of the Subcommittee on Middle East and the Arab World of the Council of Europe. In a period of pending changes and events, from the Palestinian Elections to the Abraham Accords, the Subcommittee will have an important role to play, in promoting peace and dialogue among the countries and political forces of the region.

## INTERNATIONAL

### NEW TALKS ON CYPRUS

**A**fter more than three years of immobility, the Cyprus peace process is set in motion following an Antonio Guterres initiative to convene an informal 5party conference in Geneva, 27 - 29 April, 2021.

The previous similar initiative in Crans Montana Switzerland came close to an agreement, leaving behind a "Guterres Acquis". However, conditions have deteriorated dramatically. The new leader of the Turkish-Cypriot community Mr. Tatar, wants the recognition in Cyprus of two states, i.e., the legalization of the 1974 invasion by Turkey, which led to occupation and a de-facto partition of the island.

The Cypriot Left, especially AKEL, had repeatedly warned of the dangers of immobility, insisting on the creation of a bizonal-bicommunal federation according to UN resolutions.

International solidarity is more imperative than before.

### MITSOTAKIS VISIT TO ISRAEL: OBVIOUS DEPARTURE FROM FIXED GREEK FOREIGN POLICY POSITIONS

After a visit to Israel of PM Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the International and European Affairs Sector of SYRIZA-Progressive Alliance made the following statement:

Prime Minister Mitsotakis visited Israel on 8 February 2021, second time since his first visit 16 June 2020.

As in the first time, he did not meet the Palestinian President and did not even mention the Palestinian issue during his joint press conference with his Israeli counterpart.

He kept silent as in the case of the announcement by the Israeli government of its plan to annex parts of the occupied West Bank, a plan opposed by the great majority of EU member state governments.

It is becoming alarmingly obvious that Mitsotakis' government is shifting silently away from firm positions of Greek foreign policy.

However, the undisputable truth is that peace in the Middle East can only be achieved through the peaceful co-existence of the peoples of the region, and through the implementation of the relevant UN resolutions.

The SYRIZA-Progressive Alliance Party has always supported the two states solution, i.e., the establishment alongside of Israel the State of Palestine, within the 1967 borders and East Jerusalem as its capital, with equal security for both.

Unfortunately, the foreign policy of the New Democracy government is also in this case the opposite of the multi-faceted, pro-peace foreign policy of the SYRIZA government.

### CUBA IS NOT A STATE "SPONSORING TERRORISM"

**O**ne of the last acts of Donald Trump as US President was to list again Cuba "among the States Sponsoring Terrorism".

The International and European Affairs Sector of SYRIZA-Progressive Alliance party, knows only of one recent "terrorist" activity of Cuba, which was sending doctors and medical staff to more than thirty countries in order to confront the ongoing deadly pandemic. Italy, a G7 country, was first to receive such a solidarity mission.

Sharing the concerns expressed by the European Left (EL) for the above mentioned cold war style Trump decision, we express the hope that the new US Biden administration will cancel it.

Cuba has itself to deal with formidable problems, including the pandemic and deserves like every developing country the international solidarity, not sanctions.