
STRIKES TO BRING GREECE TO A STANDSTILL THURSDAY

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There will be no incoming or outgoing flights at Greek airports Thursday due to a nationwide strike called by public sector union ADEDY against planned pension reforms. The strike will also affect public hospitals, which will only receive emergencies, state schools and services at tax and municipal offices.

Public transport (buses, the metro and the ISAP electric railway) will remain in service as workers decided against participating, while TV news programs will also be suspended as journalists walk off the job.

The decision by air traffic controllers to join the strike means that all flights will be grounded.

The action follows Wednesdays negotiations for an overhaul of the countrys troubled pension system between representatives of Greeces lenders, the International Monetary Fund and European Union institutions, and Labor Minister Giorgos Katrougalos.

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras wants to conclude negotiations before eurozone finance ministers meet on April 22. European officials have cautioned that if the review is not wrapped up before that meeting, the situation for Greece will become increasingly difficult.

Striking workers will start staging demonstrations at 11 a.m. while the federation representing public hospital workers (POEDIN) will hold a rally outside the Health Ministry.

Meanwhile, port workers will hold a strike Friday to protest the planned privatization of the Piraeus and Thessaloniki port authorities and will march in downtown Athens.

Port workers are accusing the government of conducting a fire sale of the countrys ports through state sell-off fund TAIPED.

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