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## **GREECE HOLDS BACK ON FINALIZING STRATEGY IN TALKS WITH CREDITORS**

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The government is waiting for a move from Greeces creditors to break the deadlock in frozen bailout negotiations, Kathimerini understands, as European officials indicate that very little progress has been achieved since last months Eurogroup.

Although Greek officials say they are keen to secure the resumption of talks, the lack of any concrete action means the imminent return of bailout monitors appears unlikely. And if foreign auditors fail to return by early next week, concluding a pending bailout review at the next scheduled Eurogroup on February 20 will be difficult.

There are two key stumbling blocks: firstly Greeces reluctance to legislate contingent fiscal measures up front, in line with demands by the International Monetary Fund; and secondly a rift between European Union officials and the IMF over fiscal forecasts for Greece.

Following Berlins insistence on the need for the IMF to support Greeces third bailout, Dutch Finance Minister Jeroen Dijsselbloem indicated on Wednesday that the Netherlands also requires the Fund to be on board. Both the Netherlands and Germany face general elections, the former next month, the latter in September. Sources in the Greek government indicated on Wednesday that Dijsselbloems comments, made to the Dutch Parliament, were for domestic consumption and differed significantly in tone from his criticism of the Funds report this week that pushed for the imposition of more austerity in Greece.

Sources suggested that they did not expect much to come of a Euro Working Group meeting scheduled for today as negotiations have moved to a higher level. The issue is not technical, its political, one source said. The EWG has no say and is not the competent authority as regards the issue that has transpired about the role of the IMF, the official said.

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, who on Wednesday started a two-day official visit to Ukraine, is expected to set out his vision for a potential compromise with Greeces international creditors during a session of leftist SYRIZAs central committee this weekend.

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