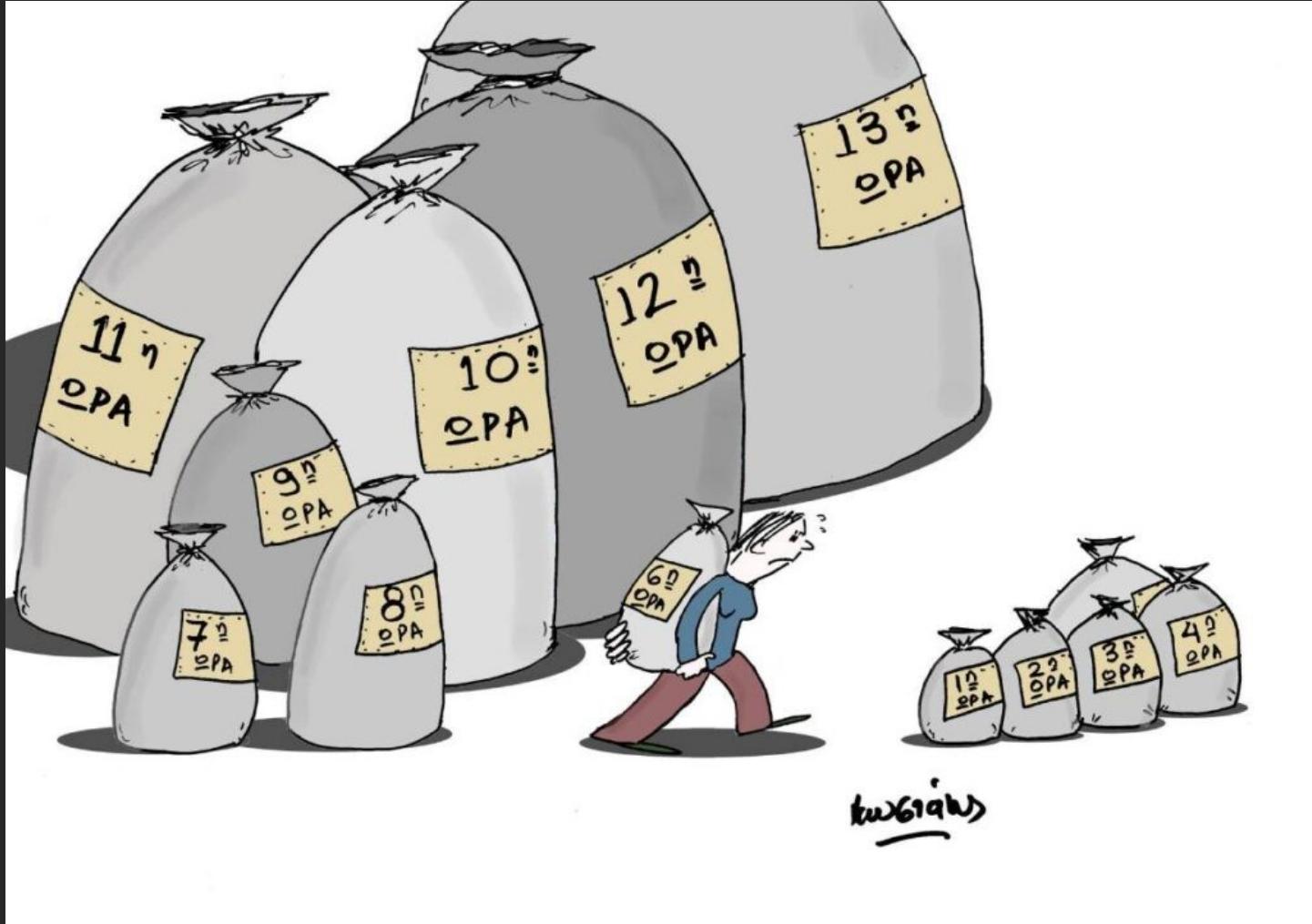


13 working hs/d or return to slavery: Recent changes in Greek labor law



Dr. Leonidas Vatikiotis

Presentation for:
Istituto Promozione Lavoratori

December 4, 2025

How we reached to 13 hours work

1. Memoranda years (2010 – officially 2018)

- During the sovereign debt crisis, changes in labor law were permanent conditionality every time when Greece had to cash a reimbursement from the loans

- The most striking changes:

a. Abolition of collective bargaining (February of 2012).

b. Official reductions to salaries around 20%.

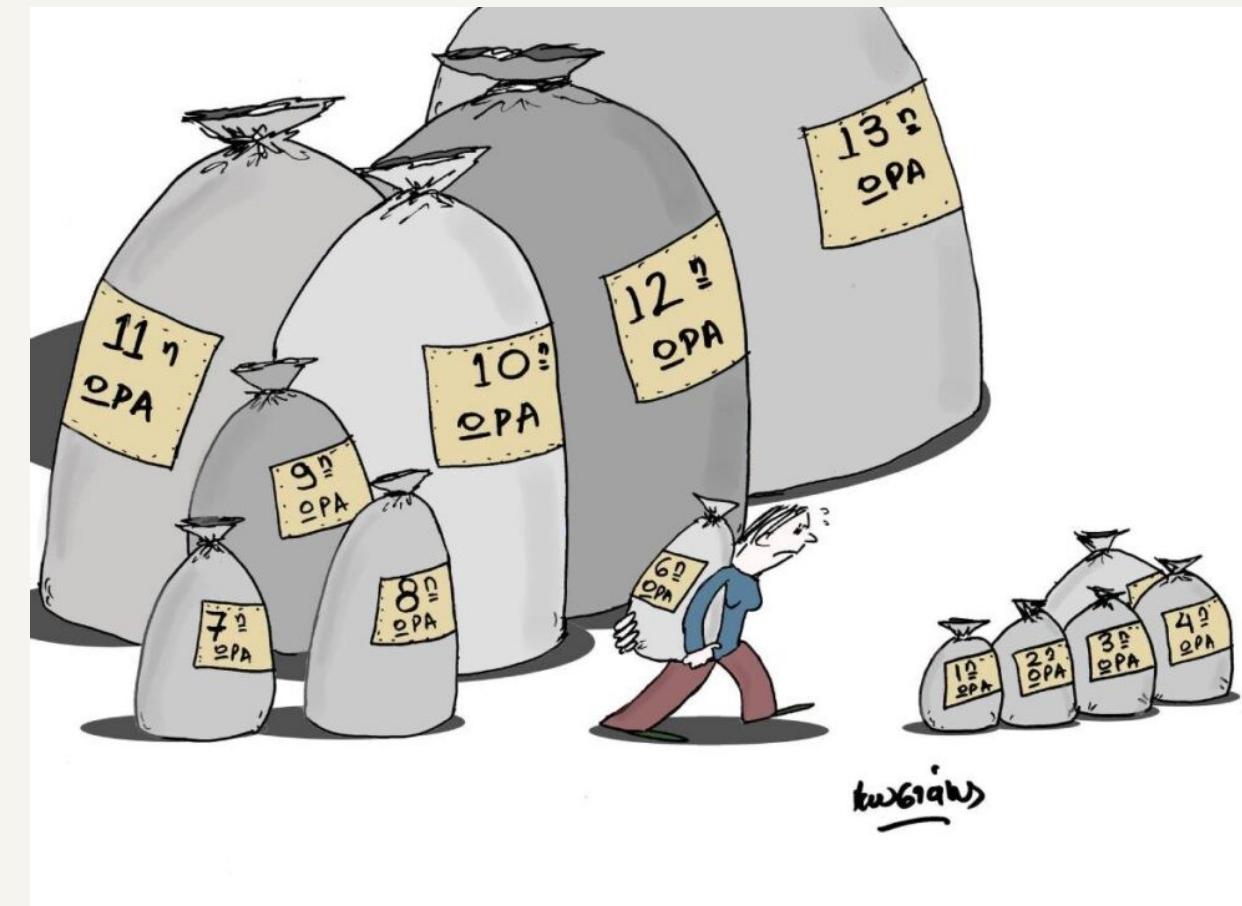
c. In private sector were much bigger, even 50%.

Establishment of a new category for salaries around 20% lower for the youth (a few years later this change was abolished).

All these changes passed in Greek law, under the pressure of Greek industrialists (SEV)

Monitoring of Greek economy has never stopped. Enhanced surveillance of Greek economy will last many decades more (to the repayment of 75% of EU loans).

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How we reached to 13 hours work

2. During the SYRIZA govt (2015-2019) the law that abolished collective bargaining remained unchanged. In addition became stronger while the then govt under the auspices of industrialists renewed and extended the law. (The first law defined its power during the sovereign debt crisis).

- As a result, till now, the basic wage and salary change after an announcement of the Labor Minister, without negotiations between the so-called social partners.

- Abolition of sectoral collective agreements: A continuously bigger part of employees (the higher in EU) is working under no collective agreement

Source:

<https://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/pr/date/2025/html/ecb.pr250917~10ff519cc5.en.html>

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Employee coverage by country

(share of employees in each country, percentages)

	<i>Belgium</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Greece</i>	<i>Spain</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Italy</i>	<i>Netherlands</i>	<i>Austria</i>	<i>Euro area</i>
2013-2024	37.7	41.9	10.7	62.1	52.1	48.7	64.1	60.6	49.0
2025 Q1	45.0	44.1	19.3	44.0	56.1	47.3	62.1	77.6	48.7
2025 Q2	45.0	45.0	16.1	43.4	55.8	47.1	61.6	76.6	48.6
2025 Q3	45.0	44.8	8.6	42.8	55.4	46.8	60.6	76.0	48.0
2025 Q4	44.9	44.3	8.6	42.6	49.5	46.1	59.0	71.4	46.3
2026 Q1	44.8	38.4	8.4	14.4	24.5	45.1	50.3	44.2	33.3
2026 Q2	44.7	31.4	8.2	12.3	8.4	40.5	47.5	31.1	26.0

How we reached to 13 hours work

3. During the nowadays govt of New Democracy (mix of neoliberals with pro-fascists and ex supporters of military junta 1967-1974), we had a flood of labor laws. Every year a new law was voted. The most important:

4808/2021: “For the protection of law” (Minister Kostis Hatzidakis)

- Introduced the digital time card
- “Gave the right to employees for arrangement of working time for an extended period of time” (“Those workers who want to go to collect olives can work 10 hours as a means to collect holidays”)

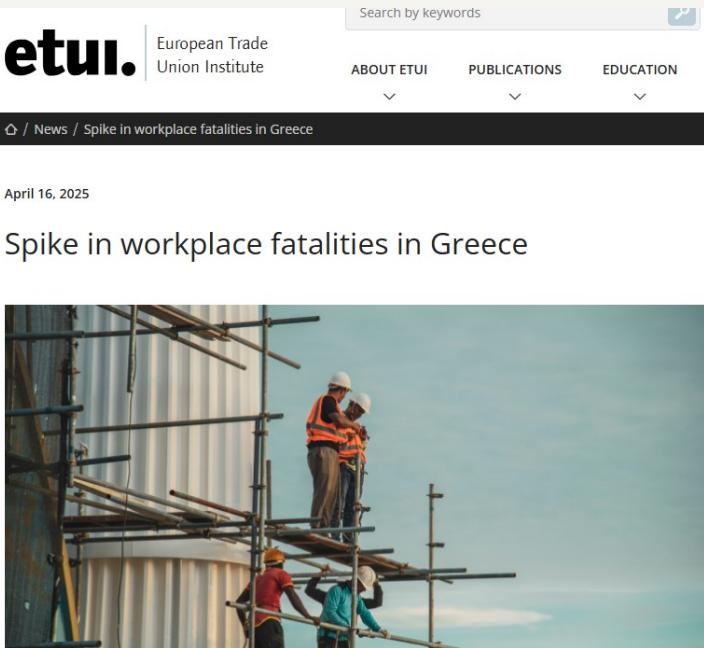


5053/2023: “For the enhancement of labor” (Minister Adonis Georgiades)

- “Right to work” 13 hours a day on two employers
- Legalization of 6th day of work
- Much more sectors have the license to work even on Sunday (food industry, greenhouses, etc.)
- Criminalization of solidarity: strict financial penalties for trade unionists who participate in solidarity demonstration in a working place, closing its entrance.

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The screenshot shows the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) website. The header includes the ETUI logo, a search bar, and navigation links for 'ABOUT ETUI', 'PUBLICATIONS', and 'EDUCATION'. Below the header, a breadcrumb navigation shows 'News / Spike in workplace fatalities in Greece'. The main content area displays a news article from April 16, 2025, with the title 'Spike in workplace fatalities in Greece'. To the left of the text is a photograph of four construction workers on a scaffolding structure. The caption below the photo reads: 'Photo credits: Abdulla Hafeez from Pexels (Canva)'. Below the photo, a quote from an expert is provided: 'Subcontracting, weak oversight, missing collective agreements and under-reporting to blame, expert says'.

Minister of Labor Anna Kerameos (like the previous ones she has never worked in her life)

- “Right to work” 13 hours a day in 1 employer (40% increase in salary as compensation)
- According to the govt isn’t obligatory it’s optional
- “Fast track” hiring (“as a means to confront bureaucracy”)
- 1 working day contract

What it means?

- Further segmentation of working class and labor relations
- Deterioration of social & family life
- Increase of accidents during working hours
- Rise in exploitation of working class

This law is servicing the sector HORECA (Hotel, Restaurant & Catering) & broader Tourism sector due to 80.000 vacancies (400.000 working seats, out of 4,3 million total labor force in Greece)

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Labour market, Wages and labour costs,
Figure 1: Estimated hourly labour costs, 2023

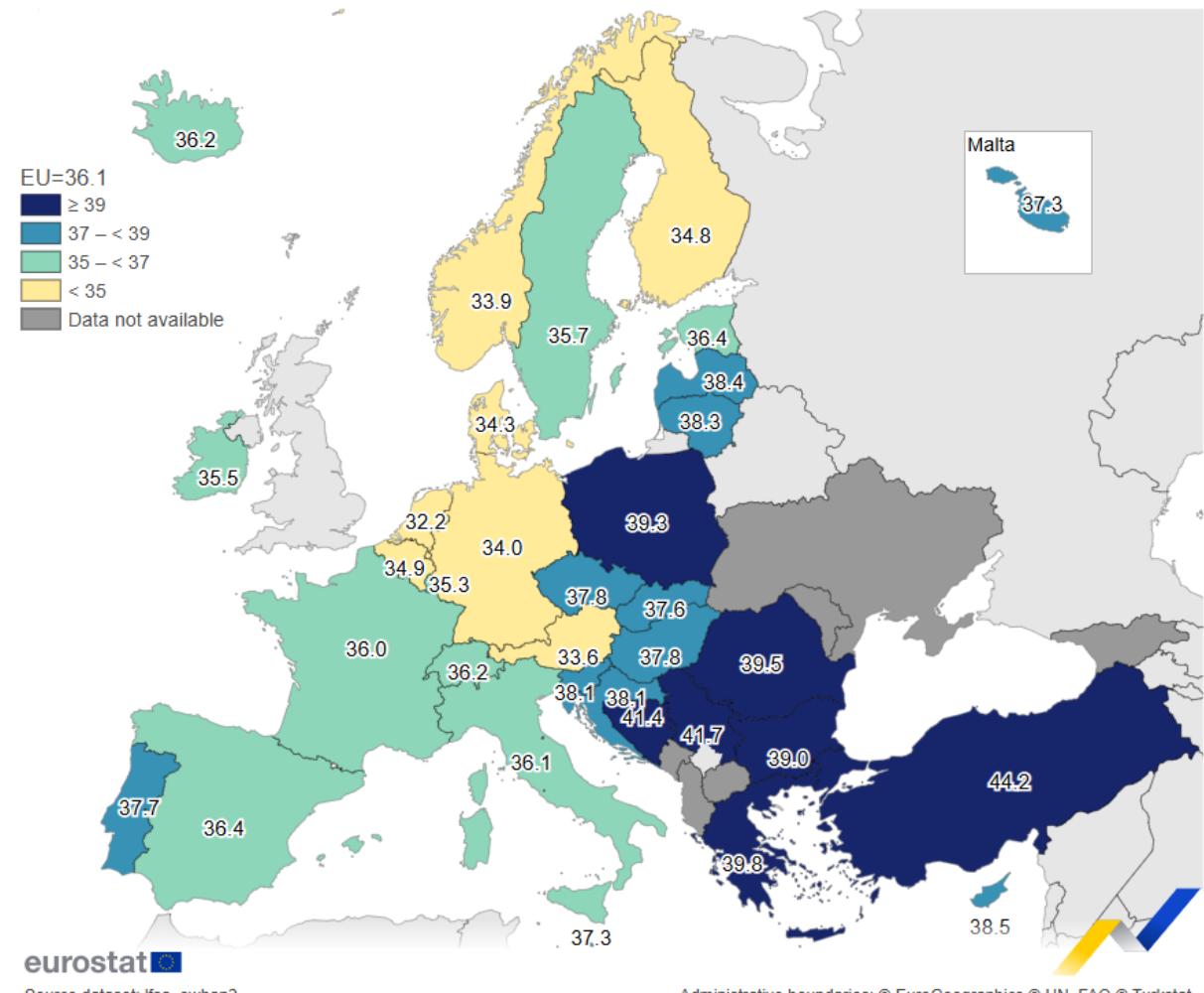
	Total labour cost	Wages and salaries	Other labour costs
EU	31,8	24,0	7,8
Euro area	35,6	26,5	9,1
Luxembourg	53,9	47,2	6,7
Denmark	48,1	42,0	6,1
Belgium	47,1	36,3	10,8
Netherlands	43,3	33,0	10,3
France	42,2	28,7	13,5
Germany	41,3	31,6	9,7
Austria	40,9	30,0	10,9
Ireland	40,2	33,3	6,9
Sweden	38,9	26,3	12,6
Finland	37,1	30,5	6,6
Italy	29,8	21,5	8,3
Slovenia	25,5	21,9	3,6
Spain	24,6	18,2	6,4
Cyprus	20,1	16,3	3,8
Estonia	18,3	13,6	4,7
Malta	18,2	17,1	1,1
Czechia	18,0	13,6	4,4
Slovakia	17,2	12,5	4,7
Portugal	17,0	13,7	3,3
Greece	15,7	12,6	3,1
Lithuania	14,7	14,0	0,7
Poland	14,5	11,9	2,6
Croatia	14,4	12,7	1,7
Latvia	13,5	10,7	2,8
Hungary	12,8	11,0	1,8
Romania	11,0	10,4	0,6
Bulgaria	9,3	8,1	1,2
Norway	51,9	41,7	10,2
Iceland	49,7	39,5	10,2

The current status of working rights in Greece

1. Actual level of weekly hours of work in main job: 39,8 h (v. EU an. 36,1)

2. One of the lowest wages and labor costs (15,7 euros/h vs 35,6 in EA) < half!

Average number of actual weekly hours of work in main job, 2023 (aged 20 to 64)



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As a conclusion:

*Greece is a great place
to visit as a tourist, if
you have a lot of money
to spend, but not to live
or work...*

Thanks!



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