



Michalis Tremopoulos, MEP Greens/EFA

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Dear Bundeskanzlerin,

Last year I had an opportunity to find out first hand how dangerous a populist rhetoric can be. A story by the FOCUS magazine, portraying all Greeks as “crooks” had sparked a wave of widespread populist reaction in my country against Germany and Germans as a whole. I was one of the few public figures who publicly opposed that wave then, and I’ m happy the average Greek, when getting angry, is now making a clear distinction between your government and the German people.

I am often furious at Greek politicians openly lying to my people and I thought such things could not happen “in the heart of Europe”. Your recent statement about your fellow European citizens of the South just disillusioned me. You publicly made an inflammatory statement that was defying all facts and statistics, one that was bound to be easily disproved, as it actually happened.

Yes, Mrs Merkel, official facts show we are in fact working longer hours, paying much higher social security contributions to get a pension at the same average age as the Germans do, having shorter holidays and days off. I have nothing against that, as you Germans are working much more efficiently and we need to get more efficient ourselves too.

But we can’t work more efficiently unless we are lucky enough to still have a job in a context of severe recession and soaring unemployment. And the weak – much weaker than yours - welfare state we have always had, is now being quickly reversed through the austerity measures.

On the other hand, millions of German jobs have for years been funded through the trade deficits of the South. Were it not the euro, the current German trade surplus would have triggered a huge revaluation of the Deutsche Mark and your exports would have collapsed. I’m afraid the sacrifices imposed on German workers are also part of the problem: the freeze on German wages contributes to the competitiveness problems of the South - and to the euro crisis as well.

What we need is a more consolidated Europe, a federal one, setting limits to tax competition, finding new sustainable sources of public revenues instead of getting addicted to easily resorting to cuts, integrating the social and environmental dimension in its economic indicators, developing an ambitious regional policy, balancing solidarity with responsibility.

This is the vision you are now turning your back at, and I am afraid it is no good for the German people either.

Yours faithfully

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