

1 **Slovaks against solidarity?**

2 Original at:

3 http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2010/08/slovakia_and_greece

4 Fiscal irresponsibility is one thing. A lack of "solidarity" appears to be
5 another. The new Slovak government earned the wrath of Brussels this
6 week when it decided to withhold its share of funding from the euro-area's
7 contribution of €80 billion to the Greek bail-out fund and this decision
8 was, almost unanimously, approved by the parliament in Bratislava on
9 Wednesday.

10 The European Commission condemned Bratislava for its "breach of
11 solidarity". Olli Rehn, the economics and monetary affairs commissioner,
12 said that he expects the euro-area's finance ministers to revisit the topic
13 at their next meeting. But since Bratislava has backtracked on a political
14 pledge (made by a previous government) rather than any legal obligation,
15 Brussels is unlikely to impose formal sanctions.

16 Solidarity cannot be applied arbitrarily, says Slovakia's prime minister,
17 Iveta Radicova, who took power last month at the head of a four-party
18 centre-right coalition after a general election on June 12th. Slovakia,
19 which only adopted the single currency last year, is much poorer than
20 Greece, with a per capita GDP of \$21,000 to Greece's \$32,000 at
21 purchasing power parity. Yet as a member of the euro area, Slovakia was
22 supposed to provide more than €800m to the rescue package.
23 Unsurprisingly, the idea is deeply unpopular in Slovakia

24 Slovakia's government insists it is still pro-European. Although it has
25 rejected contributing to the Greek bailout, the Slovak parliament has
26 approved the country's much larger €4.4bn commitment to the euro
27 area's €440bn European Financial Stability Facility, which makes up the
28 bulk of a €750 billion fund that seeks to prevent the spread of the Greek
29 crisis.

Questions

- 1) Paraphrase 'The new Slovak government earned the wrath of Brussels' in your own words (line 5).
- 2) Slovakia 'withheld' (refused to give, line 6) its share of money to one fund, but agreed to contribute even more to another one (end of the article). What is the difference between these funds?
- 3) What is the likely future development on this issue according to Oli Rehn?
- 4) Does Slovakia's decision constitute a breach of some of its legal obligations?
- 5) What grounds for withholding the money does Slovakia have?
- 6) What is the difference between the Slovak understanding of solidarity and that of Oli Rehn (and presumably others)?
- 7) A synonym for 'rescue package' (line 22) can be found throughout the text. Give your own definition of 'rescue package' and then find the synonym!
- 8) What is your opinion on Slovakia's decision? Do you favour the Slovak or the (West-) European understanding of solidarity?
- 9) Some non-euro countries, such as Sweden or Poland, are also voluntarily contributing to the European Financial Stability Facility. The Czech Republic is not. Do you think that this is appropriate?

Vocabulary

lack of (line 4) – deficiency or absence of something needed, desirable, or customary: lack of money; lack of skill

revisit a topic (line 12) – to re-examine (a topic or theme) after an interval, with a view to making a fresh appraisal

make up (line 27) – (of parts) to constitute; compose; form

seek to (line 28) – to try or attempt

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>.

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