

STOCK EXCHANGE

**American activist is looking for an executive turnaround manager for Greece**

Jeroen Molenaar

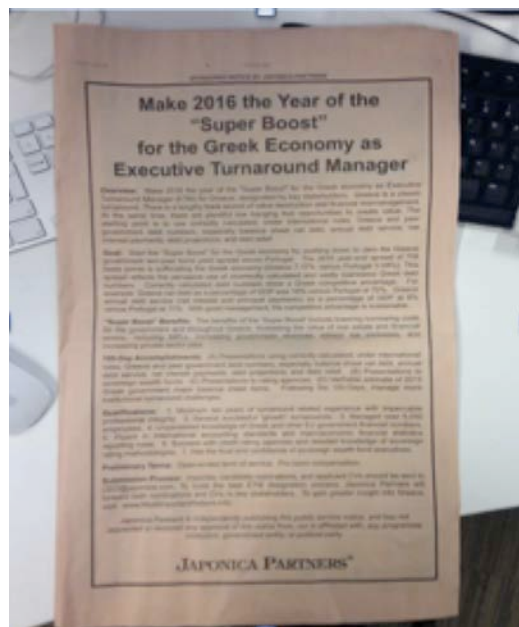
Thursday, January 14, 2016, 4.10pm

Headline: 'Activist is looking for a savior for Greece'

Paul Kazarian, the activist investor who has bought up billions in Greek debt via his firm Japonica Partners, is currently looking for an “executive turnaround manager” to pull the ailing South European country out of the abyss.

He even [bought a full page in the Financial Times](#) for that purpose.

The qualifications for the job as the Greek executive turnaround manager should not be underestimated. The job requires at least ten years of turnaround related experience with “impeccable professional integrity”, “unparalleled knowledge of Greek and other EU government financial numbers”, and “fluent in international accountant standards”. Furthermore, the executive turnaround manager must also have “the trust and confidence” of sovereign wealth fund executives, and must have managed over 5,000 employees.



Please send CVs to [CEO@japonica.com](mailto:CEO@japonica.com)

**'Pro Bono'**

At first sight, the advertisement covering the entire fifth page of the Thursday edition of the British Financial Times comes across as a bit weird. Who would be willing to pay almost £148,000 (around €195,000) for a recruitment advertisement? Who would fork out so much money to promote such a job that is also 'pro bono'; in other words: voluntary and unpaid?

The answer is simple: Paul Kazarian.

## 'Corporate Raider'

For twenty years, it has been quiet regarding this former Goldman Sachs banker and activist investor. During the 1980s and 1990s, Kazarian, who is of Armenian descent, made his mark as a “corporate raider”. He bought the failing barbecue and toaster manufacturer [Sunbeam-Oster](#) and turned it successfully around.

Kazarian’s reputation preceded him. Remarkable, since not everything that he touched turned into gold. In 1995, he took on private equity giant Henry Kravis of KKR, and lost. Kazarian lost out on the acquisition of the dairy and pasta giant Borden.

From then on, Kazarian's [Japonica](#), named after his former Armenian neighborhood in Rhode Island, stayed under the radar until 2013, when Kazarian returned to the limelight.

## Pink shirt, round glasses

Kazarian, pink shirt, round glasses, focused on Greece with boundless energy. According to Kazarian, the South European country, that has been engulfed in debt since 2009, is much less in debt than is assumed. It is all a matter of accountancy.

According to him, once appropriate accountancy rules are applied, only a relative small debt will remain. The whole system of emergency funds and economic reforms is currently based on wrong assumptions. “The Focus is on the Wrong Debt Number”, [states](#) Kazarian. Once international rules are applied, the Greek debt will only amount to 18% of its Gross National Product, and not 175%.

## At a heavy discount

To put his money where his mouth is, Kazarian [offered](#) two years ago [to buy](#) the Greek government bonds for €4b; being at a heavy discount. Kazarian was able to obtain a substantial chunk of the Greek debt with his bid of 45% of the principal amount.

How much exactly Kazarian’s Japonica Partners has invested in the Greek government bonds was not revealed by its spokesperson. He did however state by email that Japonica is currently one of the largest private creditors of Athens.

## 'The Armenian Visitor'

Kazarian took, as befits a good activist, center stage. In a large-scale, international media campaign, Kazarian has been sharing his [ideas](#) with the world for the last two years. He organizes conferences, where he invites large investors to come and listen, hands out generous [cash prizes](#) to researchers who can further shape his vision, and also has the support of renowned names such as former Harvard professor [Theodore Pelagidis](#).

For months, Kazarian visited the Athenian Treasury so frequently, that it earned him the nickname “The Armenian Visitor,” wrote the [New York Times](#) last year. An expression that Greeks use for a person who comes and goes too many times.

## And more advertisements

Looking at the Greek government bonds yields, it seems that Kazarian may already have made some return on his investment. According to the Japonica spokesperson, the bonds yields are currently between 60% and 93% of the principal amount.

But that is not yet the end of the story. The Financial Times will run the recruitment advertisement again in the coming weeks. Furthermore, Japonica will fork out another \$ 246,000 for a similar ad in the in de New York Times.

## 'Super Boost'

It is about high time that an experienced [executive turnaround manager](#) starts spreading the news, convincing everybody that it is not as bad as made out when it comes to the Greek debts. This will result in increasing government bonds yields and decreasing interest rates, thus boosting the Greek economy.

So what are you waiting for? React! Since, as the ad headline implies, you as the “executive turnaround manager” can give the Greek economy a “Super Boost” this year.

Paul Kazarian International Seminar

(Article source: <http://fd.nl/beurs/1135201/amerikaanse-activist-zoekt-bedrijvendokter-voor-griekenland>)



**Jeroen Molenaar**

[Follow on twitter](#) [Email](#)

Editor

[Read all articles by Jeroen Molenaar](#)

Share this article