

Broad Array of Organizations, Individuals Urge Greek Authorities to Halt Prosecutions of Former Chief Statistician, His Colleagues

41 Organizations, 865 Individuals—including Nobel Laureates and many other prominent individuals—support Andreas Georgiou

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (January 29, 2018) – The American Statistical Association (ASA)—the world’s largest community of statisticians and data scientists—has released a [statement](#) it is circulating for sign on in support of the persecuted former head of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), Andreas Georgiou, and his colleagues, who continue to face charges in Greece for revising in full accordance with European Union statistical rules and principles the inaccurate and misleading deficit and debt figures of Greece for the years up to and including 2009.

“The number of individuals and organizations signed onto this statement, along with their breadth of professions and interests, make a clear statement that Greek authorities should halt the unjust and counterproductive prosecution of Georgiou and his colleagues,” said 2018 ASA President Lisa LaVange. “We hope that 2018 will mark a new beginning for Greece and its respect for the independent production of objective government statistics.”

Thus far, 41 organizations and 865 individuals have signed the statement. The organizations represent economists, statisticians, researchers and others, while the individuals include nine Nobel laureates, a former managing director of the International Monetary Fund, a former chairman of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, two former chief statisticians of the United States—one of whom is also a former director of the United Nations Statistics Division—current and former heads and officials of national statistical offices from around the world, many officials and former officials of national statistical offices, national statistical society officers, academicians and professionals and dozens of Greek nationals. The laureates who signed are George Akerlof, Sir Angus Deaton, Lars Peter Hansen, Oliver Hart, Daniel Kahneman, Eric Maskin, Edmund Phelps, Christopher Sims, Joseph Stiglitz.

The statement calls on the Greek government to immediately halt legal proceedings against Georgiou and his colleagues and notes the detriment of the Greek authorities’ approach on the country’s economy. In addition, the statement reads:

The continued prosecutions of Dr. Georgiou for his work, many times after findings of innocence—amounting to double or even potentially triple jeopardy—are troubling on multiple levels. The prosecutions undermine the current production of Greek statistical figures, which in turn undermines Greece’s efforts to end its cycles of economic crises

and attract foreign investment. Trusted, credible statistical data are a cornerstone of a well-functioning democracy and a healthy economy. The prosecutions also violate the scientific freedom and human rights of Dr. Georgiou and his colleagues to present their scientifically derived statistical data without interference and to “extend and disseminate knowledge for the good of humanity.”

This statement is the latest in a series of actions by the world’s statistical community to express support for Georgiou and the process and value of producing official statistics according to statistical rules and principles. These actions date back many years, including the following recent activity:

- In October, the Federation of European Statistical Societies, whose members are the national statistical societies from 23 European countries, wrote [to Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras expressing deep concern](#) over the legal proceedings against Georgiou.
- In [September](#), the ASA expressed its dismay over yet another conviction of Georgiou, urging all necessary actions be taken to avoid undermining the credibility of Greek statistics and calling for all charges against Georgiou and other official statisticians to be dropped.
- Also in September, [the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board](#) issued a press release noting how closely they are following the Georgiou developments, stating “the ability of the president of a national statistical institute to act independently is not only a requirement under EU law, but is essential for the credibility of official statistics and a key principle of the European Statistics Code of Practice.”
- In August, the International Statistical Institute issued their [latest statement](#) expressing their deep concern “about the recent decision of the Greek Appeals Court to convict Andreas Georgiou.”

The statement is a call to all Greek authorities, whether in the judicial, executive or legislative branches of its government. LaVange, former ASA President Barry Nussbaum and the ASA Board point out that Greek law 4051 of 2012 (as well as the EU Statistics Law, Regulation 223 as in force) requires the government of Greece to uphold its [Commitment on Confidence in Statistics](#) (in law 4051), which commits the government “to follow the European Statistics Code of Practice in its entirety” and confirms that ELSTAT’s president has sole responsibility for decisions on ELSTAT statistics. It also states the Greek government commits to “guarantee and defend the professional independence of the Hellenic Statistical System, in particular of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), and to promote it to the public through appropriate communication actions” and to “support the Hellenic Statistical Authority in upholding public confidence in Greek statistics and to defend them against any efforts to undermine their credibility.”

In short, the ASA believes there is a clear legal requirement for the executive and legislative branches of the Greek government to take all appropriate action—in contrast to the approaches followed to date—so that the prosecution of Georgiou and his colleagues stops.

The [statement](#) continues to accept additional names in support of Georgiou and his colleagues at www.tinyurl.com/SupportGeorgiou. More information on the Georgiou case is available from the [Friends of Greece website](#).

NB: The statement was originally released January 10 with 39 organizations and 650 individuals. This press release has been updated and is being released with updated numbers.

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About the American Statistical Association

The ASA is the world's largest community of statisticians and the oldest continuously operating professional science society in the United States. Its members serve in industry, government and academia in more than 90 countries, advancing research and promoting sound statistical practice to inform public policy and improve human welfare. For additional information, please visit the ASA website at www.amstat.org.

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