



AMERICAN STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION
Promoting the Practice and Profession of Statistics®

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September 1, 2017

His Excellence Mr. Alexis Tsipras
Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic

Your Excellency,

In March of this year, we wrote you regarding our deep concerns over the legal proceedings against Andreas Georgiou, the former president of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), and other senior ELSTAT officials (<http://www.amstat.org/asa/files/pdfs/POL-ASALetterRegardingAndreasGeorgiou2017-03-27.pdf>.) We urged all actions necessary to be taken to avoid undermining the credibility of the Greek statistics produced by Dr. Georgiou and his former colleagues and that all charges against these official statisticians be dropped.

Since that letter, the troubling prosecutions have continued. On August 1, 2017, Dr. Georgiou was convicted for breach of duty and given a two-year jail sentence, which is currently suspended but could easily be imposed in the coming year. Dr. Georgiou had been acquitted on these same charges on December 6, 2016. Additionally, in July, the Supreme Court Prosecutor proposed to reopen a case accusing Dr. Georgiou of complicity against the state. Similarly, this occurred after he had been acquitted of such charges by a different panel of judges in the Council of the Appeals Court on July 15, 2015. Should the reopened case proceed to trial, it would amount to triple jeopardy. As we noted in our previous letter, even before the above instances, there had been a number of occasions since 2013 when various investigating judges and prosecutors had recommended that all charges against Dr. Georgiou be dropped only to have them revived because, it appears, of public and political pressure. Lastly, we learned this week of a conviction of Dr. Georgiou in a civil suit for alleged slander.

Also of deep concern, Greece appears to have shown a lack of integrity in its July agreement with its Eurozone partners to accept its third disbursement for 8.5 billion euro. The supplemental memorandum of understanding stipulated that Greece would pay for the legal defense costs of official statisticians, such as Dr. Georgiou, prosecuted for decisions made and actions taken pursuant to carrying out their official functions. However, the enacted Greek legislation only arranges for partial payment for court costs and only if he is acquitted. The repeated trials indicate that some in the judicial system and elsewhere seem unwilling to accept an acquittal of Dr. Georgiou, and it is unclear how the recent legislation will enable reimbursement of Dr. Georgiou's court costs. As officials appear to have had no qualms about promising to do so before accepting the disbursement, we urge Greece to follow through on its commitment to pay Dr. Georgiou's court costs regardless of the outcome of the prosecution.

As we said in our March letter, Dr. Georgiou's deficit and debt statistics have been validated numerous times by Eurostat. Indeed, we have seen no credible accounts calling into question either the figures produced by Dr. Georgiou or the procedures he used in their production and dissemination. More generally, there is agreement among official statisticians around the world that the quality of statistics produced by a federal statistical agency is defined by the procedures of their production and dissemination. In accordance with statistical principles explicitly referred to in EU and Greek law during the period addressed by the prosecutions, decisions on these procedures were the sole responsibility of the person heading the statistical agency. Prosecuting a committed public servant for doing his job is a deeply disturbing act. Further, the continued prosecutions send a chilling message to the current ELSTAT personnel producing the national accounts and other statistics of Greece, thereby potentially undermining their independence and reliability.

The goal of a statistical agency is to describe reality, not create it. As we stated in our March letter, statistical agencies must function independently from political influence. This position is well stated in the United States National Academies' Report, *Principles and Practices of a Federal Statistical Agency*, which notes "To be credible and unhindered in its mission, a statistical agency must maintain a widely acknowledged position of independence from undue external influences."

The initial prosecutions against Dr. Georgiou and his colleagues raised alarms about the continuing politicization of statistics in Greece. The refusal to accept acquittals in the initial trials is even more concerning and the ensuing convictions are outright disturbing. We again respectfully urge that the Greek state halt any further prosecutions of Dr. Georgiou and exonerate him of all past convictions. We also urge that Dr. Georgiou be promptly reimbursed for all legal costs and that Greece publically apologize to him.


Sincerely,



Robin Mejia
Chair (acting) ASA Committee on Scientific
Freedom and Human Rights



Barry D Nussbaum
President



Ron Wasserstein
Executive Director

CC:

The Honorable Prokopis Pavlopoulos, President of the Hellenic Republic
The Honorable Nikolaos Voutsis, President of the Hellenic Parliament
The Honorable Euclid Tsakalotos, Minister of Finance, Greece
The Honorable Kyriakos Mitsotakis, President, New Democracy
The Honorable Jean Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission
The Honorable Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament
The Honorable Donald Tusk, President of the European Council

The Honorable Jeroen Dijsselbloem, President of the Board of Governors of the European Stability Mechanism and Chair of Eurogroup

The Honorable Mario Draghi, President of the European Central Bank

The Honorable Klaus Regling, Managing Director of the European Stability Mechanism

The Honorable Valdis Dombrovskis, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue and Commissioner in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union

The Honorable Vera Jourova, Commissioner in charge of Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality

The Honorable Pierre Moscovici, Commissioner in charge of Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs

The Honorable Marianne Thyssen, Commissioner in charge of Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility

The Honorable Christine Lagarde, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund

The Honorable Marti Hetemaki, Chairman, European Statistical Governance Advisory Board

The Honorable Rex Tillerson, US Secretary of State

The Honorable Steven Mnuchin, US Secretary of the Treasury

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis, Co-Chair, Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Co-Chair, Congressional Caucus on Hellenic Issues