



March 27, 2017

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

Your Excellency,

As the world's largest community of statisticians, consisting of members from over 90 countries, the American Statistical Association (ASA) wishes to express deep concern over the legal proceedings against Andreas Georgiou, the former president of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT), and other senior ELSTAT officials. We urge the Government of Greece to unambiguously and publicly fulfill its Commitment on Confidence in Statistics that was signed on February 29, 2012 and is enshrined in Greek law 4051 of 2012, by immediately taking all actions necessary to publicly defend against any efforts to undermine the credibility of the Greek statistics produced by Dr. Georgiou and his former colleagues so that all charges against these official statisticians are dropped.

In December, Dr. Georgiou was acquitted of misdemeanor charges after prolonged legal proceedings. Yet, 10 days later, that acquittal was reversed and he is to be retried for the same alleged crimes and subjected to double jeopardy. Furthermore, more serious criminal charges, including that he inflated the Greek deficit and caused damages of 171 billion euro to the Greek state, remain in effect. We deplore these and other ongoing prosecutions and urge that all the charges are immediately dropped and that the Greek Government supports this in front of the courts. The continued prosecution of Georgiou is a violation of his individual rights and undermines both the production of independent statistics and, more broadly, the rule of law in Greece.

In 2010, Dr. Georgiou was appointed by the Greek parliament to head ELSTAT and bring about the production of reliable Greek statistics after many years of unreliability in Greece's official statistics. (For reference, see *Report on Greek Government Deficit and Debt Statistics*, published without reservation by the European Commission in January 2010.) Dr. Georgiou is widely credited with producing the first round of reliable financial statistics in accordance with EU standards, to which Greece is a party, breaking with a tradition of many years of fraud—as clearly stated in the above European Commission report and a 2014 European Parliament Report—in official statistics production. Statistics produced under his leadership were accepted and published by Eurostat for five consecutive years.

The ASA endorses previous statements from the International Statistical Institute on this matter, including the February 2013 statement, which notes, "The charges against Mr. Georgiou and two of his

managers of exaggerating the estimates of Greek government deficit and debt for the year 2009 are fanciful and not consistent with the facts.”

We note that representatives from Eurostat and several European countries have voiced similar concerns. There is widespread agreement among statistical authorities that Dr. Georgiou compiled Greek public finance statistics in accordance with EU rules and standards, with which Greece is obliged to comply, and that the charges against him are baseless.

The National Research Council report *Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency* notes, “To be credible and unhindered in its mission, a statistical agency must maintain a widely acknowledged position of independence from undue external influences.”

In reports issued in 2013, 2014, and 2016, The Hellenic Statistical Authority Good Practice Advisory Committee cited the ongoing prosecution of Dr. Georgiou as a sign of the lack of cultural understanding of what professional independence for statistical offices means in practice, and noted that this is a primary, but not a unique, example of a failure to achieve professional independence for ELSTAT. The reports further note that key stakeholders view the prosecutions as “political in nature.” Particularly troubling is the timeline presented in the third report, which shows that, on three occasions, investigating prosecutors or judges have recommended the charges against Dr. Georgiou be dropped, only to have the case reopened in the wake of public protests.

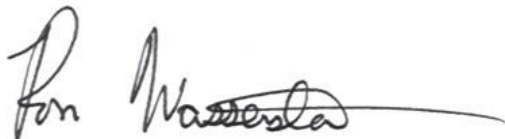
The production of official statistics using objective methods that follow international standards is crucial to their effective use. We note that the International Statistical Institute and other professional statistics associations have documented that, since 2010, Greek statistics have passed all European quality checks.

Again, we urge that all remaining charges against Dr. Georgiou and his former colleagues be dropped immediately. Under no circumstances can criminal sanctions for developing and presenting independent and objective statistical data in a credible way be justified.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robin Meija". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Wasserstein". The signature is cursive and includes a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ronald L. Wasserstein, Executive Director

Email copies to:

Mr. Prokopis Pavlopoulos, President of the Hellenic Republic
Mr. Nikolaos Voutsis, President of the Hellenic Parliament
Mr. Euclid Tsakalotos, Minister of Finance, Greece
Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis, President, New Democracy
Mr. Jean Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission
Mr. Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament
Mr. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council
Mr. Jeroen Dijsselbloem, President of the Board of Governors of the European Stability Mechanism and Chair of Eurogroup
Mr. Mario Draghi, President of the European Central Bank
Mr. Klaus Regling, Managing Director of the European Stability Mechanism
Mr. Valdis Dombrovskis, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue and Commissioner in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union
Ms. Vera Jourova, Commissioner in charge of Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality
Mr. Pierre Moscovici, Commissioner in charge of Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs
Ms. Marianne Thyssen, Commissioner in charge of Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility
Ms. Christine Lagarde, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund
Mr. Marti Hetemaki, Chairman, European Statistical Governance Advisory Board

Mailed copies to:

Mr. Rex Tillerson, US Secretary of State
Mr. John Heffern, (Acting) Asst. Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs
Mr. Steven Mnuchin, US Secretary of the Treasury