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20 October 2017

To  
His Excellency Mr. Alexis Tsipras, Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic

Copies to

His Excellency Mr. Prokópis Pavlópoulos, President of the Hellenic Republic,  
His Excellency Mr Nikolaos Voutsis, President of the Hellenic Parliament.

Your Excellency Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras,

the Federation of European Statistical Societies (FENStatS), whose members are the National Statistical Societies from 23 European countries, 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.

Andreas Georgiou returned to Greece in 2010 to serve your country as President of the then created ELSTAT. Significantly, in the five years preceding Mr. Georgiou's tenure, Eurostat had put reservations on Greek deficit and debt statistics six times in biannual reviews (Excessive Deficit Procedure), meaning Eurostat could not validate and certify the accuracy and overall quality of these statistics. In contrast, during Andreas Georgiou's 5-year term, Greek data did not receive any Eurostat reservation. The figures and the methodology of Andreas Georgiou are still used today by Greece in its official actions vis-à-vis the EU, and have been validated by Eurostat on 14 consecutive semi-annual Excessive Deficit Procedures.

However, this commitment of Andreas Georgiou to accurate statistics and adherence to international statistical principles and European statistical governance concerning all procedures of production and dissemination of official statistics led to a backlash in the form of a broadside of criminal and civil charges. On at least six separate occasions, various Greek judicial officials and panels have proposed or ruled that charges should be dismissed, only to have them resurrected in the wake of pressures. Indeed, in one recent trial, the court unanimously acquitted Andreas Georgiou of all charges, only to have another

prosecutor 10 days later annul the verdict and reorder a new trial on the same charges – a blatant violation of “double jeopardy” principles.

While it is not our aim to comment in detail on those legal proceedings, we wish to express our deep concern about the impact of their outcomes. Andreas Georgiou and his ELSTAT team have successfully established a well-functioning statistical infrastructure according to international standards. The legal convictions against these modern Greek statisticians are unjustified, they destroy their professional and private lives, they undermine international credibility that had only just been rebuilt and, last but not least, they support the incorrect belief that independent and impartial statistical information cannot and do not exist. These prosecutions also create disincentives for Greek statisticians to produce accurate statistics adhering to international statistical principles and European statistical law. Thus, after a longer period of progress and prosperous development, we fear that ‘Greek Statistics’ could return to the situation before 2010, regaining their previous reputation of scandals and misreporting.

Against this background, it should be underlined that we are disturbed by the fact that no legal action has been taken by Greek authorities to bring to account those responsible for the misreporting until 2009.

The goal of an official statistical agency is to describe reality, not create it and it must function independently from any kind of influence. The prosecutions against Andreas Georgiou and his colleagues raised alarms about the continuing politicization of statistics in Greece. We again respectfully urge that the Greek authorities halt any further prosecutions of Andreas Georgiou. We also urge that he be promptly reimbursed for all legal costs and that Greece publically apologize to him.

Confidence in the professional independence and competence of statistical authorities is of utmost importance for the functioning of democratic societies. We, the European national statistical societies, urge the Government of Greece to unambiguously take all actions necessary to publicly defend against any efforts to undermine the credibility of the Greek statistics produced by Andreas Georgiou and his former colleagues.

Sincerely yours;



Prof. Maurizio Vichi

President of the Federation of European National Statistical Societies

European National Statistical Societies that co-signed this letter

Prof. Marek Malý, President

Česká statistická společnost (Czech Statistical Society, ČStS)

Prof. Wolfgang Schmid, President

Deutsche Statistische Gesellschaft (German Statistical Society, DStatG)

Dr. Konrad Pesendorfer, President  
Österreichische Statistische Gesellschaft (Austrian Statistical Society, ÖSG)

Prof. David Spiegelhalter, President  
Royal Statistical Society (RSS)

Prof. Emilio Carrizosa, President  
Sociedad de Estadística e Investigación Operativa (Spanish Society for Statistics and Operation Research, SEIO)

Prof. Maria Eduarda Silva, President  
Sociedade Portuguesa de Estatística (Portuguese Statistical Society, SPE)

Prof. Monica Pratesi, President  
Società Italiana di Statistica (Italian Statistical Society, SIS)

Prof. Gerard Biau, President  
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