Andreas Georgiou's acquittal has been annulled for the second time!

On 16 May 2018, the Greek Supreme Court annulled Andreas Georgiou's acquittal by the Appeals Court Council for the alleged felony crime of inflating the 2009 fiscal deficit figures and causing "extraordinary" damage to the Greek economy, which according to the charges amounted to 171 billion euro (about 200 billion USD). If convicted of the alleged crime, Andreas Georgiou can be punished with life in prison.

This is the second time the Supreme Court has annulled an acquittal decision of the Appeals Court Council, which is unprecedented in the view of many legal experts, and, for observers around the world, quite extraordinary in itself. Furthermore, before the initial acquittal in 2015-16, there were two proposals for acquittal, by an Investigating Judge (in 2013) and by a Prosecutor (in 2014), that also were not accepted. It is therefore extremely puzzling that the Supreme Court continues to dismiss the considered verdicts and judgements of its competent courts and investigators. It is all the more so since the fiscal deficit statistics at issue, and the methodology underpinning them, have been repeatedly validated by Eurostat as fully conforming to the highest harmonised statistical standards set for the production of these statistics throughout the European Union.

Indeed, the methodology and figures are also accepted by the Greek Authorities and have been consistently used by successive Greek Governments since 2011 in requesting international financial assistance. Moreover, the same methodology and figures are being used these days for requesting the final disbursement of 14 billion USD to Greece under the final stage of a bailout that since 2010 has amounted to over 350 billion USD. The same methodology and figures are also currently being used by Greece to ask for significant debt relief for the debt incurred under this largest bailout in history.

The EU Commission, the ECB and the IMF, as funding partners, have also fully accepted the figures as the basis for providing assistance since the end of 2010, for considering debt relief to Greece, and for monitoring the performance of the Greek economy.

International commentators are increasingly stating openly that political factors appear to be driving this prolonged prosecution of Andreas Georgiou to serve interests of political forces within Greece and that this will be maintained until the "right" decision is achieved. Such perceptions are very damaging for the Greek judicial system and for Greece in general, its democracy and its hoped for economic recovery.

Along with Andreas, two of his former work colleagues are also facing a similar situation. For all of them, this must be considered as a gross abuse of their human rights. This situation, which has dragged on since 2011, has caused them and their families considerable stress when they were simply doing their job with the integrity expected of senior official statisticians. We are advised that it is likely to be another 1-2 years before there is even a decision whether they will have to face an open trial.

The relentless prosecution of Greek official statisticians for correctly following European statistical law and international statistical principles cannot but have a very damaging effect on the capacity of current and future official statisticians in Greece to produce reliable official statistics with independence and impartiality.

For all the above reasons, the international statistical community continues to support Andreas Georgiou and his colleagues. The International Statistical Institute calls upon the Greek State to stop these inconsistencies and this injustice.

We also call on the European and international partners of the Greek Government, who are reliant on accurate deficit and debt statistics, to take whatever steps are necessary to address the fundamental contradiction of providing for their assistance to Greece on the basis of statistics that are repeatedly challenged at the highest level of the Greek Judiciary.