



HELLENIC REPUBLIC

Piraeus, 2 August 2015

HELLENIC STATISTICAL AUTHORITY



## ANNOUNCEMENT

**The five year term of the President of ELSTAT Mr. Andreas V. Georgiou is coming to completion**

*During one of the most difficult periods for Greece, important work was done, which remains as a legacy for those that will follow*

Today ended, by personal choice, and after five years of service, the mandate of Mr. Andreas Georgiou as President of the Hellenic Statistical Authority (ELSTAT). These five years, one of the most difficult social and economic times for Greece, Mr. Georgiou and his staff at ELSTAT were called upon to address a number of important and difficult problems that the newly founded in 2010 Hellenic Statistical Authority had inherited from previous periods of statistical production in Greece. With systematic and painstaking work, based primarily on four main pillars, of

- **improving the quality and reliability of statistics,**
- **good governance and management of the Statistical Authority,**
- **closer and more effective cooperation with users as well as producers of statistics, and**
- **intensive cooperation within the European and international statistical community,**

Mr. Georgiou with his staff at ELSTAT leave behind a significant legacy for those that will follow.

Having in addition to face a series unsubstantiated and totally unfounded accusations, the outgoing President wanted to complete this difficult term summarizing in a few lines the important work produced, and **making available to the public evidence demonstrating the independence, impartiality, objectivity, transparency and quality assurance in general, with which the production of statistics took place in Greece over this period.**

**The work of the Statistical Authority in brief:**

The situation in the National Statistical Institute over many years, before Mr. Georgiou took up his post, was extremely problematic. In 2004, Eurostat produced a comprehensive report on the revisions of data on government deficit and debt in Greece, showing that the Greek statistical authorities had submitted erroneous data on the deficit and debt for the years 1997-2003.<sup>1</sup> Despite this situation, after 2004 and until mid-2010, Eurostat continued very often not to validate the figures coming from Greece and on six (6) occasions during that period expressed reservations about the data in the context of its biannual Press Releases on the deficit and the debt. As identified by the European Commission (Eurostat) in a new report in January 2010, prepared for the period 2004 - 2009 (following the corresponding report of 2004), the Greek authorities had in a multitude of cases engaged in deliberate and widespread submission of erroneous data to the European institutions.<sup>2</sup> According to Eurostat itself, the Excessive Deficit Procedure data of Greece were published by Eurostat without reservations only in the cases where the latter had intervened before or during the notification period in order to correct mistakes or inappropriate recordings showing the deficit smaller than it actually was. For these reasons Eurostat concludes in its report with an observation that shows the magnitude of the problem of our country on account of its statistics during those years: *'Deliberate misreporting or fraud is not foreseen in the Regulation.'* As a result of all this, Greece found itself twice on the verge of referral to the EU Court of Justice for infringement of EU law concerning European statistics produced by Greece. The reasoned opinion of 6 April 2011 addressed by the European Commission to Greece for violation of the European statistical legislation (infringement 2010/2002, E (2011) 2199 final) contains explicit references to violations of the law in the compilation of the statistics of Greece.

In contrast to the above, with the beginning of the term of Mr. Georgiou in August 2010—**for ten consecutive biannual publications**—the Greek government finance statistics have been accepted by Eurostat—following always the envisaged checks—without any reservation at all, and their reliability has not been challenged since by any European or international institution. In addition to the government finance statistics of Greece, considerable progress has been made in an extensive range of statistical products of ELSTAT (e.g., annual, quarterly and regional national accounts, foreign trade statistics, consumer price index, health accounts, etc.).

To achieve the above acceptance by the global community a long series of actions has taken place in the last five years that had as their main objective both building from

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-eurostat-news/-/GREECE>

<sup>2</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/4187653/6404656/COM\\_2010\\_report\\_greek/c8523cfa-d3c1-4954-8ea1-64bb11e59b3a](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/4187653/6404656/COM_2010_report_greek/c8523cfa-d3c1-4954-8ea1-64bb11e59b3a)

[http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/Report\\_EDP\\_2010\\_Annex\\_1\\_EN.pdf](http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/Report_EDP_2010_Annex_1_EN.pdf)

scratch the reliability of the official statistics of Greece and establishing the trust of users, at national, European and international level, in these statistics.

More specifically, ELSTAT, in the last five years produced important work on the following four (4) main pillars:

- a) Improving and continuously ensuring the quality and reliability of statistics, by unswervingly observing the principles of the European Statistics Code of Practice and by restructuring the processes and more generally the approach for the production of statistics.
- b) Focusing on good governance in the National Statistical Institute, regarding its operation and management, by applying a rules-based system, which enhances, inter alia, the effectiveness of statistical works.
- c) Cooperating closely with the users of statistical data and being responsive to their needs, as well as coordinating and cooperating with other producers of statistical data with a view to improving the quality of statistics.
- d) Cooperating intensively and undertaking initiatives within the European and the international statistical community.

Among the main statistical activities that have taken place in 2010 – 2015 are included three very important censuses (the Population – Housing Census, the Buildings Census and the Agricultural – Livestock Census), as well as a very extensive Post Enumeration Survey for the 2011 Population – Housing Census. Among the significant events during the above five-year period stands out the successful organization by ELSTAT of the European Conference on Quality in Official Statistics (Q2012), in Athens, in May 2012. Finally, ELSTAT accomplished a significant task concerning the advancement of the statistical legislative work in the European Union in the context of carrying out its duties during the Presidency of the Council Working Party on Statistics (CWPS), in the framework of the Greek Presidency of the Council of the European Union during the first semester of 2014.

The serious progress achieved through the systematic efforts of the last five years was recorded through multiple communications and declarations made by the competent European institutions. Indicatively, in its very recent opinion on Greece, the European Statistical Governance Advisory Board in March 2015,<sup>3</sup> notes: "*The progress achieved by ELSTAT can be considered as providing a pioneering example of the type of reform and modernisation that is required in Greece's public administration as a whole.*"

### **The unfounded accusations against the President of ELSTAT on the supposed inflation of the 2009 budget deficit**

In September 2011, on the occasion of false accusations of supposed inflation of the 2009

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/Opinion\\_%20ESGAB\\_24032015\\_EN.pdf](http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/Opinion_%20ESGAB_24032015_EN.pdf)

Greek fiscal deficit figures, against the President of the Hellenic Statistical Authority and two (2) senior managers, began a difficult adventure, until it was proven by the Greek justice system that the charges were unfounded.

### **Statement by the President of ELSTAT regarding the completion of his term**

Mr. Georgiou, following the approach he has followed up to now, to speak few words and let the facts and the evidence demonstrate the work that has been carried out over the past five years, in a brief statement underlined the following:

*"These 5 years have been a long and difficult journey, with daily fatigue and hard work. The cost has been enormous, both personally and professionally. However, I did not give up. I am satisfied that this long effort has been fruitful. Over these past five years, the statistics of Greece and the Hellenic Statistical Authority have stood by the Greek people and Greece, offering them the substantive and truthful support that a statistical agency in a developed, democratic European country should provide, without misleading and undermining them. At last, we Greeks have learned where we actually are, in contrast to the past when, with the long running systematic undermining and manipulation of statistics, we had a false and inaccurate picture of the actual situation of our country. The statistics of Greece have also ceased to undermine the European Statistical System and the European Union and we, at ELSTAT, have managed to become in practice, and not only formally, a member of the European statistical family. Many over the years were asking me how I could withstand the strain and where I found the strength to keep going. I really thought that I was doing something very important for my country, Greece, which was worth it. And it is for this reason that the so adverse and difficult conditions have not been enough to make me give up the fight. Despite the personal effort and despite the significant progress made, the risks to the statistics of Greece, and consequently to Greece itself, have not disappeared. That is why I have a wish regarding all this work that has been done: that it will be continued with the same zeal and observing the same statistical principles by those that come afterwards."*

**More information:** The important work done during the five years of the term of Mr. Georgiou is demonstrated in the attached

"Report on the work of ELSTAT, August 2010 - August 2015"<sup>4</sup>

**A few words about Andreas V. Georgiou:** Andreas Georgiou was born in Patras in 1960 and has roots in the Peloponnese and in Crete. He completed his secondary education at Athens College in Greece and then studied economics and political science at Amherst College in the United States. He received a doctorate in economics from the University of Michigan. In the period 1989 - 2010 he worked at the International Monetary Fund.

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/ELSTAT\\_WORK\\_2015\\_EN.pdf](http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE/BUCKET/General/ELSTAT_WORK_2015_EN.pdf)

Since August 2010 he held the position of President of the Hellenic Statistical Authority and his term was completed on 2 August 2015. During his tenure, he was elected by his colleagues – the heads of the statistical offices of the Member States of the EU – to the governance bodies: Partnership Group of the European Statistical System<sup>5</sup> and Bureau of the European Statistical Forum,<sup>6</sup> as well as to the Editorial Board of the European Statistical System Report.<sup>7</sup> He was chairman of the Council Working Party on Statistics during the Greek Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

He has taught economics at the University of Michigan and has been a visiting professor at the University of Economics in Bratislava (Slovakia).

He is the father of five-year old Maria Olympia.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/european-statistical-system/ess-governance-bodies/partnership-group>

<sup>6</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/european-statistical-system/ess-governance-bodies/esf>

<sup>7</sup> <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/en/web/products-statistical-books/-/KS-FN-15-001>