



**DR. DAVID GREEN**

**“A Serene Judgement”**

The essayist William Hazlitt once wrote: *"Horas non numero nisi serenas"* (I count only the hours that are serene) and the hours since I read the article "[ECJ rules against Greece](#)" (*Athens News*, October 24) have been the most serene I've had since I first started lecturing in Greece in 1994. If I were a state academic or politician with educational responsibilities, however, I would raise my hands to the court of Greek public opinion and cry *"Culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa"*. In short, why did this issue end up before the European Court?

It has been one of the most rewarding times in my 42-year academic career to have taught Greek students here in Greece, many of whom outperformed their counterparts in the UK on the same university programmes. Some of them were awarded first-class honours degrees (*ariston*, in Greek university terminology) and yet their achievements were not recognised by the Greek ministry of national education. Worse still, most of them went into the private sector and were paid less than their Greek university peers because their (British) degrees were not recognised by DOATAP, the state body responsible for recognising degrees. How more unjust and unfair can any state be to its own children?

Finally, I must raise the question of political accountability. I have rarely seen or read a more damning judgement by the European Court against the ministry of an EU member state. The 1993 judgement against the Italian ministry of education was mild in comparison. Such a damning judgement must raise questions about the competency of the respective minister and his senior education advisors, especially since many of us have been forewarning the minister of the consequences of non-compliance with EC directives and EU law in the higher-education area.

We've also drawn the minister's attention to the possible illegality of his ministry's insistence that non-Greek English teachers must have Greek-language qualifications. This issue too will soon come before the European Court.

The European Court has issued a serene judgement and, more importantly, a mighty wrong has been righted. I share in the joy which many Greek students must experience on the news that their hard-earned degrees will finally be recognised by their country. Even old academics like myself can sometimes be surprised by serene judgements!

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The press release on the ECJ's decision can be accessed at:  
<http://curia.europa.eu/en/actu/communiqués/cp08/aff/cp080078en.pdf>