



## Thessaloniki's ex-mayor asks 13 questions from jail

The former mayor of Thessaloniki, Vassilis Papageorgopoulos, on Friday issued a written statement from Diavata Prison, where he was transferred on Wednesday after receiving a life sentence for embezzling state funds, insisting on his innocence and demanding answers to 13 questions.

In his statement, the 65-year-old mayor calls on anyone with "the smallest piece of concrete evidence

that I participated in embezzling the the Municipality of Thessaloniki" to declare it on television, saying that then he would not appeal his sentence.

Papageorgopoulos also claimed that several state bodies, including the Finance Ministry and State Audit Council, had been satisfied with the operation of the Thessaloniki Municipality's treasury for the 10 years that he had been mayor.

## Nicosia rules out deposit haircut, again

Cyprus's new finance minister on Friday ruled out a haircut, or imposed losses, on bank deposits to ease a financial bailout from international lenders, now stalled amid worries about debt sustainability.

"Really and categorically – and this doesn't only apply in the case of Cyprus but for the world over and the eurozone – there really couldn't be a more stupid idea," Michael Sarris, who took over his post on Friday, told reporters. Sarris, a widely respected economist, was the first appointment of new Cypriot President Nikos Anastasiades, who won presidential elections last Sunday on a platform of constructively attempting to seek a deal with lenders. Scenarios have

been floated in recent weeks over how Cyprus could ever afford to repay a bailout bill which could reach 17 billion euros, almost the same size as its economy.

One of the reported options under discussion is for those holding deposits in excess of 100,000 euros in Cypriot banks to take a loss if their bank is wound down, in order to scale down the oversized Cypriot financial sector. Cyprus has been adamant that idea will never fly.

"I really don't know where it is coming from," said Sarris, adding that the speculation was linked to attempts to make debt sustainable, but said there were other ways to handle the bailout bill.

## Crime boss mulled using hot-air balloon in breakout

Convicted crime boss Panayiotis Vlastos, who was injured in a thwarted attempted to escape Trikala Prison in central Greece by helicopter last month, had been planning a breakout since last summer, according to authorities who told Kathimerini that they had a tipoff that a hot-air balloon might be used in the operation.

Authorities believe that they thwarted a planned escape attempt in June by Vlastos, who was to undergo a nose operation at Larissa's main hospital. At the last minute, they transferred the planned surgery to Thessaloniki's Ippocrateio Hospital to foil his plans. "The police were certain Vlastos would try to escape," a Justice



Ministry official told Kathimerini. Authorities added that they had been informed that the crime boss would try to break out using "an alternative mode of aircraft" such as a hot-air balloon. Prison managers responded to this intelligence by reinforcing the barbed wire surrounding Trikala Prison yard in August.

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