

February 25, 2014

Mr. Peter Brasik, Secretary
College of Deans
The Free University of Amsterdam
Amsterdam, the Netherlands
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Dear Mr. Brasik:

The undersigned have last year officially been appointed by the Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Dr. Harmen Verbruggen, as members of the Reading Committee for evaluating the scientific quality of the dissertation of Mrs. Karima Kourtit. To our great surprise, the public defense of this dissertation, which was originally scheduled for May 29, 2013, was postponed because of anonymous allegations. The grounds for this decision by the Dean have never officially been communicated to us, but only informally by the promoter, Dr. Peter Nijkamp. We very much regret this procedure, as it is unusual in our academic circles to base decisions on anonymous reproaches. In this way the academic career of any scientist can easily be damaged, without any good or convincing reason. In the particular case of Mrs. Kourtit, we all agreed on the quality of her thesis. And therefore, we were really surprised by the above decision, which was lacking solid grounding for us.

In a later stage we were asked by the promotor for an additional assessment of her work, notably on the degree of independence of her work, in relation to co-authors. To our knowledge there was no solid reason for not assessing her as an independent researcher. We are especially concerned that such complaints were again based on anonymous and non-verified accusations, which were never put down in writing.

In light of the above observations, we look forward to quick progress in the promotion trajectory of Ms. Kourtit. We fully endorse a fast promotion procedure for this promising young scientist.

Sincerely,

Roger Stough, University Professor, School of Public Policy, George Mason University
Roberta Capello, University Professor, Politecnico di Milano
Andres Rodriguez-Pose, Professor of Economic Geography, London School of Economics
Mark Partridge, Professor of Geography, Ohio State University

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