

# The government and pro-European parties collapse in the Greek General Elections.

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## Results

The two «main» parties, the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) and New Democracy (ND) collapsed in the general elections on 6th May in Greece. Whilst together they won 77.4% of the vote in the general election on 4th October 2009, they only took 32.1% of the vote three years later, making it difficult to form a government coalition.

Both parties were punished for having accepted the drastic austerity measures in the two rescue plans for Greece laid down by the IMF and the EU (in May 2010 and October 2011).

ND came out ahead with 18.85% of the vote and 108 seats (+ 36). PASOK was devastated in the election winning only 13.18% of the vote (41 seats - 88). The two parties have only won 149 seats ie -2 in comparison with the absolute majority in Parliament (151).

PASOK was beaten by the Radical Left (SYRIZA) which won 16.78% of the vote (52 seats, +41 seats); this puts an end to the country's two party system in force since Greece's return to democracy in 1974.

As soon as the results were announced the SYRIZA leader immediately called for the formation of a coalition against the conditions set on the country by the IMF and the EU in exchange for their financial aid. *"Thanks to their vote the Greek electorate have given a mandate for a new dawn for our country in which solidarity and justice will replace the barbaric measures of the rescue plans,"* declared Alexis Tsipras, who supports the freezing of Athens reimbursement payments and the renegotiation of the rescue plan. *"To say that our membership of the euro is in danger is a total lie, it is blackmail that is being exercised by the parties that support the rescue plans and a tool that aims to pressure people into accepting measures which will bring us misery,"* he repeated during the electoral campaign. The Communist Party (KKE) led by Aleka Papariga, which took 5th place with 8.48% of the vote (26 seats, +5) did however reject the offer of forming a coalition with the Radical Left.

The Independent Greeks' Party (AE) created on 24th February last by the former Maritime and Islands Minister, Panos Kammenos, took fourth position with 10.6% of the vote (33 seats). The Democratic Left (DIMAR) created at the end of June 2010, led by Fotis Fanourios Kouvelis, won 6.1% of the vote (19 seats).

However the Democratic Alliance (DS), founded by the former Foreign Minister (2006-2009) and former Mayor Athens (2003-2006), Dora Bakoyannis, just like the far right party, the People's Orthodox Alarm (LAOS) founded and led by Georgios Karatzferis failed to rise over the 3% threshold, which is vital to be represented in Parliament. They won 2.6% and 2.9% of the vote respectively. LAOS is undoubtedly paying for its participation in the outgoing government.

One of the events in this election is the result achieved by the neo-Nazi party Chryssi Avghi (CA, Golden Dawn), led by Nikolaos Michaloliakos, which won 6.97% of the vote (21 seats). *"You have insulted me, pushed me to one side, humiliated me but I have won. Now all foreigners can out of my country! The hour of fear has come for the traitors of the motherland,"* declared its leader on the announcement of the results. He also said that his party was going to fight *"to counter the foreign finance sharks and the slavery imposed on Greece by the IMF and EU rescue plan."*

This result has had the effect of a thunderbolt in a country with a particularly strong anti-fascist tradition. The nationalisation of the banks having received State aid, the re-examination of the national debt, the immediate arrest and expulsion of all illegal immigrants, the surveillance of the

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Greek borders by the army and the setting of anti-personnel mines on the Turkish border are the main lines of the programme set out by Chryssi Avghi, which wants a "nationalist" party to "protect the Greeks".

"It is a fascist party that expresses the most extreme trends," indicates Georges Prevelakis, a professor of geopolitics. According to Gerassimo Moschonas, a political scientist at the Pantheon University Athens, the party is prospering because of the economic crisis and also because of immigration. The country, which has around one million migrants out of a total of 11 million citizens, was, in 2010 the entry point of around 9 out of 10 immigrants into Europe. In 2011, 55 000 migrants were arrested in Greece after having crossed the river Evros (that separates Greece from Turkey) ie +8000 in comparison with 2010. "All of those who voted for Chryssi Avghi are not fascists. They are people who wanted to express their rage; it is an anti-system vote. Many will realise that Chryssi Avghi is a neofascist party," indicated Panagiotis Sotiris, professor at the University of the Aegean.

It is obligatory to vote in Greece, but turnout was slightly down in comparison with the last general elections on 4th October 2009. It totalled 65.1%, i.e. -5.82 points less than 3 years ago.

New Democracy leader, Antonis Samaras, who asked his fellow countrymen for a majority so that he could lead Greece without requiring the PASOK's support, lost his wager. On the announcement of the results he called for the constitution of a "government of national salvation". "We are ready to assume the responsibility of forming a government of national salvation with two goals: to keep Greece in the euro zone and to refine the rescue policy to create growth and to relieve Greek society," he declared.

PASOK leader, Evangelos Venizelos, who failed in his bid to contain his party's collapse also called for a government of unity. In his opinion it has to have a clear pro-European orientation, whilst retaining the possibility to renegotiate the terms of the agreement signed with the IMF and the EU. "Greece is going to experience a new period of turbulence" said one of the PASOK leaders, Panos Beglitis.

"A pro-European, pro-reform government coalition is possible but Greece will continue to navigate in uncharted waters," analyses Thanos Dokos, the General Director of

the Hellenic Foundation for Foreign and European Policy (Eliamep). "In Greece the true line of division does not lie between left and right but between the haves and the have-nots," declared Georges Sefertzis, a political analyst who forecasts "the collapse of the present political system". The results of the election on 6th May have led many analysts to forecast another early election next autumn.

The president of the Republic, Carolos Papoulias, is due to ask Antonis Samaras, the ND leader, to form the next government. He will have three days to put a team together. In the event of failure the Head of State will then have to turn to the leader of the party that came second, i.e. Alexis Tspiras, the leader of SYRIZA.

Antonis Samaras, who will soon turn 61, is a graduate in economy. He entered Parliament for the first time in 1977 as an ND MP. In 1989 he was appointed Foreign Minister but resigned from the government, as did all of the ministers in his party the following year. Re-appointed to his post two months later he was relieved of his duties for having defended a hard line in the conflict between Athens and Skopje over the name of Macedonia (refusal to see neighbouring Macedonia called this, (since this is the name of a northern Greek province), out of fear that Macedonia would claim rights over some Greek territories.

Antonis Samaras then quit ND which brought the government down ; he then created the party, Political Spring. He returned to his original party in 2004 and in the same year was elected MEP. In 2009, he was appointed Culture Minister in Constantin Caramanlis's government (ND). After his party's defeat in the general elections on 4th October 2009 he was elected head of ND with 50.18% of the vote against former Foreign Minister (2006-2009) and former mayor of Athens (2003-2006), Dora Bakoyannis (39.76%) and Panayiotis Psomiad (10.06%).

Just a few days ago the outgoing Prime Minister Lukas Papademos called on the next government to "ensure the effective application of the reforms approved over the last few months." "Everyone agrees to say that these laws will only make sense and produce results if they are applied. But past experience in this area has not often been encouraging. In these general elections Greece's strategic orientation and

its future for the next few decades will be in the balance," he added.

The next government will indeed have to decide in June on more than 11 billion € of additional savings in 2013 and 2014 and have them adopted by Parliament. It will also have to address the prepara-

tion of a new fiscal law and the reform of the legal system.

In the daily *To Vima* published on 6<sup>th</sup> May Antonis Samaras admits that Greece quitting the euro may now be a reality: "*the immediate danger has been avoided but it has not been totally removed.*"

#### Results of the General Elections on 6th May 2012 in Greece.

Turnout: 65.1% (it is obligatory to vote in Greece)

Political Parties	No of votes won	% of votes won	No of seats won
Nouvelle démocratie (ND)	1 183 851	18.85	108
Coalition de la gauche radicale (SYRIZA)	1 051 094	16.78	52
Mouvement socialiste panhellénique (PASOK)	827 459	13.18	41
Parti des Grecs indépendants (AE)	664 737	10.6	33
Parti communiste de Grèce (KKE)	531 293	8.48	26
Aube dorée (CA)	437 005	6.97	21
Gauche démocratique (DIMAR)	382 650	6,1	19
Alerte populaire orthodoxe (LAOS)	182 023	2,9	0
Alliance démocratique (DS)	160 280	2,6	0
Autres	851 004	13,4	0

Source : Greek Interior Ministry <http://ekloges.ypes.gr/v2012a/mobile/level.html?lang=en>

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