

Antonis Samaras' New Democracy wins the Greek General Elections

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Results

New Democracy (ND) led by Antonis Samaras won the general elections that took place on 17th June in Greece. The centre right party won 29.66% of the vote and because of the electoral system that grants 50 additional seats to the party that comes out ahead in the election, it took 129 seats (+21 in comparison with the election on 6th May last) in the Vouli, the only chamber in Parliament. It ran ahead of the Radical Left Coalition (SYRIZA), a far left party that rallies 13 other parties led by Alexis Tsipras, which won 26.89% of the vote and 71 seats (+ 19). The Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) led by Evangelos Venizelos 12.28% and 33 MPs (- 8). Then came the Independent Greeks (AE) led by Panos Kammenos, which won 7.51% and 20 seats (- 13); Chryssi Avghi (Golden Dawn), a neo-Nazi party, won 6.92% and 18 MPs (- 3), the Democratic Left (DIMAR) led by Fotis-Fanouros Kouvelis 6.25% and 17 seats (- 2) and the Communist Party (KKE) led by Aleka Pappariga, 4.5% and 12 seats (- 14).

Turn out totalled 62.47, slightly below the figure recorded on 6th May last (-2.36 points).

The vote on 17th June concerned the future of Greece in Europe. It opposed the parties that supported the Memorandum, the name given to the agreement signed by Athens in February with the IMF, the Union and the European Central Bank, which introduces a number of austerity measures, against those who contested it but who wanted Greece to remain within the euro zone nevertheless. Many analysts had qualified the Greek vote on 6th May as a "vote of anger" and forecast that the election on 17th June would be a "vote of fear" of a future outside of Europe and of leaving the euro zone. The Greeks seem to have firstly voted for the maintenance of their country in the single currency and for the continued control of budgetary spending, hoping though for a modification to be made to the aid plan so that austerity will not make economic recovery impossible.

Antonis Samaras (ND) has called for the formation of a national unity government "to save the country". "There is no time to lose. A national unity government has to bring economic growth back to the country and reassure the Greeks that the worst is over," he declared on the announcement of the results. It is therefore due to govern with PASOK, but might extend its government coalition to the "small parties" that support the rescue plan. The Democratic Left (DIMAR) has already said it is prepared to join the government formed by the two "big" parties. "A government holding national responsibility supposes the participation of several leftwing movements," declared PASOK leader, Evangelos Venizelos.

For his part, Alexis Tsipras, the SYRIZA leader has declined the offer to take part in the next government and said that his was now "the main opposition party".

"The euro or the drachma, coalition government or no government" was the alternative put forward in the election on 17th June by Antonis Samaras. During the electoral

campaign the latter stood as the guarantor of keeping his country in the euro zone. "We shall get out of the crisis. We will not leave the euro. We shan't let anyone exclude us from Europe," he declared during an electoral meeting at Syntagma Square in Athens. "It is our life as a nation that is at stake," he added.

Antonis Samaras succeeded in widening his party's electoral base in this election, welcoming four leading figures of the People's Orthodox Alarm (LAOS/People) to the fold and above all by re-integrating the Democratic Alliance (DS), founded by former Foreign Minister (2006-2009) and former Mayor of Athens (2003-2006), Dora Bakoyannis.

Finally Antonis Samaras toughened up his approach to immigration. "Whilst Greek families are fighting for survival, the Radical Left Coalition wants to offer immigrants access to unemployment benefits and work permits (...), we have to win back the towns which face an illegal influx (...) the immigrant invasion will stop and mass expulsion will begin," he said.

These Greek elections were observed by all European countries and notably those in the euro zone. On the announcement of the results the Eurogroup, that rallies the 17 Euro zone Finance Ministers, published a press release: "The Eurogroup has noted the significant effort that has already been achieved by the Greek citizens and is convinced that the continuation of budgetary and structural reform is the best guarantee for Athens to overcome the present economic and social challenges for a more prosperous future within the euro zone. The Eurogroup re-iterates its commitment to supporting Greece in its adjustment work so that its economy can rise to the many challenges which it is facing." "The EU must be clement and repeat to the Greeks one message before and after 17th June: "Everything is up

to you" declared Stelios Ramfos, a philosopher in the Swiss daily, Le Temps on 14th June last.

Aged 61 Antonis Samaras is an economics graduate. He entered parliament for the first time in 1977 with New Democracy. In 1989 he was appointed Foreign Affairs Minister but resigned from government as did all of the ministers in his party the following year. Re-appointed to office two months later, he was dismissed for having defended a hard line in the conflict that opposes Athens with Skopje, over the name of Macedonia (refusal to allow the neighbouring country to call itself Macedonia, since this is the name of a northern Greek province) for fear that Skopje would lay claim to some areas in Greece. Antonis Samaras then quit New Democracy, which brought down the government and he founded the Political Spring movement. He returned to

his original party in 2004 and in the same year became 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 as head of New Democracy with 50.18% of the vote ahead of Dora Bakoyannis who won 39.76% of the vote and Panayiotis Psomiad (10.06%).

"The next Greek government whatever it maybe will have to renegotiate with Brussels, at least the time it will take to implement the reforms included in the Memorandum," declared Dimistris Sotiropoulos, a researcher at Kingston University London. Antonis Samaras has declared on several occasions that he wants to "renegotiate the rescue plan to enable the creation of jobs" and "to spread" the implementation of the austerity measures "over time".

Results of the General Election in Greece on 17th June 2012

Turn out: 62.47% (It is obligatory to vote in Greece)

Political Party	Number of votes won	% of votes cast	Number of seats won
New Democracy (ND)	1,824, 342	29.66	129
The Radical Left Coalition (SYRIZA)	1,653, 994	26.89	71
Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK)	755, 249	12.28	33
The Independent Greeks Party (AE)	462, 175	7.51	20
Golden Dawn (CA)	425, 792	6.92	18
Democratic Left (DIMAR)	384, 674	6.25	17
Communist Party (KKE)	277, 015	4.50	12
Others	428, 736	5.99	0

Source : Greek Home Affairs Ministry ([http://ekloges.ypes.gr/v2012b/public/index.html?lang=en#%22cls%22:%22main%22,%22params%22:{}".](http://ekloges.ypes.gr/v2012b/public/index.html?lang=en#%22cls%22:%22main%22,%22params%22:{}))

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