



# Sergio Mattarella is the new President of the Italian Republic

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Results

**Abstract :**

Sergio Mattarella was elected President of the Italian Republic on 31st January 655 votes in support (out of 995 voters) during the fourth round of voting i.e. 150 votes more than the 505 necessary to succeed outgoing head of State a Giorgio Napolitano, who resigned from office on 14th January.

During the Italian presidential election a 2/3 majority of the 1010 grand electors (672 votes) is needed to be appointed as head of State during the first three rounds of voting, but the simple majority is required (505 votes) is enough as of the 4th round.

The President of the Council Matteo Renzi (Democratic Party, PD) called on the members of his party to put in a blank slip in the first three rounds of voting that took place on 29th [1] and 30th January then to rally to the name of Sergio Mattarella on 31st January. *"He is the candidate in whom we are placing our credibility. There will not be any other Democratic Party candidate,"* he said.

This presidential election is – in the wake of the European elections on 24th and 25th May 2014 another success for Matteo Renzi who succeeded in circumventing the opposition of former head of government (1994-1995, 2001-2006 et 2008-2011) Silvio Berlusconi (Forza Italia, FI) to his candidate by rallying the vote of the New Centre-Right (NCD) of Home Affairs Minister Angelino Alfano.

The head of government proved to all of those who had criticised him for being "close" to the *Cavaliere*, notably the members of the Democratic Party's left-wing, that he was the one who was in control. He can also be happy to have succeeded in having brought about the election of a president of the Republic who will help him in the reforms that he would like to introduce. *"Matteo Renzi can celebrate this victory. He rallied his party, strengthened his coalition and he asserted himself over Silvio Berlusconi,"* analyses Vincenzo Scarpetta, analyst for Open Europe (London).

**WHO IS THE NEW PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC?**

*"Sergio Mattarella is a man who represents 'legality', someone who has fought against the Mafia (his brother Piersanti, elected President of the region of Sicily in 1978 was assassinated by the Mafia on 6th January 1980). He is one of the rare Christian Democrats who have had the courage to resign,"* declared Matteo Renzi just before the fourth round.

The new President of the Republic quit his post as Public Instruction Minister in 1990 in protest against the approval of a bill on the audio-visual industry which he deemed to be a gift made to Silvio Berlusconi. In 1999, he qualified the entry of Forza Italia (FI) within the European People's Party (EPP) as an 'irrational nightmare'.

Aged 73 and from Palermo (Sicily) Sergio Mattarella was firstly a teacher of parliamentary law at the University of Palermo. A former member of the Christian Democratic Party he was elected MP in 1983 and was regularly re-elected after that. He was also a minister four times: Minister for Relations with the Parliament (1987-1989), then Public Instruction Minister (1989-1990), Defence (1998-1999) and Vice-President of the Council (1998-1999) in Massimo Alema's government (1998-2000).

In 1993, Sergio Mattarella was the rapporteur for the bill (called *Mattarellum*) which changed the Italian electoral system (introduction of the majority vote to bring the country stability This bill was in force until the elections of 31st May 2001.

Sergio Mattarella is close to the Democratic Party but

1. Ferdinando Imposimato, the candidate put forward by the Five Stars Movement (M5s) led by Beppe Grillo came out ahead in the first round of voting on 29th January with 120 votes. Then half of the Grand Electors voted blank.

he never joined it however. He has not had a high profile in the political arena over the last few years and since 11st October 2011 he has sat as a judge at the Constitutional Court.

### SILVIO BERLUSCONI'S FAILURE

The election of Sergio Mattarella as President of the Republic is undeniably a defeat for Silvio Berlusconi, who was obliged to follow the election from his villa in Lombardy, since he has been confined to house arrest every weekend since he was convicted in the Mediaset affair on August 1st 2013.

The former President of the Council who, with his vote, enabled the adoption of the reform of the voting method (*Italicum*) and also that of the Labour Market targeted by Matteo Renzi, but countered by the left wing of the Democratic Party (24 Democrat senators voted against the *Italicum* bill on 24th January) believed he was the kingmaker in this presidential election. He said he would refuse to vote for someone from the left and because Mr Renzi had chosen Mr Mattarella, he accused the head of government of having broken the agreement which had bound them together - which in his opinion included an agreement between the two men on a joint candidate. On 18th January 2014 Matteo Renzi and Silvio Berlusconi signed the Nazareno Pact (the name of the street in Rome where the HQ of the Democratic Party lies), which stipulates that Forza Italia will support the reforms put forward by the government on the Senate and on a change to the electoral law. In exchange for this guarantee of support, the *Cavaliere*

wanted to be able to recover his sit in the Senate which he lost on 27th November 2013 after a solemn, public vote. He was counting on the flexibility, the generosity and especially the pardon of the future head of State. His hopes are not to become a reality because Sergio Mattarella is a strict man of conviction, and extremely respectful of the law.

Silvio Berlusconi therefore lost his wager and will now have to face opposition from within his own party. Led by Raffaele Fitto, some members accuse the former President of the Council of having accepted Matteo Renzi's conditions without making sure that his own interests were protected, in brief, to have been tricked. Only 105 of the 143 Forza Italia MPs obeyed the voting instructions given by the *Cavaliere* on 28th and 29th January last to vote blank in the first three rounds of the election.

Beppe Grillo is the other loser in this presidential election. The leader of the Five Stars Movement (M5s) asked MPs to vote for the former magistrate Fernandino Imposimato in each round of voting, which was not followed either.

The presidential election is surely a success for Matteo Renzi. He might experience some difficulties in the months to come however in terms of introducing the reforms he has been drafting if Silvio Berlusconi withdraws his support or if the *Cavaliere* finds himself in a minority within Forza Italia.

To exercise his new office Sergio Mattarella just has to cross the road - indeed the Constitutional Court is opposite the Quirinal Palace, the residence of the Italian heads of State.

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