

# The Greek parliament fails to elect a president of the Republic; snap election will be organised on 25th January

## Abstract :

As expected the 300 members of the Vouli, the only chamber in the Greek parliament, failed to elect the successor to Carolos Papoulias as the President of the Republic. During the third and last round of the presidential election which took place on 29th December, Stavros Dimas, the only candidate standing, supported by New Democracy (ND) of Prime Minister Antonis Samaras, and the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) led by Evangelos Venizelos, won 168 of the vote, i.e. 12 less than the 3/5ths majority (180 votes) necessary to be elected. He won a similar number of votes on 23rd December the day of the second round of the presidential election when the qualified majority of 2/3rds, i.e. 200 votes was vital. The government election procedure in force for the presidential election in Greece certainly made it even more difficult for independent MPs – who are usually members of the opposition to rally Antonis Samaras's cause.

To settle the election of the head of State on 21st December the Prime Minister did suggest to the opposition to extend the government coalition to the independents in order to finalise the negotiations with Greece's creditors and finally organise early general elections at the end of 2015. The Radical Left Coalition (SYRIZA) led by Alexis Tsipras, the Party of Independent Greeks (ANEL) led by Panos Kammemos and the Democratic Left (DIMAR) led by Fotis Kouvelis rejected the offer. Antonis Samaras undoubtedly hoped that the latter two parties, which are losing ground in the polls, would have preferred to avoid an early election.

The Prime Minister also tried to warn MPs calling on them "to listen to the voice of national interest and common sense" and to "avoid causing a threat to the nation". It was all in vain.

On 27th December Alexis Tsipras, qualified Antonis Samaras as the "Prime Minister of Chaos" and asked the opposition to "take into account the people's suffering and the country's interests" as they voted, "neither the parliament nor the people want to give Antonis Samaras the licence to do anything he wants and for him to continue the reform imposed by the Troika

(IMF, World Bank and the European Union). With the New Year our country will turn the page with a popular vote in support of negotiations. Let's be optimistic – it will work," he declared. "It is an historic day. With the will of the people, in a few days' time, the austerity plans will belong to the past, the future can start," he stressed after the failure of the presidential elections.

And so the Prime Minister lost the first round of his wager.

Although Alexis Tsipras was glad that "the people had shown its wish to put an end to the policies in force" a poll by Kapa Research that was published in the daily To Vima did however reveal that six Greeks in ten (59.90%) think that the snap elections will be bad for the Greek economy and society.

When the results of the third round were published the Athens stock exchange plummeted by 11.20%.

In virtue of article 32 of the Greek Constitution, after the presidential election, Antonis Samaras has 10 days to dissolve parliament and convene a snap election. He has already said that this would very likely take place on 25th January next. "Greece has no time to lose,"

## Presidential election in Greece 17, 23 and 29 December 2014

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declared the Prime Minister who maintained that the upcoming election would be "*the most important in decades.*"

According to a poll by Alco, published on 27th December last SYRIZA is in the lead in terms of voting intentions with 28.3% of the vote. New Democracy is due to come 2nd with 25%.

However a poll by Kapa Research shows that 44.1% of the Greeks see the present head of government, Antonis Samaras as the most able politician to run the country; 34.4% prefer Alexis Tsipras.

Hence the Prime Minister has not lost everything. The second round, i.e. the general election is forecast to be difficult however.

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