

Prokopis Pavlopoulos is elected President of the Republic of Greece

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Results

Abstract :

Prokopis Pavlopoulos was elected President of the Republic of Greece on 18th February. He won 233 votes i.e. 33 more than the 2/3 majority required during the first round of voting. MPs of the Radical Left Coalition (SYRIZA), of the Independent Greeks Party (ANEL) and of New Democracy (ND) voted for him. Nikos Alivizatos, the candidate put forward by To Potami, the party led by Stavros Theodorakis and supported by the Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK), won 30 votes.

After some hesitation on the day before the election, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras chose Prokopis Pavlopoulos to succeed outgoing Head of State Carolos Papoulias, in office for two mandates. Two days previously the names of the Bishop of the Albanian Orthodox Church Anastasios Yanulatos, of former Prime Minister (2004-2009) Costas Caramanlis (New Democracy, ND) and of the present European Commissioner for Migration and Internal Affairs Dimitris Avramopoulos (ND) had been mentioned. Regarding the latter the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker (European People's Party, EPP) expressed his reticence about giving up one of his commissioners who would probably have been replaced by a SYRIZA member, which would have upset the Commission's balance.

Alexis Tsipras also had to face criticism from his party's left wing led by the Minister for the Restructuring of Production, the Environment and Energy, Panayotis Lafazanis, who wanted the post of president to go to a man on the left and put forward Manolis Drettakis (PASOK), former Finance Minister (1981-1982), and Yoanna Karystiani, writer and script writer.

The head of government defended Prokopis Pavlopoulos qualifying him as a man "with high national awareness" maintaining that he wanted to put forward a candidate

who would unify, who was acceptable to the entire political class. He said that "in the face of History the left should not be excessively arrogant or too demanding." He also had to deal with ANEL, his government partners whose leader, Panos Kammenos, maintained that he would only vote for a right-wing candidate and put forward the name of the former mayor of Athens, Dora Bakoyannis (ND).

The election of Prokopis Pavlopoulos falls within Greek tradition of a presidency that will guarantee national unity. Hence in 1995 the government led by Andreas Papandreou (PASOK) elected Constantin Stephanopoulos (ND); in 2005 the head of government Costas Caramanlis (ND) appointed Carolos Papoulias (PASOK).

64 year-old Prokopis Pavlopoulos comes originally from Kalamata (South Peloponnese). He is a graduate of the University of Athens and the University of Paris II – he started his career as a lawyer and teacher of public law at the University of Athens.

He was secretary to the President of the Republic Michail Stasinopoulos (ND) (1974-1975) during Greece's democratic transition – then legal advisor to the Ministry of Coordination, Deputy Minister to the Presidency of the Council, the spokesman for Xenophon Zolotas's

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(1989-1990) government and legal advisor to Costas Caramanlis (ND). He was also ND's spokesperson and leader of his parliamentary group. Elected as an MP in 1996 Prokopis Pavlopoulos was Minister for Internal Affairs, the Civil Service and Decentralisation (2004-2009) in the Caramanlis government.

The election of Pavlopoulos as President of the Greek Republic therefore brings an electoral process to an end that started in December last which initially failed to elect a head of State, and which led to the organisation of a snap election on 25th January 2015. He will take office on 13th March.

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