

The Democratic Rally of President of the Republic Nicos Anastasiades comes out ahead in the general elections in Cyprus in a vote marked by the discontent of the electorate

Seven political parties will be represented in the next *Antiprosopon Vouli* (House of Representatives), the single chamber of Parliament, one less than in the previous assembly.

The Democratic Rally (DISY), the right-wing party of President Nicos Anastasiades, led by Averof Neophytou, came out ahead on 30 May with 27.77% of the vote and 17 seats, one less in comparison to the previous elections on 22 May 2016. DISY, which obtained the lowest result in its history, failed to obtain an absolute majority, which will force the head of State to form a minority government again.

The Progressive Workers' Party (AKEL), led by Andros Kyprianou, remains the largest opposition party with 22.34% of the vote and 15 elected members (-1). This result is also the party's lowest ever. Its leader admitted that AKEL had failed to convince voters. "We will continue to support workers' rights, fight corruption and serve the goal of reunification of the island", he said, claiming that he took responsibility for the electoral defeat.

The centre-left Democratic Party (DIKO), led by Nikolas Papadopoulos, came third with 11.29% of the vote and 9 seats (=), managing to maintain its number of MPs despite the presence of the Democratic Front (DIPA), a breakaway faction of the centrist party.

Each of the two "big" political parties in Cyprus is in decline compared to the 22 May 2016 elections, which reflects voter dissatisfaction with the traditional parties. The National Popular Front (ELAM), a radical right-wing nationalist party led by Christos Christou, came in 4th

with 6.78% and 4 seats (+2). "The National People's Front is the clear winner of the elections and this is a problem for the people who believe in a federal solution to the problem of the division of Cyprus. This result will be used by the nationalist circles in the north of the island," said Andromachi Sophocleou, a political analyst, adding, "Even though it is part of the system, the National People's Front has managed to make it look like it is not and it has managed to take advantage of the existing discontent with the traditional parties."

"There is a desire for change, many voters are dissatisfied and tired of the political class and parliament, of corruption, but the protest vote is fragmented, the abstention rate high and no single personality is there to embody the discontent," said Hubert Faustmann, professor of international relations at Nicosia University.

For Christoforos Christoforou, a researcher at the Cyprus Centre for European and International Affairs at the University of Nicosia, the National Popular Front but also the Democratic Front (DIPA) are the real winners of the election, which signifies failure for the island's two main parties. The Democratic Front, created in 2018 by members of the Democratic Party opposed to Nikolas Papadopoulos and led by Marios Garoyian, indeed garnered 6.10% and 3 elected members. This was an honourable result for a first participation and its leader was pleased, speaking of "the beginning of the rejuvenation of the centre of the political spectrum, which Cyprus badly needed". He mentioned the fact that with an electoral threshold set at 3.6%, people who voted for "small" parties that did not win any seats will not be represented in Parliament.

General elections in Cyprus

30th May 2021

"Politically, Cyprus has become a very polarised island, with young people clearly not wanting the corrupt practices of the past," said Nicos Trimikliniotis, professor of sociology at the University of Nicosia, adding "The National Popular Front has played a destructive role in shifting the rhetoric to the right and allowing public discourse to become more racist and anti-immigrant at a time when more and more asylum seekers are arriving in Cyprus".

In the polls, the nationalist party is followed by the Movement for Social Democracy (EDEK), chaired by Marinós Sizopoulos, which shares its hard-line position in the negotiations on the future of Cyprus. EDEK won 6.72% and 3 seats (- 2).

The Movement of Ecologists-Citizens' Cooperation (KOSP) did not obtain the result it had hoped for despite the positioning of its new leader Charalambos Theopemptou, who is more focused on environmental issues than his predecessor: 4.41% and 2 seats (+ 1). Finally, Eleni Theocharous and her Solidarity Movement (KA) failed to retain their seats in the *Antiprosopon Vouli*. The outgoing member of parliament expressed her disappointment while declaring that she would continue to work for the good of the country: "The people have chosen to surrender without a fight".

The turnout was 65.72%, -1.02 points compared to that recorded on 22 May 2016. Despite the health context, it was higher than the opinion polls had predicted.

The elections took place in a context marked by the "golden passport" scandal. For several years, Cyprus issued passports to thousands of foreign investors in exchange for an investment of €2.5 million on the island (which could consist of the purchase of a residence). Launched in 2007, the Cyprus Investment Programme (CIP) developed especially after the economic crisis of 2013 when the country was on the verge of bankruptcy. According to the Ministry of Interior, around 4,000 foreigners have benefited from the programme, which has generated some €8 billion in revenue. The Cypriot authorities are reviewing the files of the 4,000 or so people who benefited from the scheme.

For a third of Cypriots (34%), corruption is the country's main problem, according to a survey conducted by the

IMR opinion institute and the University of Nicosia for CyBC. In the same survey, a quarter of respondents (25%) cite the management of the health crisis following the coronavirus pandemic as the island's main electoral issue; 18% cite socio-economic issues and 15% cite the division of the island.

Results of the 30 May 2021 parliamentary elections in Cyprus

Turnout: 65.72%

Political parties	Number of votes won	Percentage of votes cast	Number of seats
Democratic Rally (DISY)	99 332	27.77	17
Progressive Workers' Party (AKEL)	79 912	22.34	15
Democratic Party (DIKO)	40 392	11.29	9
People's National Front (ELAM)	24 265	6.78	4
Movement for Social Democracy (EDEK)	24 023	6.72	3
Democratic Front (DIPA)	21 832	6.10	3
Ecologist Movement – Citizens' Cooperation (KOSP)	15 761	4.41	2
Others	51 154	14.30	0
Independents	1 041	0.29	0

Source : http://live.elections.moi.gov.cy/Greek/PARLIAMENTARY_ELECTIONS_2021/Islandwide

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