

**First Deliberative Polling® for Candidate Selection in Marousi, Greece:
A Summary**

Joint press release of the Institute of Statistics of the Athens University of Economics and Business and the Center for Deliberative Democracy of Stanford University

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The Event: On Sunday June 4, a modern version of Ancient Athenian democracy was employed to select a candidate for mayor in [Marousi](#), one of the principal municipalities in the Athens area following a decision by [George A. Papandreou](#), the leader of [PASOK](#) (the main opposition party in Greece) and President of the [Socialist International](#). To this aim, a scientific random sample was recruited to deliberate about the merits of candidates and the nature of the issues facing the city. At the end of the process ballots were cast and the official candidate of [PASOK](#) was selected.

The process was a Deliberative Poll® in which a scientific random sample answers survey questions both before and after it has a chance to deliberate. In ancient Athens, groups of several hundred citizens chosen by lottery would make important public decisions after considering competing arguments. The [PASOK](#) experiment in [Marousi](#) was the first time in 2,400 years that a deliberating microcosm of the citizens, chosen randomly, made an important public decision in the Athens area.

A scientific sample of 160 citizens gathered Sunday morning and continued meeting in both small groups and in plenary sessions with candidates until 9pm. The citizens in the sample met for ten hours and considered 19 issues ranging from traffic and waste disposal to private universities and issues of development. Every citizen of [Marousi](#) was eligible to be randomly chosen. After taking an initial questionnaire by telephone, participants were invited to attend and were sent briefing materials on the issues along with candidate positions about them.

Candidate Selection: Six candidates for mayor competed for the nomination. After a whole day of deliberation, both in small groups and in plenary sessions where the candidates were questioned directly, the citizens, by a secret ballot, narrowed down the choice to two finalists: Panos Alexandris who received 41.6 per cent and Alekos Bregiannis who received 20.8 per cent in the first ballot. Because no candidate received an absolute majority, the voting moved to a second round in which Alexandris received 57.5 per cent and Bregiannis 42.5 per cent. Five of the six candidates then joined Party Chairman [George Papandreou](#) to congratulate the winner and pledge support for his campaign. [Papandreou](#) said, among other things, that “through the implementation of this procedure for candidate choice, a world first, a democratic tradition, for which we are proud, is being revived in its birthplace, our own country. In the framework of [Socialist](#)

[International](#) of which I am the Chairman, this can provide inspiration to other political parties of the world for ideas on new ways of democratic participation, deliberation and decision making of the citizenry”.

The percentages the candidates received in round I and round II were:

	Round I %	Round II %
Alexandris, Panagiotis	41.6	57.5
Bregiannis, Alekos	20.8	42.5
Karanasiou, Mary	12.8	
Diakoliou, Mary	12.0	
Vlahos, Haralambos	9.6	
Veloudos, Yiannis	3.2	

It is worth noting that the winning candidate, Alexandris, was the least known at the beginning. Approximately 1300 respondents took the initial questionnaire by telephone before the invitations to attend were issued. All respondents were asked to rate all six candidates. Alexandris was the least known among them (more than 80% had "never heard of him" before the event). The fact that relatively unknown candidates would emerge from citizen deliberations is a distinctive aspect of the process--distinguishing it from the sound bite campaigns typical in mass primaries.

Professor [John Panaretos](#), Director of the [Institute of Statistical Documentation Research and Analysis](#) of the [Athens University of Economics and Business](#) and director of the project said "This is a historic day for democracy, politics and science; for democracy, because people were given the chance to have a direct say in candidate selection, for politics, because a political leader relinquished authority in favour of the citizens, and for science, because a scientific method was used to enhance democracy".

Professor [James Fishkin](#), Director of the [Center for Deliberative Democracy](#) at [Stanford](#) and the inventor of the Deliberative Poll said «[PASOK](#) is to be congratulated on a world first. Never before has a political candidate been officially selected by a random sample of the citizenry after deliberation. Now there is an alternative to the mass primary that represents everyone under conditions where they can think."

Voting Intention and Issue Priorities: The participants significantly changed their views on the candidates and the issues. As measured by voting intention and thermometer ratings (rating the candidates on a 0 to 100 scale) Alexandris gained dramatically. He gained nearly fifteen points in voting intention from the first poll to the last (from 24.2% to 38.7%). He also gained in his overall thermometer rating or approval score from 47 to 62. Breyannis lost ground slightly in voting intention (from 25% to 19%) but in the thermometer rating he moved from 50 to 59. The other candidates rated lower in their thermometer ratings both before and after.

On issue priorities, the participants were asked to rate the importance of issues on a 0 to 10 scale, before and after deliberation. They became significantly more concerned with six issues: the Mall (a very large shopping center in the town), the operation of multinational companies in [Marousi](#), public accountability of elected officials, expanding

public participation in the decision making process, the long term municipal budget and managing school budgets. On a seventh issue, unemployment, they became significantly less concerned (although it still ranked high). A few other issues started high and did not change very much, such as the transparent management of public funds, municipal waste management and maintaining public roads.

Process Evaluation: The participants were asked to evaluate the elements of the process on a scale from 0 to 10, ranging from 0 "generally a waste of time" to 10 "extremely valuable". 90% rated "participating in the small group discussions" at 7 or above, 84% rated "meeting and talking to other participants outside the formal discussions" at 7 or above. 89% rated "the large group sessions with the candidates" at 7 or above and 94% rated "the event as a whole" at 7 or above.

Broadcast: The [Marousi](#) experiment in democracy will be the subject of a broadcast on [Mega TV](#) in September, before the municipal elections, moderated by Pavlos Tsimas.

Partners and Project Team: The [Institute of Statistical Documentation Research and Analysis](#) of the [Athens University of Economics and Business](#) designed and implemented the project on behalf of [PASOK](#). The Institute cooperated with the [Center for Deliberative Democracy](#) of [Stanford University](#).

The scientific team in charge of the project was led by Professor [John Panaretos](#) of Director of the [Institute of Statistical Documentation Research and Analysis](#) at the University of the [Athens University of Economics and Business](#). It also included Professor [Evdokia Xekalaki](#) of the [Athens University of Economics and Business](#), Professor [James Fishkin](#), Director of the [Center for Deliberative Democracy](#) at [Stanford](#) and Professor [Robert Luskin](#), Director of the [Center for Deliberative Opinion Research](#) at the [University of Texas at Austin](#).

Detailed information about the project can be found in the web page of the project (http://www.aueb.gr/statistical-institute/deliberative-polling/index_en.htm). Deliberative Polling® is a registered trade mark of [James S. Fishkin](#). Professor [Robert C. Luskin](#) has collaborated with [Fishkin](#) on nearly all the Deliberative Polling projects since their inception in 1994.

For more on Deliberative Polling see <http://cdd.stanford.edu>. The process has been employed in the US, Britain, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Bulgaria, Hungary and China. The [PASOK](#) project is the first time the process has ever been employed for candidate selection by a political party.

Greek Deliberative Poll for Candidate Selection: Preliminary Results

Table: Voting Intention

Candidate	T2 %	T3 %	Change
Alexandris	24.2%	38.7%	+14.5%*
Veloudos	2.0%	1.8%	-0.2%
Vlahos	18.2%	8.1%	-10.0%
Diakoliou	14.1%	14.4%	+0.3%
Karanasou	16.1%	18.0%	+1.9%
Bregiannis	25.3%	18.9%	-6.4%

Note:

- *The percentage change for Alexandris is significant at $p < 0.01$ level. Percentages were calculated based only on those who offered opinions before and after.
- Percentages for T2 and T3 each sum up to 100%; the no preference option is not included

Table: Voting Intention, Changes in No Preference

	T2 %	T3 %	Change
No preference	20.8%	8.3%	-12.5%

Note: 1. Percentages reflect opinion at each time.

Table: Thermometer Ratings

Question	N	T1 Mean	T3 Mean	T3-T1	S.E.	Significant
Alexandris	63	47.44	61.90	24.46	3.54	Yes
Veloudos	57	34.60	34.21	-0.39	4.00	No
Vlachos	69	39.94	42.38	2.44	3.09	No
Diakoliou	66	39.30	45.67	6.36	3.84	No
Karanasou	64	41.05	48.13	7.07	3.92	No
Bregiannis	74	50.20	58.95	8.74	3.29	Yes

Note:

- Mean is on a scale from 0 to 100, 100 being highest
- Analyses only include participants that completed pre and post surveys.
- All significant questions are significant at the 0.01 level.

Table: Thermometer Ratings, No Opinion Distribution at T1

Candidate	T1 %
N=1275	
Alexandris: Never heard of him	82.5%
Veloudos: Never heard of him	76.5%
Vlachos: Never heard of him	63.8%
Diakoliou: Never heard of her	73.2%
Karanasou: Never heard of her	80.4%
Bregiannis: Never heard of him	76.1%

Note: 1. Analysis consists of all respondents at T1.

Table: Issue Priorities

Question (No. of cases =138)	T1 Mean	T3 Mean	T3-T1	S.E.	Significant
Instituting a private university in Marousi	4.85	5.51	0.66	0.36	No*
The Mall	4.52	6.50	1.98	0.38	Yes
The operation of multinational companies based in Marousi	4.17	6.67	2.50	0.37	Yes
The integration of immigrants into society	7.43	7.20	-0.23	0.27	No
Reducing poverty	7.71	7.45	-0.26	0.24	No
Tackling unemployment	8.13	7.47	-0.66	0.25	Yes
Managing school budgets	6.80	7.71	0.91	0.29	Yes
Building new municipal sports venues	7.34	7.75	0.41	0.24	No
Long term municipal budgets	6.93	7.83	0.89	0.27	Yes
Organized parking	6.88	7.95	1.07	0.32	Yes
Improving public transport	8.38	8.05	-0.33	0.21	No
The maintenance of public schools	8.40	8.25	-0.15	0.21	No
Providing municipal healthcare	8.54	8.36	-0.18	0.22	No
Finding open spaces	8.45	8.61	0.16	0.24	No
Municipal waste management	8.88	8.75	-0.13	0.21	No
Maintenance of public roads	8.88	8.80	-0.08	0.25	No
Expanding public participation in the decision making process	8.25	8.93	0.68	0.21	Yes
Public accountability of elected officials in the municipality	8.41	8.97	0.56	0.23	Yes
The transparent management of public funds by the municipality, particularly concerning public works and expenditures.	9.17	9.35	0.18	0.17	No

Note:

1. Mean is on a scale from 0 to 10, 10 being extremely significant
2. Analyses only include participants that completed pre and post surveys
3. Participants that selected don't know or provided no answer were placed at the midpoint of the scale.
4. All significant questions are significant at the 0.01 level.
5. *Not significant at 0.01 level, but very close to 0.05 level.

Table: Process Questions

Question: How valuable was...	Results (0 to 10 scale)
Participating in the small group discussions (N=131)	90%+ said 7 or above
Meeting and talking to other participants outside of the formal discussions (N=127)	84%+ said 7 or above
The large-group sessions with the candidates (N=128)	89%+ said 7 or above
The event as a whole (N=129)	94%+ said 7 or above

Note:

1. Mean is on a scale from 0 to 10, 10 being highest