

French Presidential Elections 2012

As presented by the Greek press

ΜΑΡΙΑ ΚΟΥΤΟΥΛΑΚΟΥ (MARIA KOUTOULAKOU)

Abstract

On 6 May 2012 presidential elections were held in France, where socialist Francois Hollande came out as winner. On the one hand, this caused the defeat of the previous French President Nicolas Sarkozy, who then decided that he would depart from active politics, and on the other hand, this marked a significant shift in politics not only in France but Europe too. The Greek newspapers, which coincide with the voice of people, analyze this as a benefit for them. Given that France, one of the largest economy in Europe, elected a president who is against of more short and strict measures, then that means France is an ally in going through the financial crisis without disastrous consequences. Hollande wants to focus on the economic development of Europe and to stop the increase of taxes as an answer to the financial crisis. The choice of the French people shows that they do not want the disaster of European dream, which important leaders of the history created, although is now in the middle of a turning point. They showed that mediocre and cynical policies will no longer be accepted not only from them but the whole European citizens. Now is time for a change and their vote was the proof.

Keywords: Elections in France, Francois Hollande, Nicolas Sarkozy, Financing Agreement; Kathimerini (Καθημερινή), Ta Nea (Τα Νέα), Ethnos (Εθνος), Vima (Βήμα),

*

‘A Socialist, Francois Hollande, was elected president of France, for the first time in 24 years, in yesterday’s round of confrontation with 51.5% versus 48.5% of President Nicolas Sarkozy’. That is what is written in one of the most important newspaper in Greece Kathimerini (Καθημερινή), only a day after the Sunday’s 6 of May events. It continues with the first speech of the new president, who emphasized his intentions to unite all the French people, actually praising the outgoing president Nicolas Sarkozy. The voters of the Socialists celebrated yesterday the victory of Francois Hollande, with great enthusiasm in the Bastille square and in other parts of Paris and other cities of the country.

Another prestigious newspaper Ta Nea (Τα Νέα) mentioned on May 7 that France started anew on Sunday and together Europe too. Francois Hollande has become the second socialist president of the Fifth French Democracy since Francois Mitterrand and Nicola Sarkozy, the first outgoing president who failed to be re-elected since Valery Giscard d’Estaing. Shouts of joy flooded the headquarters Of the Socialist Party. The crowd was constantly increasing, waiting for the winner and the celebration lasted till morning.

Ethnos (Εθνος)¹ an also famous daily newspaper focused on the outgoing president Nicola Sarkozy who stated that France has a new president of democracy, it was a democratic choice and he takes full responsibility for the defeat. The clear mandate given to Hollande by the French people gave him a significant edge in parliamentary elections too that are going to be held on June 10 and 17, when the Socialists need a full majority to forward the reforms in the tax system that was promised before the elections.

The general atmosphere in Greece was very positive towards the new president of France, Francois Hollande, as they likened it with their elections and with a chance to show to Europe their voice and to state their actions. They cannot help but to believe that with this choice Greek people will be helped too.

Many newspapers started to be interested in Francois’ Hollande past and in him as a personality. Patience, smartness, consistency, humorous and dynamic are only some of the characteristics given to him by Ethnos.

¹ Ethnos is a newspaper which is also daily and weekly.

Ta Nea referred to his career until his election, from 1959 and 1964 when he was a candidate with right-wing ballot, his school years and all about his current cause. Kathimerini focus on his career, him being a consultant for Francois Mitterrand and his difficult fight that he gave in order to not be overestimated anymore.

Lastly, all the newspapers pointed out the political lines that the Socialists Party and President Hollande stated publicly. ‘As message against austerity with Angela Merkel as the recipient, some analysts interpreted the result of the elections in France, who also noted that the victory of Francois Hollande enhances the chances for a Europe based on development and not just on fiscal discipline’ (Ta Nea, 7 May). ‘The French Socialist leader has said that he wants to renegotiate the financing agreement [...]. Also stressed in his speech after his victory: “My work is to give Europe a dimension of development.”’² The markets seem to have begun reconcile with the proposals on development of Hollande’. (Maria Adamidou - Xrysoula Katsarou: Hollande the New President of France: He demolished the ‘Bastille’ of Sarkozy, *Ethnos*, 7 May).³

A week has passed since Francois Hollande won the elections in France and the newspapers in Greece are still writing articles about it. The president is now called to show that he can make his words into actions. The relationship of German and France is on the line because of the different paths that Angela Merkel and Francois Hollande has taken. Hollande wants to put an end to the idea of ‘Merkozy’, which was created the last year and it indicates that only the ‘strong’ ones decide. As Melina Haritatu (Μελίνα Χαριτάτου) wrote on May 12 in *Ethnos*, as analysts noted, despite the fact that Berlin has claimed that it will not step back as far as the Financing Agreement is concerned, Francois Hollande appears equally determined not to bow to German pressure.⁴ It is needed to be recalled that the economic team of Hollande puts as key tools for managing the crisis in the euro zone the creation of Eurobonds on the one hand and the direct refinancing of government debt by the ECB on the other. In addition, Hollande has proposed the use of European funds that currently are ‘inactive’ in various funds and asks for assistance from the European Investment Bank to stimulate the industry and financing major infrastructure projects across the EU. The new French president says he will succeed to reduce the deficit by increasing taxes on the wealthiest households and large companies and reducing the growth rate of spending.

As Tania Bozaninou wrote in *Vima* (Βήμα) on May 13, the press is wondering if the win of Hollande means disaster for Merkel as she openly supported Nicola Sarkozy on the elections. Merkel wants development through the liberalization of labor market, while Hollande through public investments, which will attract private investments too.⁵ Olivier Rozenberg believes that there will be a compromise that will make both happy. Emiliano Grossman says that France and German are ‘convicted’ to be in good terms.⁶ Everything will be clearer in one year time.

To sum up, the main idea is that everything now is up to Hollande. Something must be done in order to reduce the debt of member-states or else the whole European project will be in danger of disaster. People think that they have every mean to fulfill that expectation.

*

www.southeast-europe.org
dke@southeast-europe.org

© DKE 2012

Note: Respected Researchers, if you make a reference to this article or quote part of it, please send us an email at dke@southeast-europe.org to let us know that. *Please cite the article as follows:*

Maria Koutoulakou (Μαρία Κουτουλάκου): French Presidential Elections 2012. As presented by the Greek press. *Délkelet Európa – South-East Europe International Relations Quarterly*, Vol. 3. No.1. (Spring 2012) 2 p.

Thank you for your kind collaboration. *Editor-in-Chief*

² Το έργο μου είναι να δώσω στην Ευρώπη και μια διάσταση ανάπτυξης.

³ Μαρία Αδαμίδου – Χρυσούλα Κατσαρού: Ο Ολάντ ο Νέος Πρόεδρος της Γαλλίας: Γκρέμισε τη <<Βαστίλλη>> του Σαρκοζύ. *Έθνος*, 7 Μαΐου 2012.

⁴ Μελίνα Χαριτάτου: «Κρας τεστ»... για την ανάπτυξη. *Έθνος*, 12 Μαΐου 2012.

⁵ Τάνια Μποζανίνου: Έχουν συμφέρον και οι δύο να τα βρουν. (Η οικονομική κρίση και η αποκάλυπτη προτίμηση της καγκελαρίου στον Σαρκοζί θέτουν σε δοκιμασία τις γαλλογερμανικές σχέσεις) *Βήμα*, 13 Μαΐου 2012.

⁶ *Emiliano Grossman* and *Olivier Rozenberg* are Associate Research Professors at the Centre for European Studies, School of Political Studies (*Centre d'études européennes, Sciences Po*) in Paris.