

Survey

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Political impact of the recent reshuffle

Cabinet reshuffles have very rarely had any significant impact on the image of and social support for governments in Greece since the restoration of democracy in 1974, especially when they do not signal a change in policy. This general rule appears to be confirmed by the recent reshuffle. The general impression recorded among the public is first of all negative (36%), followed by indifference (32%), while only one quarter of respondents (25%) viewed it positively (figure 1). It is characteristic that even the rallying of ruling party voters on this matter does not exceed 50% (46%). From a comparison of the last three reshuffles in February 2006, January 2009 and September 2010 (for which corresponding surveys were conducted by Public Issue on behalf of Kathimerini), it emerges that the most recent one probably had the least favorable impact (figure 2).

Nevertheless, most likely because social dissatisfaction, or the general demand for 'change' remains, the majority of citizens consider – in hindsight – that the re-engineering of the government mechanism was both necessary and dictated by circumstances. More specifically, 52% agree that the reshuffle "had to happen" and only 27% believe that it was not necessary. On this point, the prime minister's initiative appears to find greater acceptance among PASOK voters (67%).

As for the impact of the reshuffle on the government's performance, citizens remain highly skeptical: Almost 6 in 10 (58%) believe that "nothing will change" and only 1 in 4 (27%) are of the opinion that "there will be an improvement" (figure 3). Regarding this parameter, social expectations for the latest reshuffle are lower than for the two previous ones (2006 and 2009).

New and old faces

Although the general assessment and expectations of citizens regarding the recent reshuffle are extremely low, the evaluation regarding the actual persons involved is more positive. Perhaps because the available 'reserves' are indeed very few, but perhaps also because social expectations of politicians and politics in general have begun, after the Memorandum (the bail-out package), to decline rapidly.

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Survey profile

The results presented in this analysis are based on a telephone opinion survey, with a general population sample of 500 adults (18+) from across Greece. The survey was carried out: 8-9/9/2010. Published by: newspaper KATHIMERINI.

FIGURE 1. ATTITUDE TOWARD THE RECENT RESHUFFLE

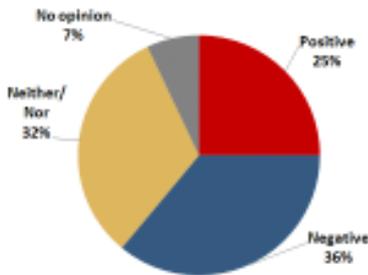


FIGURE 2. ATTITUDE TOWARD THE RECENT RESHUFFLE, 2006 - 2010

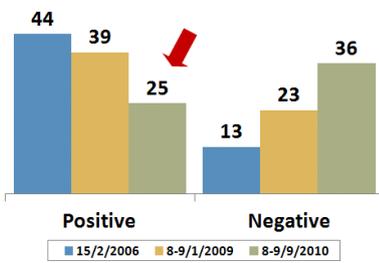
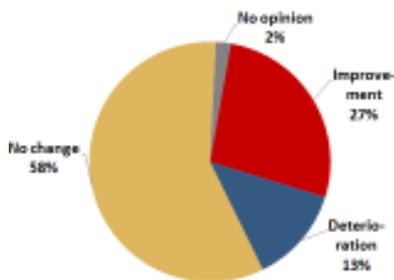


FIGURE 3. IMPACT OF RESHUFFLE ON GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE



The entry of 3 of the 5 newly appointed ministers and alternates (Skandalidis, Papoutsis, Hytiris) is assessed positively, while in the case of the other 2 (Xynidis, Diamantidis), low awareness probably explains their (also positive) acceptance. In the cases of 8 ministers (Venizelos, Chrysochoidis, Gennimata, Loverdos, Kastanidis, Ragousis, Papaconstantaninou, Reppas), public opinion views their continued presence in the government as quite correct, with percentages of over 60%. In 7 other cases (Diamantopoulou, Koutroumanis, Xenogiannakopoulou, Petalotis, Pangalos, Katseli) the assessment of their continued presence is also positive, with percentages ranging from 50% to 59%. In contrast, in only 5 cases (Birbili, Sifounakis, Droutsas, Paboukis, Beglitis) the positive assessment percentages are lower than 50%. As for the final two, as well as the new foreign minister, low awareness again offsets the overall positive assessment.

Lastly, the majority of citizens are of the opinion that the much-vaunted and entirely expected reshuffle will do nothing to strengthen the position of Prime Minister George Papandreou within PASOK. Only 35% of respondents today hold this view, while in January 2009, following the replacement of the economy and finance minister George Alogoskoufis, the corresponding percentage for the strengthening of Costas Karamanlis' position was nearly 50%.

Founded in 2001 Public Issue specializes in public opinion research on political, economic and social issues in Greece and Cyprus. Member of the World Association for Public Opinion Research (WAPOR) and the European Society for Market Research (ESOMAR).