INSTITUTE OF STATISTICAL RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND DOCUMENTATION

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**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

June 15, 2006

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 highly). 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 to 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.