

# **Who treated the 2004 European Election in Greece as a second-order election?**

By

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## ABSTRACT

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This paper focuses on the **2004 European Election in Greece**. In the first part of the paper we try to answer whether this election comes under the second-order election (SOE) model. Participation in the European Election is compared with that in the March 2004 General Election and we present the evolution in participation in various ‘types’ of elections (European and General ones from 1981 to 2004 and Prefecture ones since 1994). Next we examine the losses in the share of votes for the governmental and big parties and the electoral appeal of the smaller ones. The main conclusion is that the hypotheses of the SOE model are verified. Therefore, the 2004 European Election in Greece was a SOE. Since the answer to the first question is affirmative, the main question that runs through the second part of our paper is an attempt to extend this question one step further: *Second-order election, for whom?* In other words, we want to find if all voters treated the election as a SOE. We attempt to answer these questions using data on demographic variables from the results of the European Election Study 2004 (EES 2004), from the Flash Eurobarometer 162 and the exit polls by OPINION S.A conducted on March 7<sup>th</sup> for the General Election and on June 13<sup>th</sup> for the European Election respectively.

## 1. Introduction

Beside General Elections, there are various other elections, with differing purposes and functions in respect to the institutional background and administrative organisation of each country. The attempt to study systematically and comparatively different types of elections has started from the USA and focused mainly on the electoral cycle and the evolution of party performance in presidential and mid-term elections. In 1960, Angus Campbell formulated the 'surge and decline' theory. In Europe, the first study on the electoral cycle and the popularity of the government was done by Reiner Dinkel and was formulated in the 'minor elections' theory (Dinkel 1978). Dinkel observed that the performance of the federal government parties in the German Länder elections depended on the timing of the election within the federal cycle.

The characteristics of the mid-term and Länder elections led to the formulation of the theoretical model of 'national second-order elections'. Karlheinz Reif and Hermann Schmitt's model is a turning point in the study of elections that had been overshadowed by General ones (Reif and Schmitt 1980, Reif 1985, Schmitt and Mannheimer 1991, C. van der Eijk and Franklin 1996, Reif 1997, Norris 1997, Marsh 1998 and 2005, Freire 2004, Schmitt 2005, W. van der Brug and C. van der Eijk 2005). The writers made the distinction between first-order national elections and second-order national elections. In their 1980 article, they studied the first European Election that took place in June 1979 and represented a typical example of a second-order election.

The main hypothesis and novelty of Reif and Schmitt's theoretical model was that the European Election political arena combined nine different second-order political arenas. Each member-state of the European Community (EEC) had a national (first-order) political arena (FOPA) and therefore, the European Election result (second-order political arena/SOPA) was clearly affected by the current national policies and the national first-order political arena. Thus, at the time of the European Election, the FOPA played an important role in the SOPA (Reif and Schmitt 1980, Reif 1985).

Reif and Schmitt place the European Election within each national electoral cycle and claim that participation will be lower, smaller and new parties will fare better and null votes will increase.<sup>1</sup> They also elaborate on the performance of larger and governing parties or coalitions, and claim that it is worse than in General Elections. All these trends derive from

the fact that less is at stake, since the national government will not change. The European electorate uses national criteria, the campaign and media focus on national issues, and political leaders ask for the voters' support based on national policy platforms (Caramani 2004: 1). The 'less at stake' dimension is the first axis of the model and most European Elections students consider it the key point for understanding and analysing second-order elections.

This paper is divided in two parts and tries to answer two questions. In the first part we try to examine the 2004 European Election in Greece with the help of the second-order election (SOE) model. The main question is whether the 2004 European Election in Greece verifies the hypotheses of Reif and Schmitt, according to which, participation is lower in comparison to the national election, government and bigger parties fare worse and smaller parties fare better.

The main question that runs through the second part of our paper is an attempt to extend this question one step further: *Second-order election, for whom?* In other words, we want to find if all voters treated the election as a SOE, or whether certain groups of voters do not change their choices between elections.

## **2. The 2004 European Election in Greece: second-order elections?**

It is the first time that a European Election took place in Greece only three months after a General Election (that of 7<sup>th</sup> March 2004). Looking at Table 1, we see that participation decreased and that the ranking of the parties did not change. The New Democracy (*Nea Demokratia*, ND) party won both elections, leaving the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (*Panellinio Sosialistiko Kinima*, PASOK) second and faring worse in the European Election. Given these facts, we will try to answer whether the last European election in Greece was a second order election (SOE).

**Table 1: Electoral Results**

	<b>European Election</b>		<b>General Election</b>	
	June 2004		March 2004	
<b>Electorate</b>	9938863		9899472	
<b>Participation</b>	6283637	63.2	7573368	76.5
<b>Valid</b>	6122632	97.44	7406619	97.8
<b>Null/Blanks</b>	161005	1.56	166749	2.2
<b>ND</b>	2633961	43.0	3359682	45.4
<b>PASOK</b>	2083327	34.0	3003275	40.6
<b>KKE</b>	580396	9.5	436706	5.9
<b>SYN</b>	254447	4.2	241637	3.2
<b>LAOS</b>	252429	4.1	162151	2.2
<b>Other</b>	318377	5.2	199979	2.7

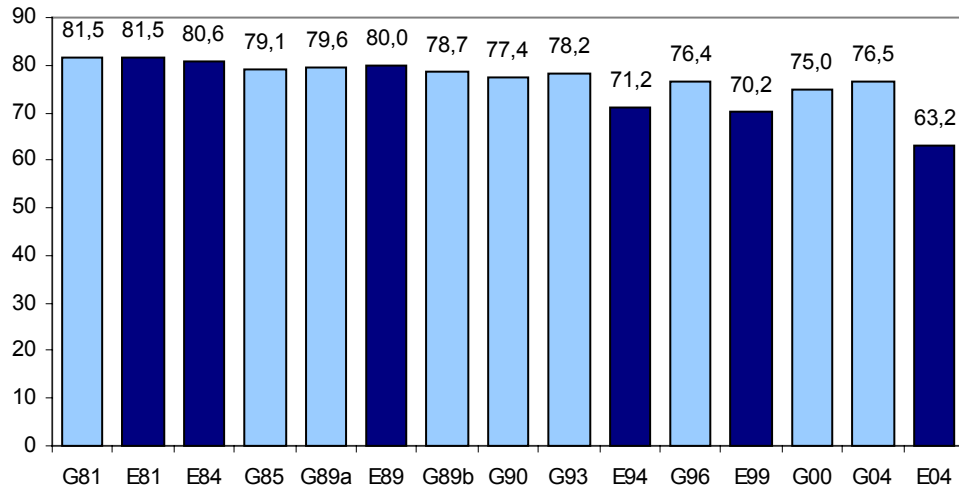
*Source: official results, Ministry of Interior*

Examining the first hypothesis of the model, according to which, participation is lower *vis-à-vis* the national election, the study focuses on various comparisons. On the one hand, we compare the evolution of participation in European Elections and the respective rate in the previous General Election, and on the other, with the European average. We also compare participation in the European Elections with that in other second-order elections. In addition we try to find the relationship between abstention and the point in time that the European Election takes place within the first-order electoral cycle.

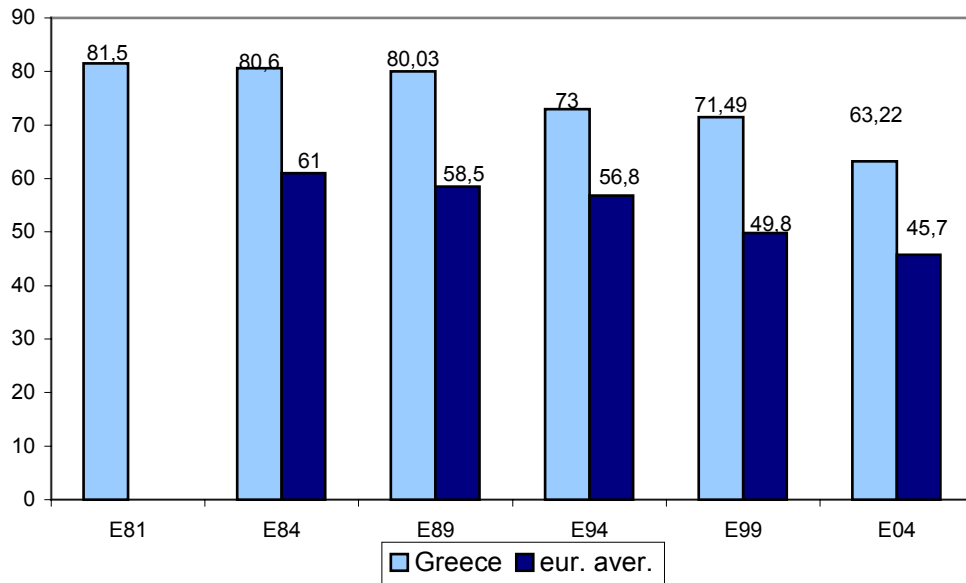
The last European Election has seen the lowest participation ever throughout the European Union (EU); it reached 45.7%, following the steady decrease from 63% in 1979 to 61% in 1984, 58.5% in 1989, 56.8% in 1994 and 49.9% in 1999. In Greece, the last European Election was marked by the lowest turnout of any election.<sup>ii</sup> It reached 63.22%.<sup>iii</sup> This fact is especially relevant since in Greece voting at the European Parliament Elections is quasi compulsory. In the 1999 election participation was 70.21% and the difference with the respective figure in the 2000 General election has been 4.72%. Comparing participation in the two elections in 2004, the difference is three times as big: it reaches 13.3%. For the first time in Greece, there is a clear manifestation of increasing abstention in SOEs.

**Chart 1**

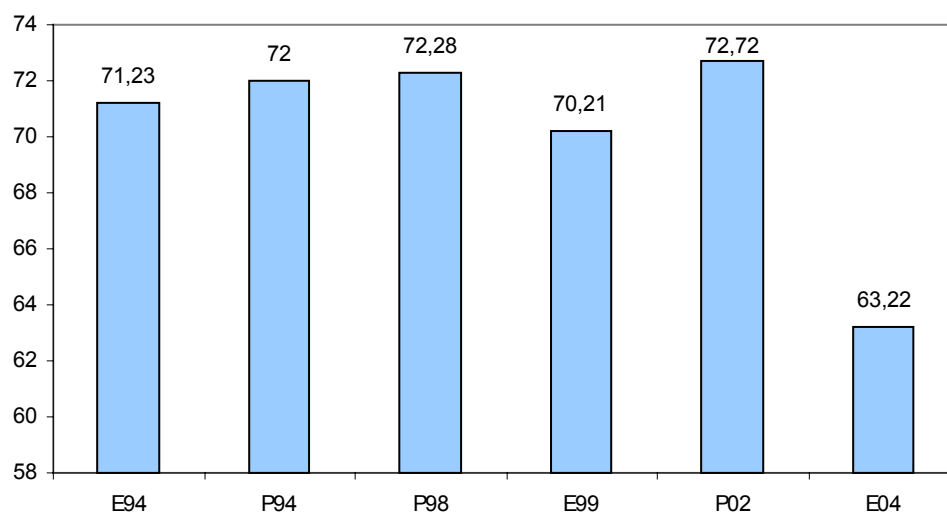
**1a Evolution of participation in European (E) and General (G) Elections in Greece, 1981-2004**



**1b Evolution of participation in European Elections in Greece, compared with the European average**



### 1c Evolution of participation in European (E) and Prefecture (P) elections in Greece, 1994-2004



*Source: official results, Ministry of Interior*

Calculating the average participation in General and European Elections since 1981, there is a 3.1 difference (General Elections average =77.6, European Elections average =74.5). The fact that in the case of Greece voting is quasi compulsory contributes in having high participation in European ballots.<sup>iv</sup> Chart 1b shows that participation in European Elections in Greece, if compared with the European average, is higher than in the other member states. Another comparison is also worth mentioning. That of participation figures between European Elections and the elections for the Prefectures, as another type of SOEs (Mavris 2003). According to Reif and Schmitt participation in European Elections is even lower than in other SOEs (Reif 1985: 16). This feature is also verified in Greece (Chart 1c).

One of the most important defining factors of participation in European Elections is the time of such an election within the electoral cycle of the General elections. According to analyses, European Elections that took place near the start of the electoral cycle have low participation (the difference exceeds 10% in comparison with General elections). On the contrary, European Elections that take place just before General ones, in the end of the cycle, are characterised for higher participation (Marsh and Franklin 1996: 17-19).<sup>v</sup> Low participation in the last European Election in Greece on the one hand, is related with the fact that the election took place in the start of the electoral cycle and on the other, it shows that

the complimentary and secondary character may also be attributed to the electoral fatigue due to the recent General Election.

According to the statistics, more than 1.3 million voters decided to abstain, compared to the March General Election. Amongst them, 57% came from those who voted for PASOK in March, 33% came from ND voters and 10% from those who had voted for the rest of the parties (*TA NEA* (THE NEWS newspaper), 15 June 2004). Undoubtedly, a part of PASOK partisans chose not to vote for reasons that relate with the ample disinterest that the electorate shows for such elections (a parameter that concerns all the parties, not only in Greece, but even more in Europe in general). Another important part of PASOK voters chose to abstain expressing dissatisfaction towards the party. Irrespectively of party preference and affiliation, abstention by a considerable share of voters indicates the citizens' alienation from the national political elites, and from the process of European integration (Pantazopoulos 2005: 141-163).

Furthermore, another issue that rises is the timing of the decision to abstain in European Elections. As Flash Eurobarometer (EB) 162 data show, a large part consists of regular abstentionists (24%). An equally large part (23%) decided to abstain a few months before the election, while 38% answered that the decision not to vote was taken on election day or a few days before it. The reasons that the abstentionists mentioned are related to the 'less at stake' dimension of Reif and Schmitt's model: the largest share (31%) claimed that they were "on vacation, not at home", and 17% claimed "illness". On the contrary, the share of answers like "lack of interest for European issues" and lack of information about the European Parliament", is quite low, 6% and 3% respectively. It is worth mentioning that no one of those who abstained claimed to be opposed to the EU.

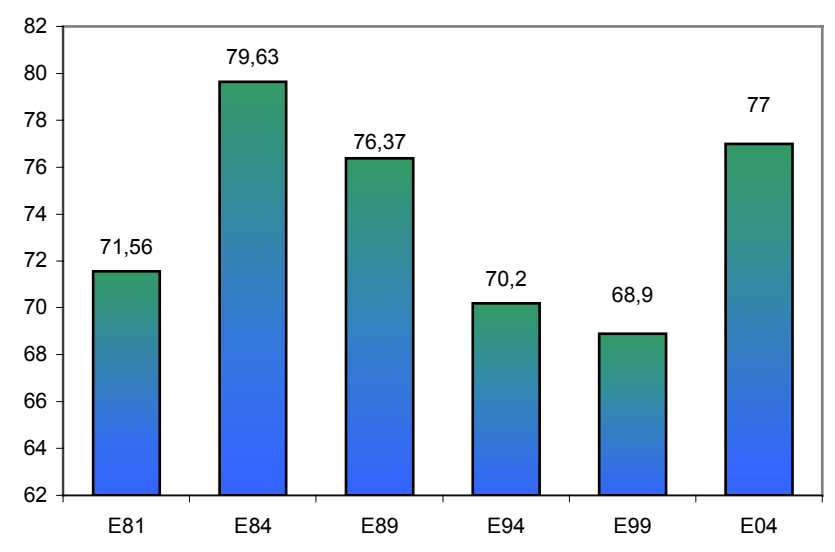
The reasons of abstention are partly related to the core of the electoral campaign and the citizens' lack of information on EU issues. According to a study conducted in Greece, "enlargement, integration, the European Constitution and EU membership were seldom brought up for discussion by the mass media. [...] (T)he Greek media, as is also the case of other member states, pay less attention to Europe and European politics"<sup>vi</sup> (Demertzis & Tsiligiannis 2004: 162).

In the 2004 European Election, all government parties in each member state fared worse in comparison to the previous General election, thus verifying the Reif and Schmitt model (except Slovakia and Spain to a certain degree).<sup>vii</sup> The dropoff (Eijk, Franklin and Marsh 1996: 156) of the ND party in the last European Election, that is the difference of the

vote share between the General election and the European Election, reached 2.35%. However, this loss of votes for the governing party is the lowest that has ever been recorded in all European Elections in Greece (Teperoglou & Skrinis 2006). This observation is consistent with the hypothesis that government parties fare well in European Elections that take place near the start of the legislature, because they may still take advantage of the honeymoon period. This is the first time in Greek European Elections that this hypothesis has been verified.<sup>viii</sup>

A second point that verifies the model in the Greek case deals with the losses in the vote share of large parties as a whole. In the June 2004 election, the share of the two larger parties was clearly lower: it decreased by 8.9% compared with the General election in March (77% and 85.9% respectively). Chart 2 shows that the cumulative share of ND and PASOK is 8% higher than the respective figure in 1999. It is the second highest since the 1984 election, which was characterised by total confrontation and polarisation. Thus, we find ourselves in front of a certain particularity: the 2004 European Election took place only three months after ND won the government and, therefore, it was politically impossible that an actual issue come up, especially concerning governing. In similar cases, the absence of such an issue is also manifested in the results of European Elections: comparing with the European Election of 12<sup>th</sup> June 1994 that also occurred during the honeymoon period, one may observe the similar decrease of both major parties PASOK and ND, which were kept to about 80% and 83% of their share in the 1993 General Election (an aggregate fall of 15.8%).

**Chart 2**  
**Evolution of the aggregate vote for ND and PASOK**  
**in European Elections, 1981-2004**



*Source: official results, Ministry of Interior*

The losses of the larger parties are attributed according to the model to the fact that voters in European Elections feel less obliged to stick to their party attachment. This entails vote switching between General and European Elections. M. Franklin (2005) analysing the European Election Study 2004 (EES 2004) results, has calculated the net vote switching in the last European Election at was about 8.6%.<sup>ix</sup> Moreover, exit polls set off interesting connotations in relation to vote switching. Table 2 shows that of those who voted in March either for ND or PASOK, 13% switched in June: 3% turned to the opposite big party, while the rest 10% turned to smaller ones.

**Table 2**  
**Vote-switching: General – European Elections 2004**

<b>General Election 2004</b>	<b>European Election 2004</b>					
	<b>ND</b>	<b>PASOK</b>	<b>KKE</b>	<b>SYN</b>	<b>LAOS</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>ND</b>	87.2	3.1	1.7	1.4	3.6	3.0
<b>PASOK</b>	3.0	86.2	4.0	2.5	1.0	3.3

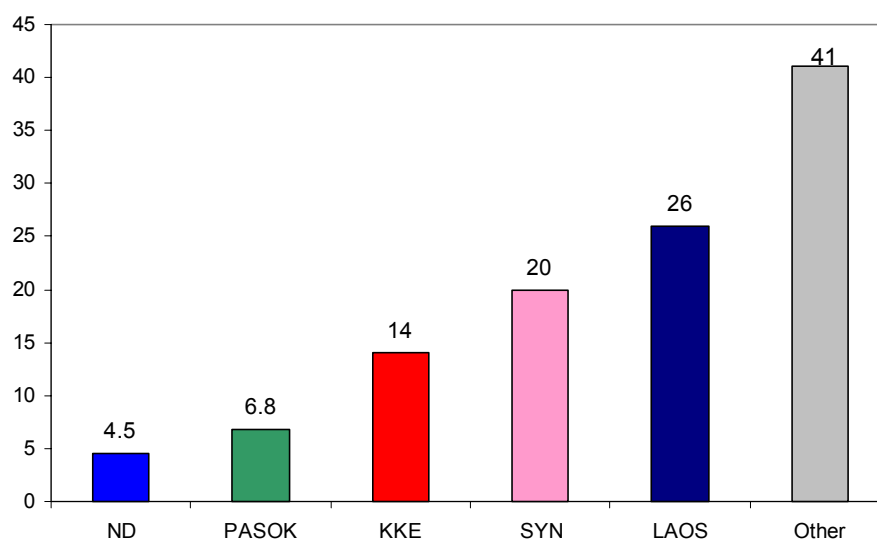
*Source: Exit poll OPINION S.A, 13 June 2004*

Consequently, one may wonder whether these ‘leaks’ have been consolidated. We have checked the question, in the exit poll by OPINION S.A., on the timing of the final decision about the party people voted for in the European Election. Most of those who had chosen which party to vote for early, systematically vote the same way, while very few were those who had taken the decision only a few months before the election. Nine out of ten ND voters (91%) come into these two categories (“always the same” and “a few months ago”). This has to do not only with the high coiling that the government party has, but with post-electoral euphoria too. The respective figure for PASOK has been high too (88%).

From those who answered “a few weeks ago”, “a few days ago” and “on election day”, the main trend consists of those who made their choice on the last moment (day of the election). Furthermore, one may observe a U-shape curve. While those who vote always for the same party are quite many, the answers “a few months”, “a few weeks” and “a few days” are low and the answer “on election day” rises again. This significant rise may imply the fact that, during the last weeks before the European Election, the campaign had not been too lively and therefore not helpful, so that only a few of the voters could make up their minds.

They finally decided on the last day because they felt it was compulsory to vote. The main question that arises is which party did those ‘last moment’ voters voted for.

**Chart 3**  
**Those who decided on the day of the election per party (%)**

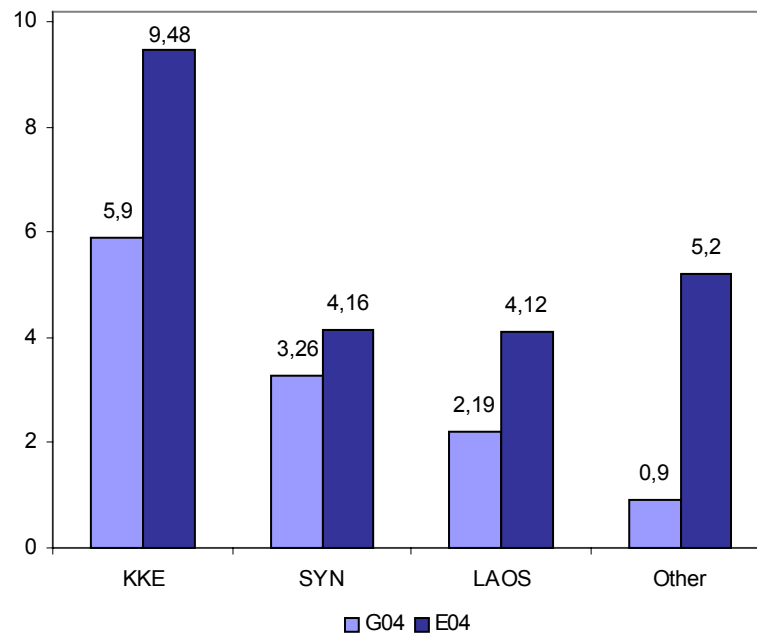


*Source: Exit poll OPINION S.A, 13 June 2004*

It so appears in Chart 3 that the “election day” choice favoured the small parties. Of those voters who had chosen one of these very small lists, 41% did so on the day of the election. The same applies for 26% of the nationalist Popular Orthodox Rally (*Laikos Orthodoxos Synagermos*, LAOS) and 20% of those who voted for the Coalition of the Left and Progress (*Synaspismos*, SYN). The figures decrease for bigger parties; thus, 6.8% of the PASOK voters and only 4.5% of the ND ones decided in front of the polling booth.

Looking at Chart 4, the strength of all the small parties increased in the European Election. Although their share may be considered relatively low if compared with other European countries. There, the electoral result clearly has favoured more these smaller parties, which accepted the protest vote of a large part of the European electorate. However, it complies with the axioms in the literature about the electoral cycle and the honeymoon period, when protest voting is quite low. Besides, the share of the smaller parties might have been higher, if participation had not been so low. In our case study, abstention has been another form of protesting (Teperoglou & Skrinis 2006). The choice not to vote, instead of the so-called “voting with the boot”, does not add much to small or new parties, contrary to the case of the 1994 and 1999 European Elections.<sup>x</sup>

**Chart 4**  
**Smaller parties' vote share in the General and European Elections 2004**



*Source: official results, Ministry of Interior*

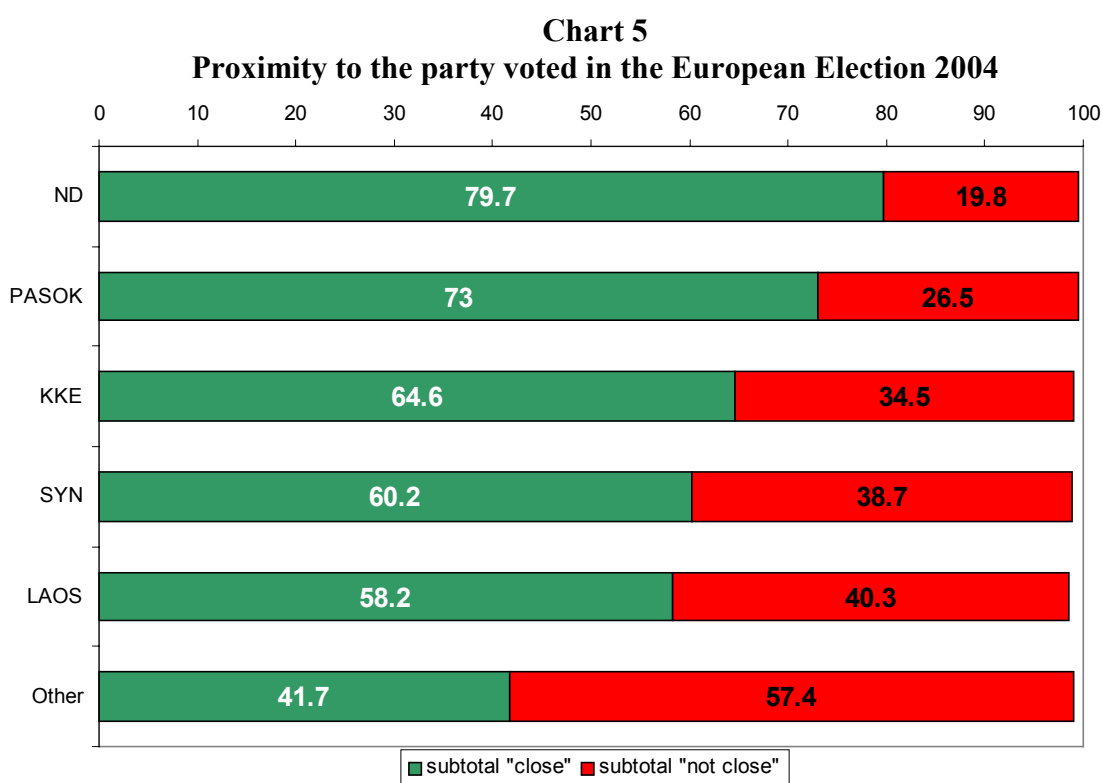
To go into detail, the share of the Communist Party of Greece (*Komounistiko Komma Elladas*, KKE) increased in the European Election, gaining 3.58% (143,823 votes) more than in the General one, verifying the hypothesis of the model. In addition, this share is also higher if compared with that of the 1999 European Election. In the last European contest, KKE presented itself as the main expression of euroscepticism in Greece.

The respective increase of SYN has been clearly limited: on the whole 12,908 more voters turned to it in the European Election. This may actually be considered on the one hand as a standstill in its electoral appeal compared with the General election (0.9% rise), and on the other as the start of a fall in comparison with the 1999 European Election, when it had elected 2 MEPs, with 5.16% of the votes. All the same, it was expected that SYN would be favoured, gaining sympathy votes, especially in an election where less is at stake, and attract voters, who would otherwise vote tactically. The share of the ‘Women for another Europe’<sup>xi</sup> list (0.76%) partly explains SYN’s standstill and constitutes an explicit example of “loose vote” that emerges in European Elections.

LAOS had been significantly favoured in this European Election. It got 90.326 more votes than in the March General Election, almost doubling its vote share. Taking into consideration the findings of surveys on the LAOS’s electorate (Koukourakis 2005), one may argue that the rise in the party’s share in the last European Election came from various

‘groups’ of voters. To begin with, this share came from ND voters who either were disappointed by their party (although not much time had passed since ND came to government), or chose to express themselves through a ‘loose’ choice, as is the case in European Elections. At the same time, a part of LAOS voters, according to the same surveys, describe themselves as ‘a-political’ and ‘anti-political’ (non-partisan vote). Besides, LAOS had called for the support of rightwing euroscepticists (Koukourakis 2005: 139). Thereby, the LAOS choice implies, at least as far as the conscientious voters are concerned, voting with the boot towards the established parties.

Finally, the total share of the rest of the lists also has risen. An increase of 2.5% compared with the General Election three months earlier, certifies the hypothesis of the SOE model. A question that arises about the vote to the smaller parties is if and to what degree does this vote constitute a protest (negative vote) against one of the big parties, or if it is about sincere voting. One way to approach this is by examining how close did each voter feel towards the party of his/her choice. Looking at the relative data in the exit poll we have used, we cannot rule out negative voting in this European Election (Teperoglou & Skrinis 2006). On the whole, 72.73% felt close or very close to the party they voted for, while 27.27% either did not feel close or felt far from it. Proximity to each party is shown on Chart 5.



Source: Exit poll OPINION S.A, 13 June 2004

Applying the SOE model in the case of the 2004 European Election in Greece, we conclude that the main hypotheses of the ‘less at stake’ dimension are verified. Therefore, we are dealing with a SOE. Since the answer to the first question is affirmative, our study goes one step further. In the next part of our paper we are focusing on the question *Second-order election, for whom?* In other words, we try to find whether the secondary character of the election applies to the whole of the electorate or if there are different trends among different socio-demographic groups.

### **3. Second-order election, for whom?**

We have chosen to do crosstabulation tables since they allow us to examine frequencies of observations that belong to specific categories on more than one variable. We attempt to answer the questions above using data from the European Election Study 2004 (EES 2004), the Flash EB 162 and the exit polls by OPINION S.A. conducted on March 7<sup>th</sup> and June 13<sup>th</sup>. We have chosen to use the following demographic variables: sex, age, years of education, size of the town. These variables are crosstabulated with abstention and party preference. We try to find if there is any association between the demographic variables and abstention or the size of the party voted for (where large parties are ND and PASOK, and smaller parties, which KKE, SYN, LAOS and “other” parties).

**Table 3a**  
**European Election Study 2004: Demographics and abstention crosstabulation**

		<b>EES 2004</b>	
		<b>EU24<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>GREECE</b>
<b>Sex</b>	Male	54.4	<b>37.7*</b>
	Female	57.3	<b>34.4*</b>
<b>Age</b>	18-24	70.5	<b>67.2</b>
	25-39	63.7	<b>43.9</b>
	40-54	54.3	<b>27.8</b>
	55+	46.2	<b>19.1</b>
<b>Years of education</b>	-15	54.7	<b>16.4</b>
	16-20	59.4	<b>40.5</b>
	21+	52.6	<b>39</b>
	0	69.1	<b>-</b>
<b>Area</b>	Large town	55.2	<b>41.6</b>
	Middle or small size town	56.4	<b>32.4</b>
	Rural or village	52.3	<b>24.7</b>

*Source: Own calculations based on the European Election Study 2004 data*

The sample has been weighted for participation. The results are statistically significant at least at 95%, except the figures with an asterisk (\*).

<sup>a</sup> Malta did not participate in the EES 2004

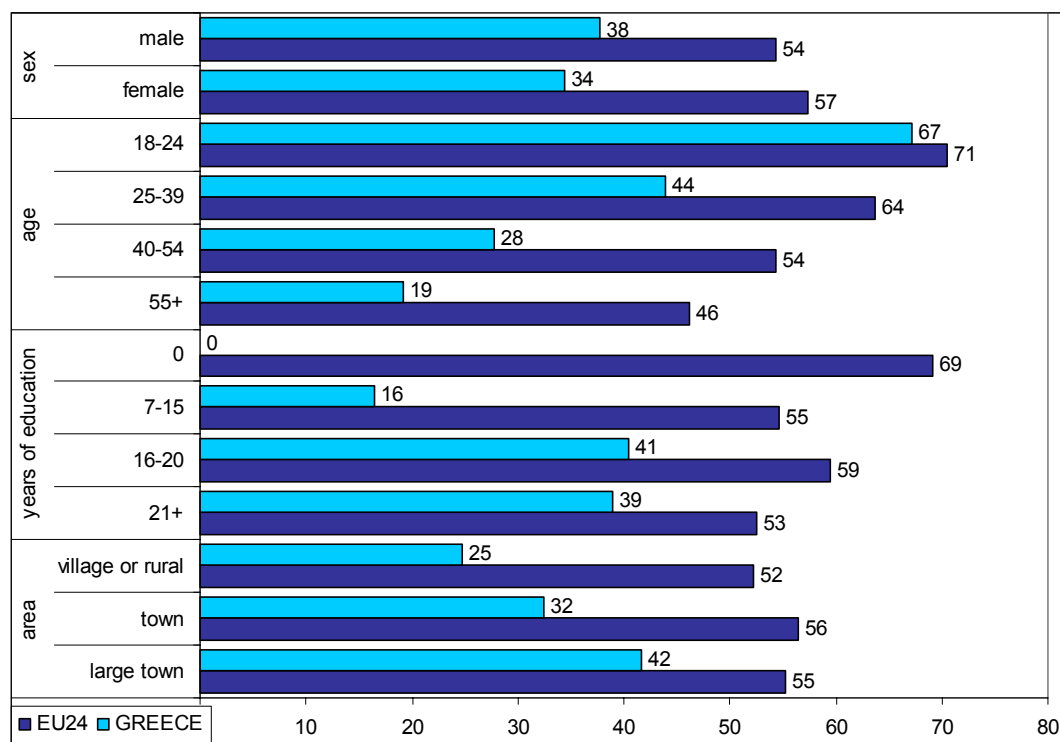
**Table 3b**  
**Flash EB 162: Demographics and abstention crosstabulation**

		<b>Flash Eurobarometer 162</b>	
		<b>EU25</b>	<b>GREECE</b>
<b>Sex</b>	Male	53.6	<b>37.8</b>
	Female	54.9	<b>36.8</b>
<b>Age</b>	18-24	66.6	<b>59.4</b>
	25-39	63.3	<b>38.6</b>
	40-54	53.7	<b>26.4</b>
	55+	40.3	<b>30.8</b>
<b>Years of education</b>	-15	47.4	<b>31.6</b>
	16-20	59.9	<b>34.3</b>
	21+	49.5	<b>45.6</b>
	0	46.5	<b>53.8</b>
<b>Area</b>	Metropolitan	54.7	<b>44.1</b>
	Urban	52.7	<b>45.4</b>
	Rural	56	<b>25.2</b>

*Source: Own calculations based on the Post European elections 2004 survey- Flash Eurobarometer 162 data*

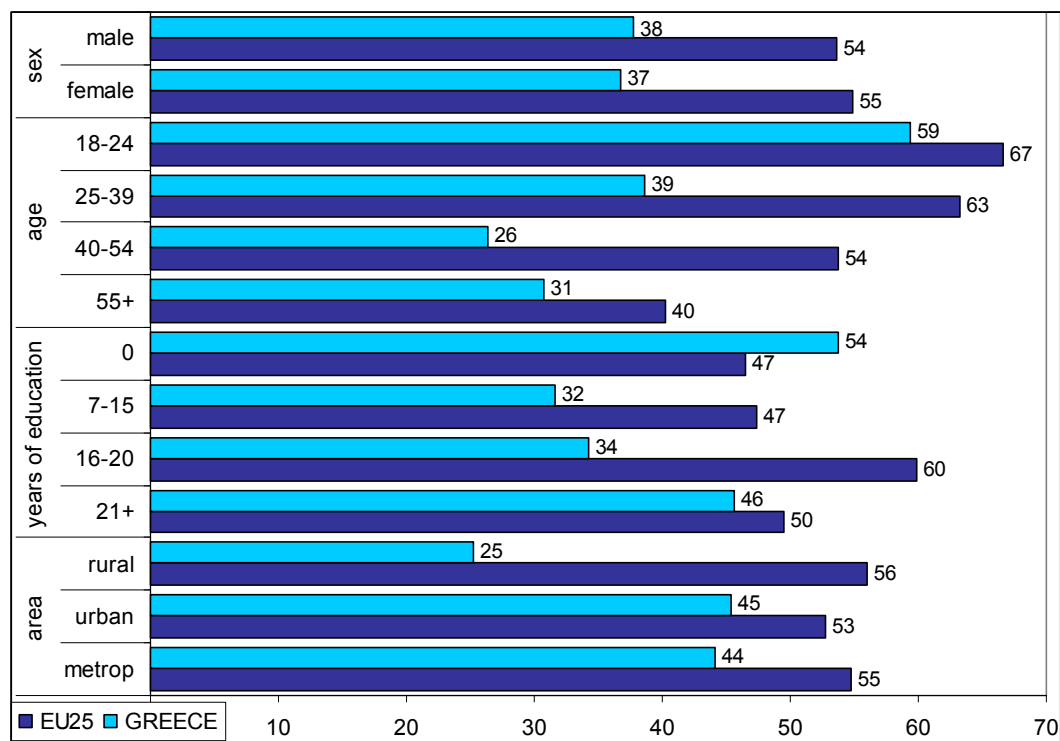
**Chart 6: Demographics and abstention**

**a. EES 2004**



Source: Own calculations based on the European Election Study 2004 data

**b. Flash EB 162**



Source: Own calculations based on the Post European elections 2004 survey-Eurobarometer Flash 162 data

## Abstention

Looking at the EES 2004 and the Eurobarometer Flash 162 data on Greece, we observe certain similarities. Age is the most important variable. As shown in Tables 3a and 3b and Charts 6a and 6b there is a very clear trend of increased abstention among younger voters (aged 18 to 24). In Europe, according to both surveys, abstention is also high among the second age group (25-39). In Greece, though, abstention decreases almost 20% in comparison to the youngest age group and the European average. The decreasing trend continues both in Greece and in Europe, in the 40-54 and 55+ age groups. The only difference lies on the share of the eldest Greeks in the Flash EB 162, where there is a 5% rise from the previous age group. Consequently, the main trend running through both surveys is that both in Greece and in Europe as a whole, it is highly possible that the younger one is, the more one will abstain. It is worth mentioning that according to the EES 2004 data, the difference between abstention rates in the 18-24 and 55+ age groups reaches about 50%. The respective difference in the Flash EB 162 data is 28%.

The locality variable is equally interesting. According to the Flash EB 162, there is a clear split between the answers that have been given in greek metropolitan and urban areas on the one hand, where abstention lies at 44% and 45%, and rural areas on the other, where it is limited at 25%. Contrary to the case of Greece, the EU average shows uniformity among geographic areas. Table 3a demonstrates that the greek EES 2004 data are in consistency with the aforementioned trend, even though the coding does not correspond exactly. The same trend is also verified in the March general election, where there is differentiation between metropolitan and urban regions on the one hand and rural regions on the other (see Table 4).

**Table 4**  
**Crosstabulation: Abstention by locality**

	<b>Large town</b>	<b>Middle or small size town</b>	<b>Rural or village</b>
<b>Abstention</b>	41,6 [12,3] <sup>a</sup>	32,4 [8,5]	24,7 [7,4]

*Source: own calculations based on the EES 2004 data*

<sup>a</sup>In brackets it is the abstention in the March General Election.

Evidently, according to the answers given in the survey, abstention in large towns increased rather much (about 39%), in smaller towns by 24%, and in rural areas and villages almost 17%, compared to the 7th March election. From the analysis of the relative data we

find that in rural regions, citizens do not abstain as much as they do in more populated regions.

Examining the education variable, we observe that the results of the two surveys are not too similar. According to the Flash EB 162 those who have not had any schooling and those who have university education abstained more than those who have primary and secondary education. The opposite is the case for the European average (see Table 3b and Chart 5b). According to the greek data in the EES 2004 survey, we also see that those with less education participated more than those with more education (see Table 3a and Chart 5a).

Finally, looking at the gender variable and abstention, the crosstabulation table for the greek data does not give statistically significant results. There is no evidence that there is a difference in attitude between males and females in the population, as there is in the rest of the variables we have examined. At the EU aggregate level, it seems that women abstain slightly more than men (see Tables 3a and 3b).

### **Voting for large or smaller parties**

The ‘less at stake’ dimension in the SOE model is based on the one hand on participation and on the other on the performance of large and smaller parties. Next, we will focus on examining if there is any difference between voting preferences and each of the categories of the demographic variables. We have recoded the vote variable so that ND and PASOK choices are coded as ‘large’ parties, and KKE, SYN LAOS and rest of the lists are coded as ‘smaller’ ones. Before proceeding to the analysis it is useful to remind that abstention had increased and that protest voting was limited.

**Table 5**  
**Crosstabulation: Age by size of party**

#### **a. EES 2004**

	<b>18-24</b>	<b>25-39</b>	<b>40-54</b>	<b>55+</b>
<b>Large</b> (ND & PASOK)	65.2 [89.4]	76.8 [83.8]	67.1 [75]	84.9 [90.7]
<b>Smaller</b> (KKE - Other)	34.8 [10.6]	23.8 [16.2]	32.9 [25]	15.1 [9.3]

#### **b. Exit poll OPINION S.A**

	<b>18-35</b>	<b>36-54</b>	<b>55+</b>
<b>Large</b> (ND & PASOK)	73,8 [85,5]	73,4 [84,1]	85,6 [89,7]
<b>Smaller</b> (KKE - Other)	26,2 [14,5]	26,7 [15,9]	14,5 [11,1]

*Source: Own calculations based on the European Election Study 2004 and OPINION data respectively*

The crosstabulations of the EES 2004 and the OPINION exit poll (the Flash EB162 crosstabulation was not statistically significant) help us make some interesting observations. Among the three age groups of the exit poll data, voting in the March General Election (see figures in brackets) is rather identical. There is a small differentiation between the first two groups and the last one. If we consider voting for smaller parties as an indication of ‘loose vote’ in European Elections, then we find that voters aged 18 to 54 respond similarly to the less-at-stake stimulus. Turning to the EES 2004 data, we see that the results are not as identical as those of the exit poll. However, it is clear that elder voters tend to vote more for large parties. Comparing voting choices between March and June, it is obvious that young voters change more. Therefore, supporting smaller parties is mainly an issue among those in the first age group. Elder voters respond differently. Their European Election votes do not loosen too much, and tend to remain constant and consistent to the General Election.

Turning to the locality variable, we notice that things are not the same as in the crosstabulation with abstention, which showed voters in metropolitan and urban areas have the same electoral behaviour. When it comes to voting choice, the difference lies between voters in metropolitan areas on the one hand, and urban and rural on the other.

**Table 6**  
**Crosstabulation: Locality by size of party**

**a. EES 2004**

	<b>Large town</b>	<b>Middle or small size town</b>	<b>Rural or village</b>
<b>Large</b> (ND & PASOK)	74,1 [81,6]	79 [90]	82 [87,8]
<b>Smaller</b> (KKE - Other)	25,9 [18,4]	21 [10]	18 [12,2]

**b. Flash EB162**

	<b>Metropolitan</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>
<b>Large</b> (ND & PASOK)	65,1	84,3	83,1
<b>Smaller</b> (KKE - Other)	34,9	15,7	16,9

**c. Exit poll OPINION S.A**

	<b>Metropolitan</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>
<b>Large</b> (ND & PASOK)	73,4 [83,7]	82,7 [88,8]	82,5 [90,5]
<b>Smaller</b> (KKE - Other)	26,7 [16,2]	17,3 [11,2]	17,5 [9,5]

*Source: Own calculations based on the European Election Study 2004, Flash EB 162 and OPINION data respectively*

The tables above show that big parties do not have the same effect in larger areas (large towns or metropolitan areas), as they do in smaller ones (middle and small-size towns, villages and rural areas). Taking into consideration the result of the 7<sup>th</sup> March election, we observe that in all of the three groups of localities there is ‘loose vote’, and in smaller regions the difference between the two elections is lower. To be more precise, according to the EES 2004, the shift from the General Election to the European Election vote is about 7.5% in large towns, 11% in middle and small-size ones, and 5.8% in rural areas and villages. Respectively, according to the OPINION exit poll, the shift is 10% in metropolitan areas, 6% in urban ones, and 8% in rural areas. Consequently, we find that in more populated areas there is more dispersion of votes among parties, while in less populated areas the share of votes is about the same.

The difference that is noted in more populated areas (about 8%) in the EES 2004, and the exit poll and Flash EB 162, may be attributed to the sample of each survey and to the operational definition of the variable, that is the limit which puts each region in one of the three groups.

**Table 7**  
**Crosstabulation: Education by size of party**

**a. EES 2004**

	<b>6-15</b>	<b>16-20</b>	<b>21+</b>
<b>Large</b> (ND & PASOK)	76,8 [85,5*]	72,6 [80,3]	79,7 [88,1]
<b>Smaller</b> (KKE - Other)	23,2 [14,5]	27,3 [19,7]	20,3 [11,9]

\*: The General Election figures (in brackets) are not statistically significant

**b. Flash EB 162**

	<b>Never been to school</b>	<b>6-15</b>	<b>16-20</b>	<b>21+</b>
<b>Large</b> (ND & PASOK)	90	84.1	76.5	67.7
<b>Smaller</b> (KKE - Other)	10	15.9	23.5	32.3

**c. Exit poll OPINION S.A**

	<b>Primary, not finished (6-11)</b>	<b>Primary (12)</b>	<b>Secondary (13-18)</b>	<b>College or University</b>
<b>Large</b> (ND & PASOK)	86,8 [89,6]	84,9 [90,1]	77,3 [86,9]	71,6 [82,8]
<b>Smaller</b> (KKE - Other)	13,3 [10,5]	15,2 [10]	22,7 [13,1]	28,3 [17,4]

*Source: Own calculations based on the European Election Study 2004, Flash EB 162 and OPINION data respectively*

Moving next to educational level, as it ensues from the ‘age when finished full-time education’ question, there are some differences in the choice of party. The EES 2004 data are quite homogeneous. Voting choice seems to be consistent among the three different groups, while the change from the General Election is almost the same. On the contrary, OPINION exit poll and Flash EB162 data show that the more years of full-time education one has, the more prone one is to turn away from bipartism and support smaller parties. In the March General Election, differences among educational levels are not significant. In the European Election, however, ‘loose vote’ is clearly present among those who have had more years of full-time education. Unfortunately, the surveys do not use the same categories for educational level, preventing direct comparison.

Gender is the last demographic variable to be examined. EES 2004 data do not provide statistically significant results. Therefore, no safe conclusion may be drawn from this survey. Nevertheless, using Flash EB 162 and OPINION exit poll data, it seems that female voters favour more one of the two big parties, while male voters turn slightly more towards smaller and more extreme lists. The exit poll data are more balanced than those from the Flash EB 162, where there is a difference of almost 10%. Moreover, comparing vote shares between the European and the General elections, we observe a similar decrease for the two big parties (about 9%) for both sexes (see Table 8).

**Table 8**  
**Crosstabulation: Sex by size of party**

**a. Flash EB 162**

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>Large</b> (ND & PASOK)	71,9	82,2
<b>Smaller</b> (KKE - Other)	28,1	17,8

**b. Exit poll OPINION S.A**

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>Large</b> (ND & PASOK)	75,7 [84,8]	78,6 [87,5]
<b>Smaller</b> (KKE - Other)	24,3 [15,1]	21,3 [12,4]

*Source: Own calculations based on the Flash EB 162 and OPINION S.A data respectively*

## 4. Conclusions

This paper has attempted for the first time to apply in the Greek case a theoretical model that has prevailed in the study of European Elections. Trying to answer the main question of the paper, whether the last European Election in Greece consists of a SOE we checked if the main hypotheses of the model are verified.

We have illustrated the main trends of the last European Elections in Greece. Our main conclusion is that this has been a SOE indeed. Starting from this fact, we have made some very interesting observations that mark out important aspects of the European Elections. The result was defined by the current political context and the first-order political arena. Participation was the lowest ever, while abstention did not affect parties equally. The losses of the two larger parties, in particular those of ND (that in comparison with the previous European Elections were rather limited) also verify the relevant literature. They are in consistency with the timing of the election in the electoral cycle of the General election and the post-electoral euphoria that favours governing parties. The hypothesis of the SOE model that smaller parties fare better is also verified, although the increase in their vote share –attributed to negative/protest voting- might have been even higher, should the European Election took place later in the electoral cycle or should participation were higher.

Applying the SOE model in the Greek case, one may notice that European Elections are used as a ‘medium’ for either to express true party preferences or to protest against the party usually voted for in general elections. However, the large share of the two big parties recorded in this European Election resulted in limiting the increase of the vote share for the smaller parties. Although the total share had been higher than in the General Election, it remained lower than in the previous European Election. Probably, this electoral behaviour relates to the national character that has been attributed to these elections by the parties, and the fact that there has not been any alternative that could motivate the electorate. At the same time, the lack of issues and the new FOPA have given the character of an election with less at stake.

Having studied the June 2004 European Election in Greece with the help of the SOE model, we decided to take one step further. We tried, using demographic data, to see if every voter treated it as a second-order election and answer for whom it actually was one, and for whom there was no question of order between different types of elections (at least for the two that took place in 2004). The two most salient parameters of the model’s ‘less at stake’ dimension are changes in abstention and in the vote shares of bigger and smaller parties. We

have crosstabulated demographic variables (gender, age, education and locality) by abstention and party size preference, using three surveys. We presented only statistically significant results.

Based on the results of the crosstabulations, we have noticed that there is differentiation of electoral behaviour from one demographic group to the other. All groups of voters are influenced by the fact that less is at stake in European Elections, as SOEs, but do not respond the same way. Consequently, trying to answer for whom was the 2004 European Election a SOE, we have observed that younger, male, more educated citizens living in more populated areas tend to adopt an electoral behaviour, which accords more to the hypotheses of the 'less at stake' dimension than other demographic groups.

Particularly, there is a clear cut division between younger and older voters. Older ones tend less towards abstention and/or smaller parties. A similar 'reservedness', towards both abstention and vote switching, is also observed amongst voters in rural areas. On the contrary, younger ones and city-dwellers tend to abstain more or to switch their votes in European Elections. In any case, all these conclusions are nothing more than trends and indications valid at any rate in the election in question. Given that European Elections take place every five years in all member states, regardless of the electoral cycle -but regarding demographic variables- they may prove a valuable "laboratory" to study electoral behaviour in General as well as European elections.

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<sup>i</sup> In his 1997 article, Reif mentions that apart from smaller parties, radical, populist ones and protest parties also tend to fare better in second-order elections (Reif 1997: 118).

<sup>ii</sup> According to various researchers, the share of actual participation is almost 13% higher (Franklin 2001: 207). This difference has been attributed to the electoral register that is not updated regularly, but also to the fact that the register for General and European elections had been based on the municipal rolls. These included people who had migrated, their children, etc. (Drettakis 2004: 15-7). For abstention figures in the last European Election see Andreadis 2004 and Drettakis 2004: 18-38. It should be underlined that these percentages are based on official sources and are underestimated. According to calculations in Greece, there is almost universal turnout.

<sup>iii</sup> In the period between the General Election in March and the European Election in June, many had feared that abstention would rise. The survey that was conducted for *Standard Eurobarometer 61* showed that of all Europeans, Greeks were the keenest to vote, at 66%. This figure was close to the official participation, but at the same time it has been the lowest in Greek electoral data.

<sup>iv</sup> Equally high participation has been registered in Luxembourg, Belgium and Italy (until 1993) where voting is obligatory. For more in factors of high participation see Franklin, Eijk and Oppenhuis 1996: 306-331 and Mattila 2003: 449-468.

<sup>v</sup> Attempting to apply Marsh and Franklin’s conclusions in the case of the Greek European Elections, we find that in the 1984 and 1994 ones they are verified. In the first case, the election took place a few months before the General Election and participation was high. In the second, the election was soon after the General contest and participation was low. On the contrary, the 1999 European Election contradicts the conclusions, as participation was low even though the election took place a year before the General Election.

<sup>vi</sup> The purpose of the study was a discourse analysis of the European Election campaign by the media. It covered the last fortnight (01/06/2004-13/06/2004) before the election. The data had been compiled from six nationwide and two regional newspapers, and three private and one public TV network. Prof. Demertzis from the University of Athens was the study supervisor.

<sup>vii</sup> The government coalition in Slovakia won almost 10%. In Spain, PSOE increased its share of vote by 1%.

<sup>viii</sup> The 1994 European Election took place eight months after the 1993 General Election, during the honeymoon period, the decrease of the government party reached 9.23%. The respective figures in the 1981 and 1989 European Elections, which coincided with the General Elections, were 4.53% and 3.17%. The case of the last European Election in Spain may be compared to the Greek one. The Spanish General Election took place one week after the Greek General Election. PSOE’s share increased. We assume that this deviates from the SOE model, as it is due to post electoral euphoria, and it fits Angus Campbell’s notion of “surge”.

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<sup>ix</sup> According to Franklin's calculations, the 1989-2004 average was 8.9. This is the lowest among the 15 member states (Franklin 2005).

<sup>x</sup> The nationalist Political Spring (*Politiki Anixe*, POLAN) won 8.65% in the 1994 European Election and the populist Democratic Social Movement (*Demokratiko Kinoniko Kinema*, DIKKI) 6.85% five years later.

<sup>xi</sup> The 'Women for another Europe' was an *ad hoc* list comprised of left-wing women, who formerly belonged to or supported SYN.