

# Political Elites, propagandization and the presentation of the MoU in Greece

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# Propaganda and the nation-state

- Politics has become throughout modernity and late modernity a systematic exercise of control over people. The increasingly bureaucratized corpus of the modern state and political parties created the framework for the implementation of power politics.
- The modern (and late modern state)-through the government and the party system- has to use propaganda to conduct its policy (Ellul J, 1973:122-138, Smith B. L., Lasswell H.D. & R. D. Cassey, 1946: 1)
- Propaganda is a deliberate process of communication, through the dissemination of information, aiming at structuring social, political and financial realities for all individuals or groups taking part in these “realities”

# Propaganda Characteristics

Propaganda appears to have diachronically several characteristics serving the aims of the propagandist:

- Unilateral views
- Selective presentation of issues
- Use of sentimental arguments
- Logical arguments lacking sufficient explanation
- Disorientation
- It might be overt or covert, black or white, true or misleading, serious or funny, “reasonable” or “sensational”

# Initial Research and definition of Political Elite

- Political elites, constituted a major pattern for the research of political parties from the early 20th century when the first party researches were published. However, elite research was even earlier during the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- **Political elites could be defined** as small minorities that manage to concentrate at their disposal more power than the great majority of a population, influencing through that power the policies adopted to a much greater extent.
- Political elites, are obvious from the ancient years during the first politically organized societies.
- The existence of political elites, even in representative governments, means a lack of democracy and democratic participation...

# Political elites during crises periods

- ...But even among the very powerful, few people directly decide public policy (direct, indirect, spurious influence).
- This lack of democratic participation is even higher during periods of crises (as it is the current economic crisis of Greece).
- During crises periods, elites tend to homogenize and concentrate at their disposal even higher jurisdictions power with a subsequent loss of power for party organs, members and institutions like parliament
- New political elites or new personnel from the existing elites tends to emerge, while serious doubts regarding the legitimation of the government to receive so serious decisions are also evident.

# Research outline

- Quantitative content analysis in three different daily prime time TV news bulletins (ALTER, MEGA, NET)
- Why TV? Greece has a TV-centric mentality (Hallin & Mancini 2004)
- Unit of analysis: Individual statements of political actors in news bulletins concerning the MoU
- Research period: News bulletins from 20<sup>th</sup> of April 2010 to 9<sup>th</sup> May 2010 (60 news bulletins)
- Total number of statements 779 (N=779)
- Data input and analysis using SPSS 19
- The data input by the coders was tested using the North, Holsti, Zaninovich and Zinnes coders' reliability test (North et al. 1963)

# Research Questions

**How is the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) presented by the political actors (politicians and political parties), through their statements in the prime time TV news bulletins?**

1. The presentation of all aspects concerning measures to be taken and policies to be followed according to the MoU by political leaderships.
2. The evaluation on behalf of the politicians of both the causes and consequences of the MoU as a means of overcoming the fiscal crisis.
3. The existence either of consensus or debating between political parties regarding the implementation of the MoU.
4. The intra-party consensus in terms of the debates within political parties caused by the MoU
5. The politicians (experienced or newcomers) undertaking the task to “promote” the MoU to the public opinion through the media.
6. The political (or not) context within which the discussion on the MoU took place (e.g. press conference, parliament, mass media-studio, etc.)

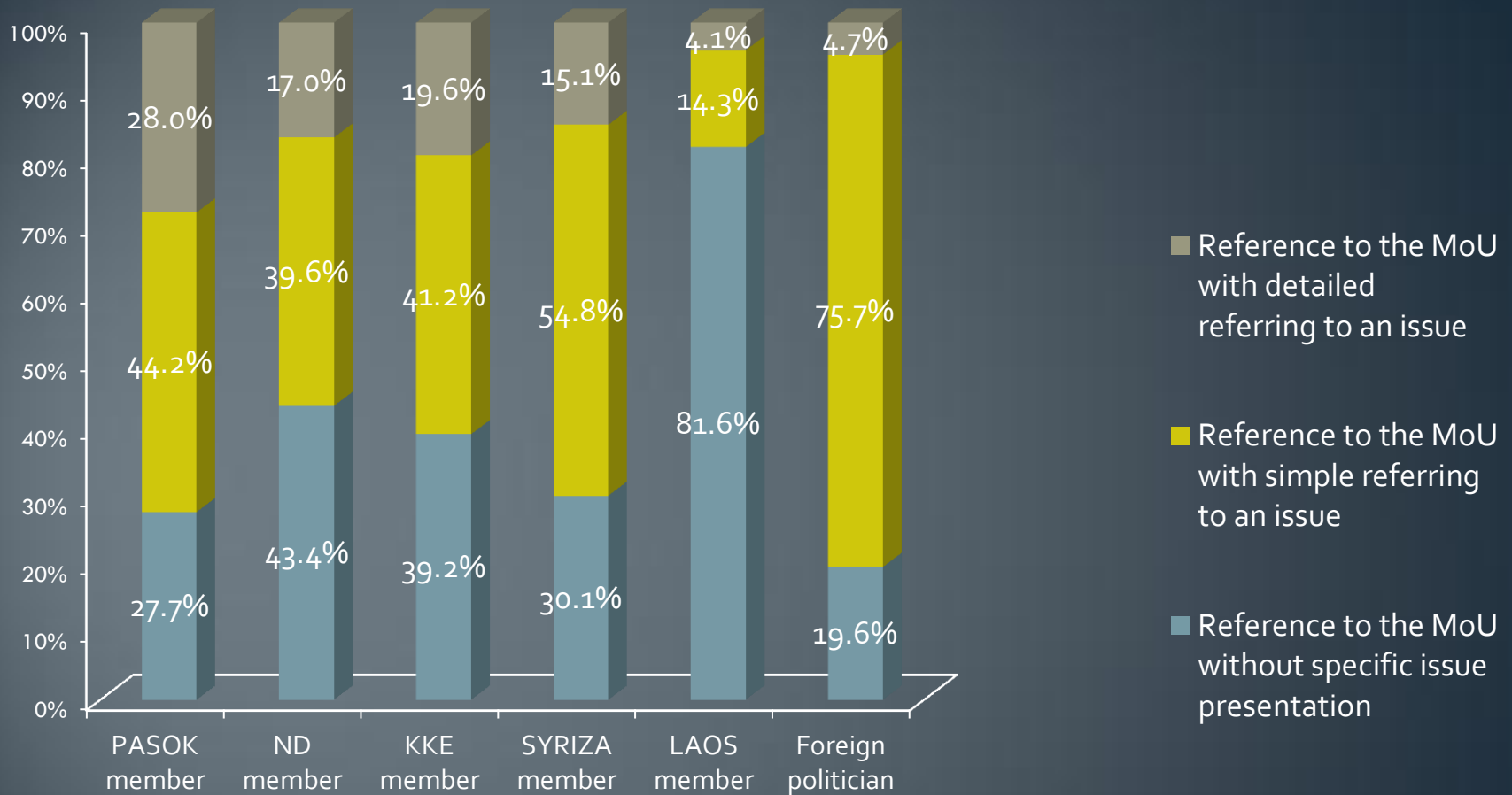
# The MoU

## 16 axes :

- Regulation and supervision of the credit-monetary sector
- Taxes
- Wages-Pensions
- Public Investments
- Labor-Insurance
- Local Administration reforms
- Entrepreneurship-Trade- Corporations
- Transports
- Energy
- Health
- Education
- Budget Check
- Cooperation/negotiation with European Commission and E.U.
- Zoning plan
- Expenditures and Function of Government, local governments and public administration
- Unemployment- Vulnerable social groups

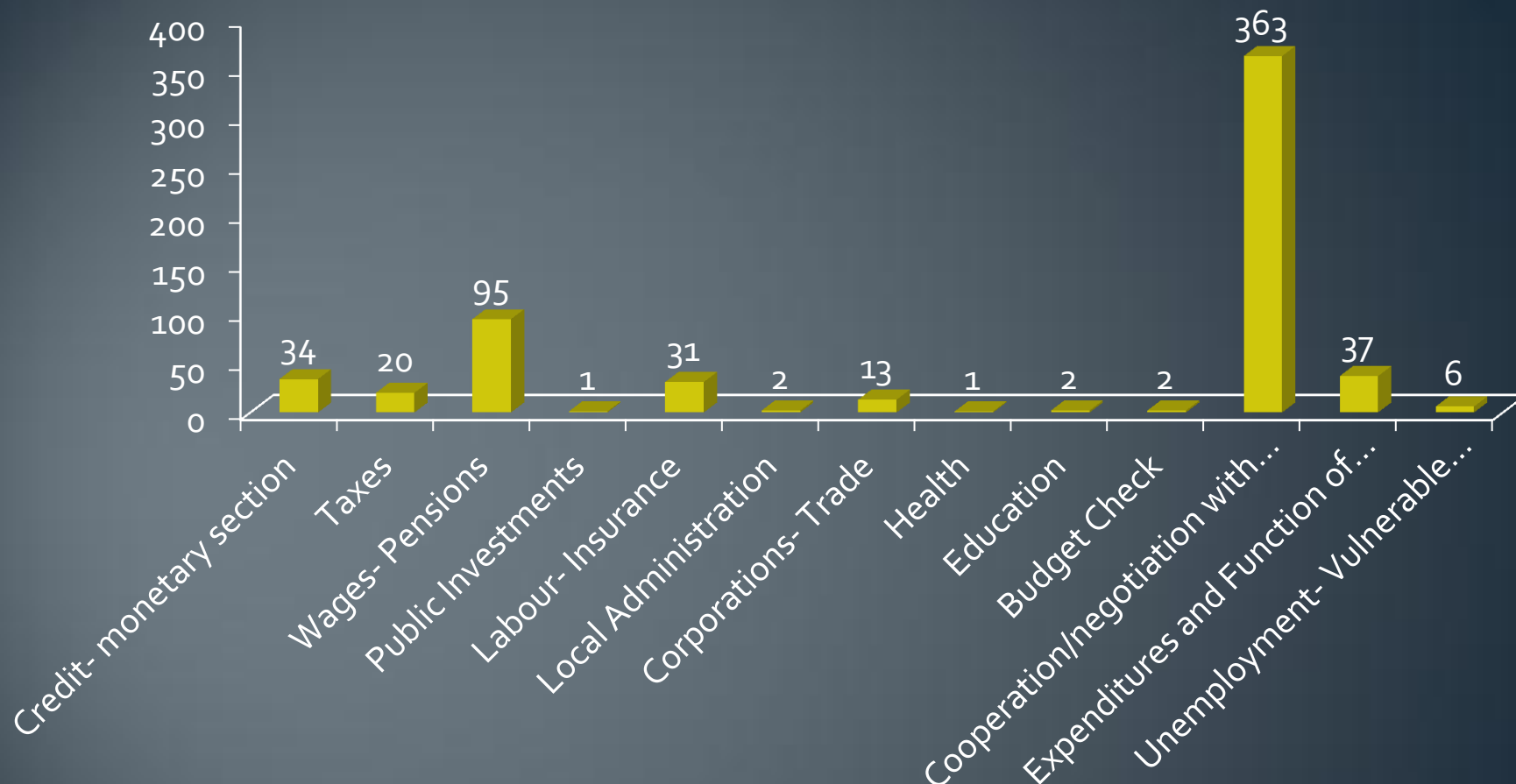
**Containing 98 actions**

## Targeted presentation of issues per party



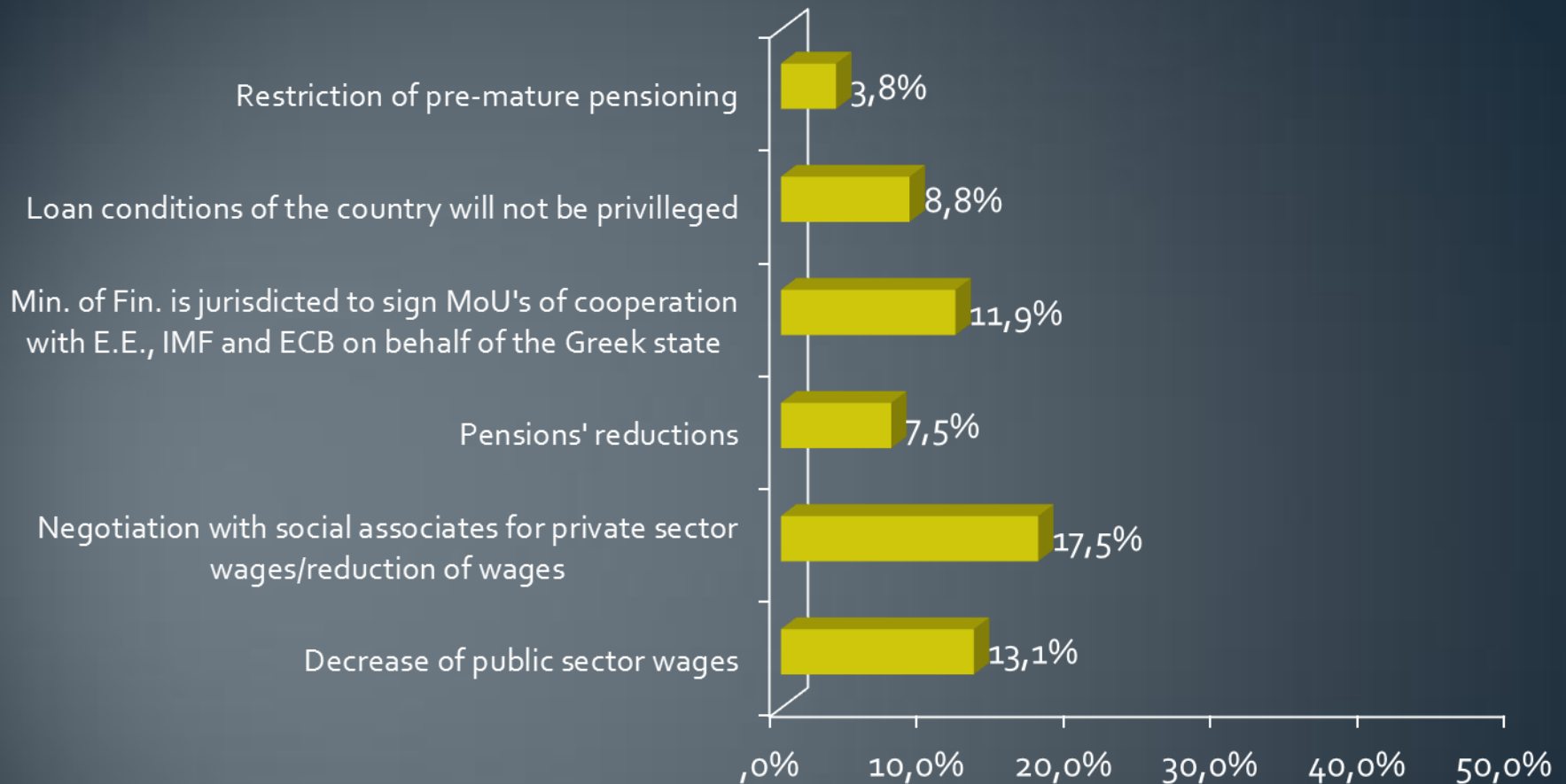
- Mostly, simple references to axes of the MoU from parties (except LAOS and ND) and foreign politicians
- Detailed presentation of issues was very limited with the exception of PASOK
- LAOS (81,6%) and ND (43,4%) preferred general references

## Main Category of Actions



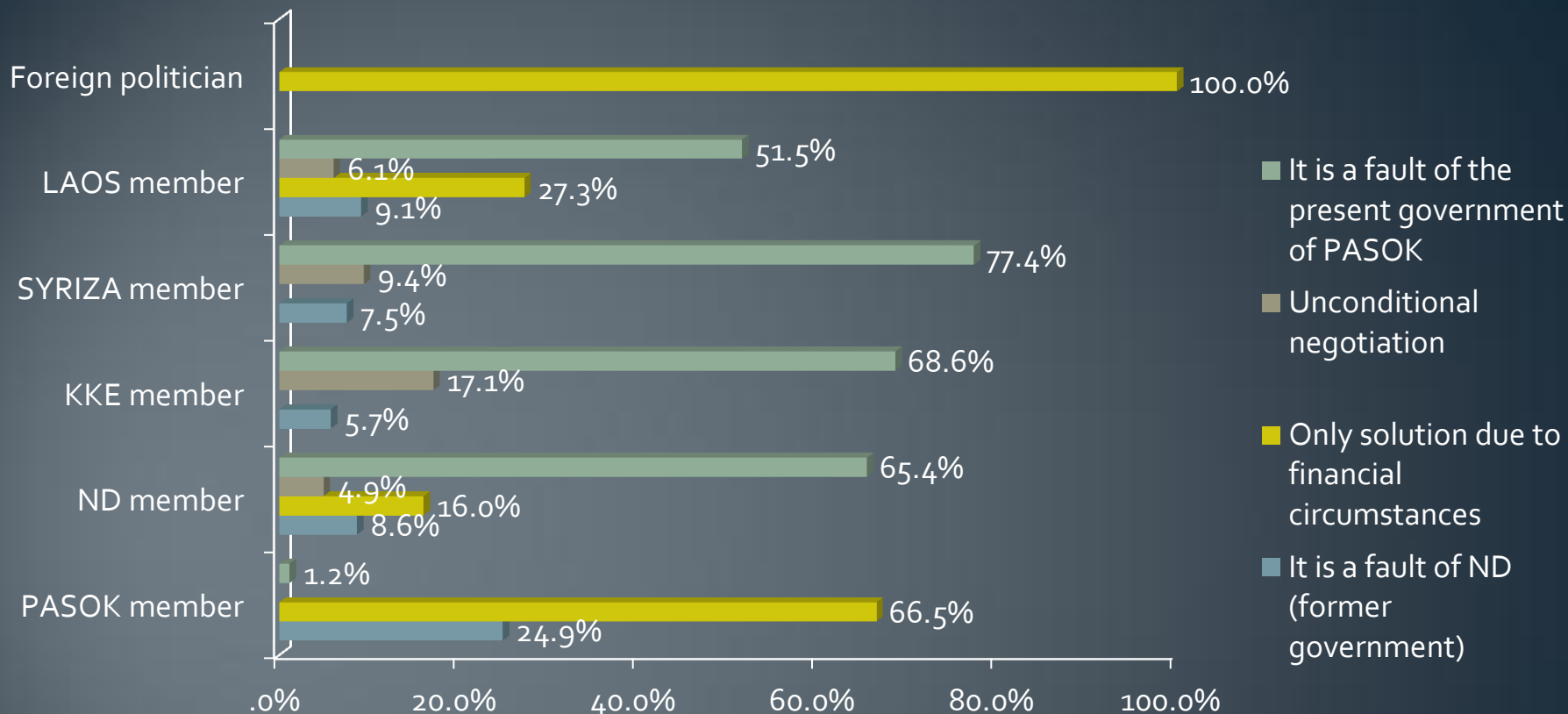
- Focus on negotiations (363), 3 categories not mentioned
- Followed by far by wages-pensions (95)
- Few references on credit, Labor-insurance and state expenditures

## Top 6 mentioned actions



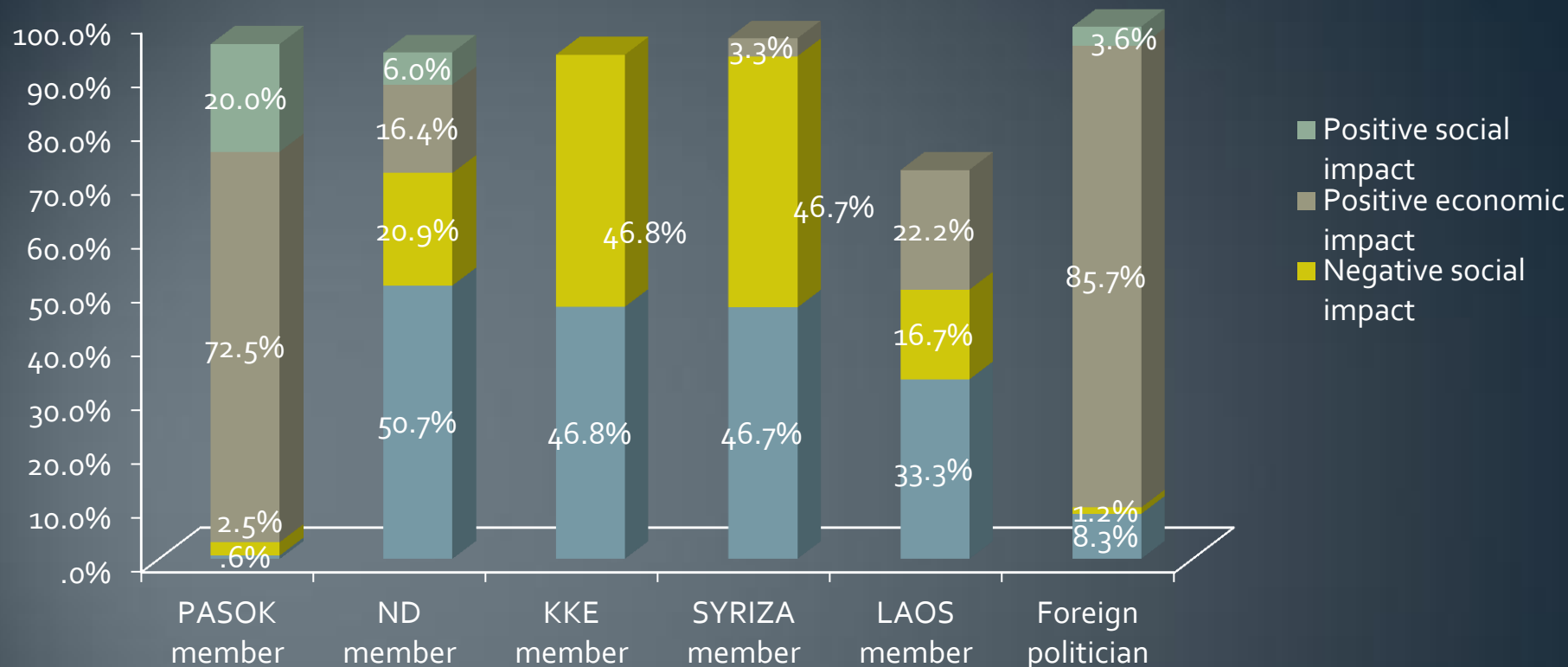
- 98 actions in total, only 40 mentioned
- 6 of them with percentage over 3.5%
- All other actions less than 2.5%

## Main causes for the implementation of the MoU



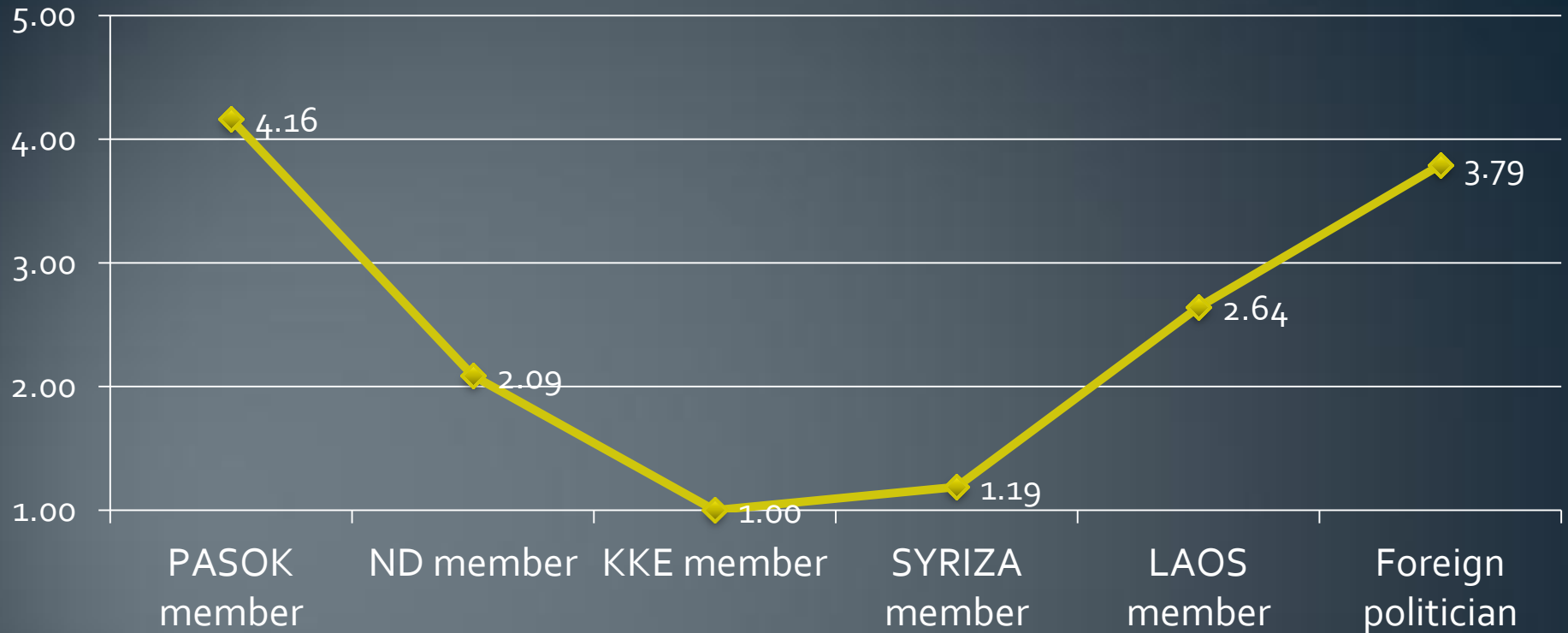
- “Only solution” conquers foreign politicians and PASOK members, followed by the blaming of the last government of ND
- “Fault of PASOK government” is by far the main point of opposition parties
- Mainly left parties mention directly the “unconditional negotiation”
- Limited reference of “fault of all governments since 1974”, “Greek mentality”, “failure of political party system”

## Consequences from the implementation of the MoU



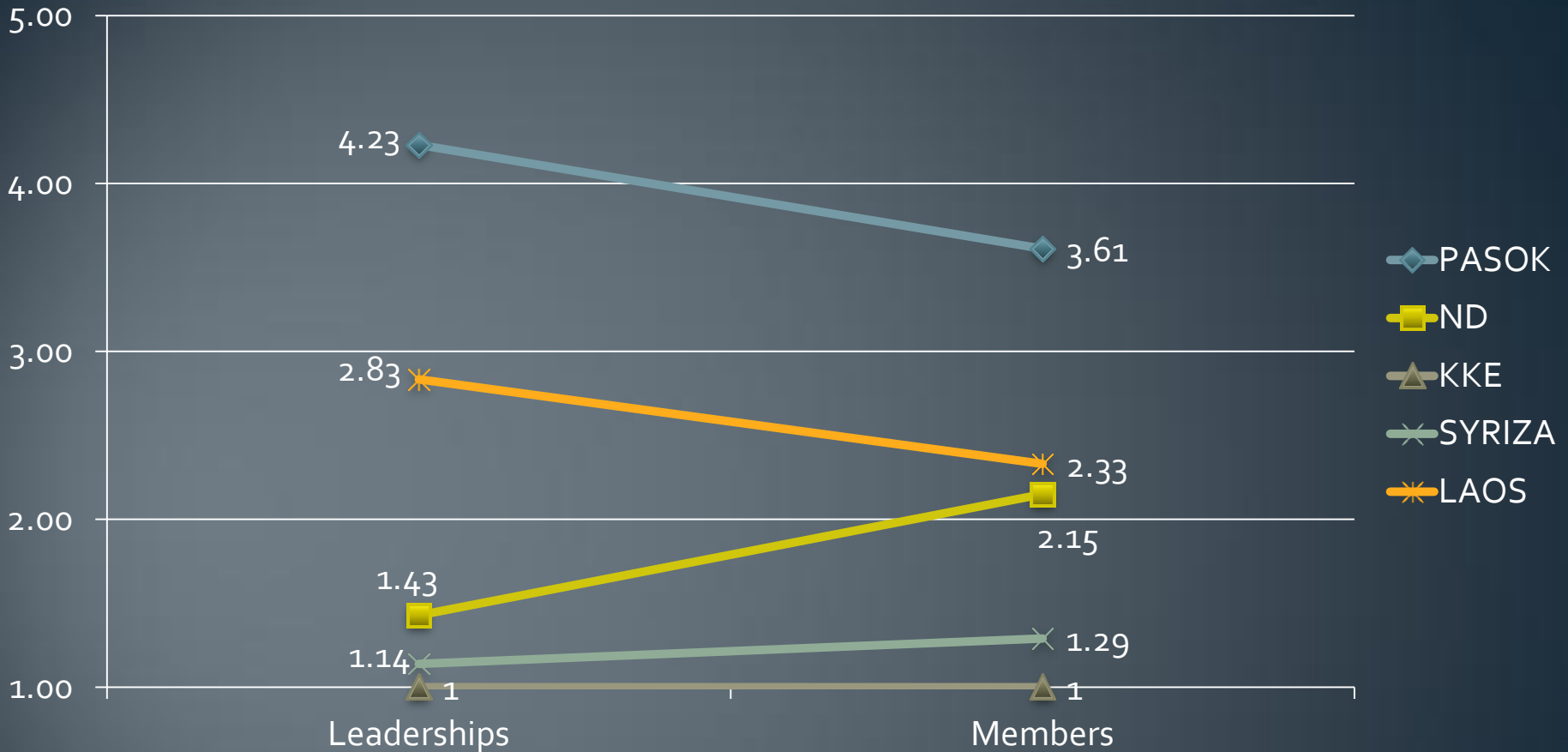
- Limited comments on political consequences (either positive or negative) with the exception of LAOS
- PASOK and foreign politicians foresee positive economic consequences, whereas the leftist parties promote the negative economic and social consequences
- LAOS appears to be rather divided into negative and positive economic consequences

## MoU support rate (overall party)



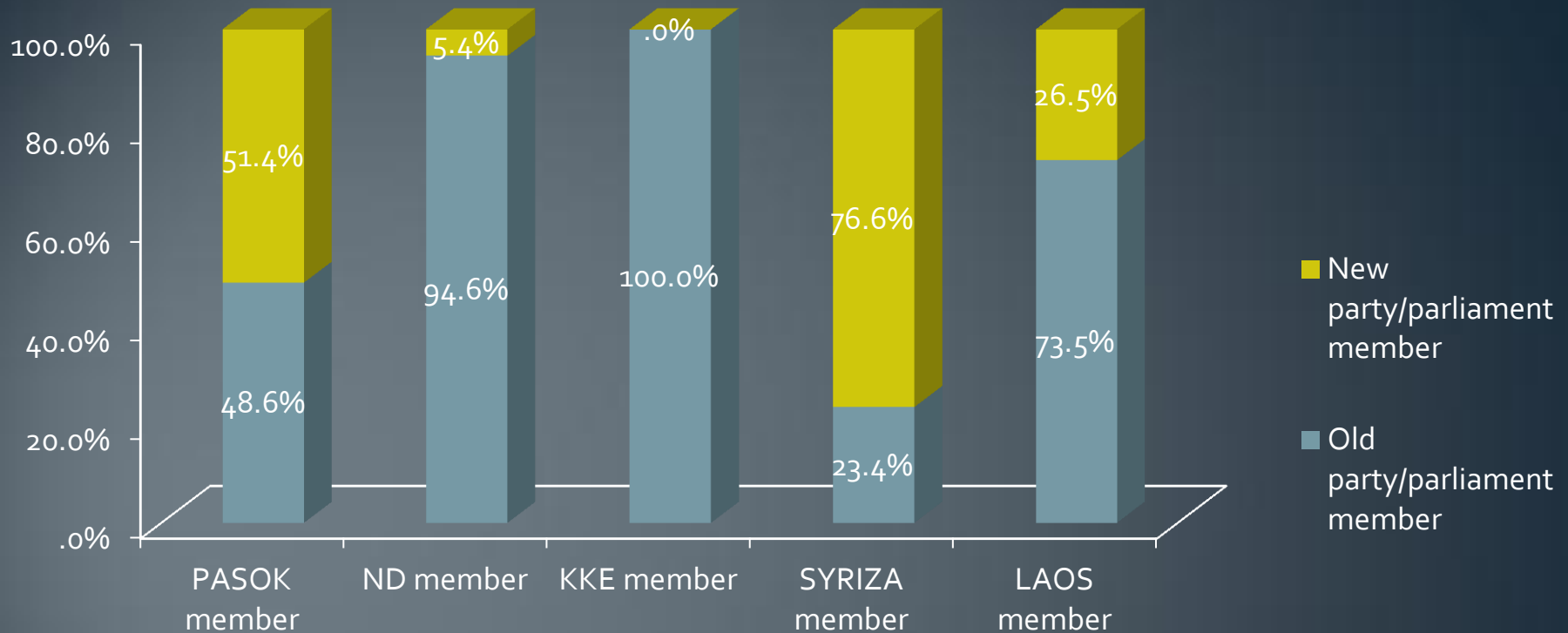
- 1 = Totally disagree, 5 = Totally agree
- PASOK and foreign politicians support the MoU
- Left parties totally against
- LAOS is closer to the neither agree nor disagree

## Leadrs hips vs. members support rate



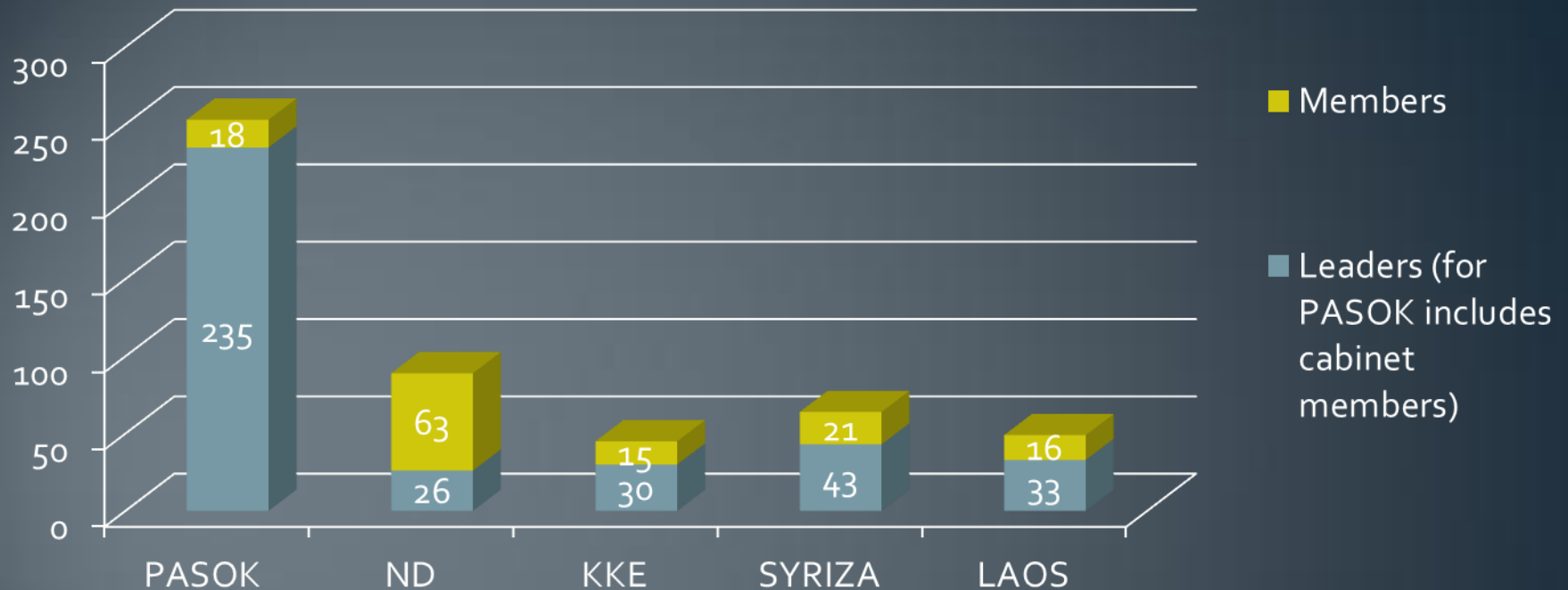
- PASOK and LAOS leadership appear to agree more with the MoU
- The opposite happens within ND
- The above differences combined with lack of function of intra party organs might imply a lack of intra-party consensus

## Old/new party member per party



- SYRIZA and PASOK talk mostly through new members, whereas ND (surprisingly), KKE and LAOS depend on old members to communicate their views

## Number of appearances leaders vs. members



- PASOK is represented by its elite (prime minister-cabinet members)
- In ND happens quite the opposite (members undertake mostly the presentation of its MoU approach)
- All small parties prefer to “talk” mainly through their leaders

# Basic Conclusions I

- Parties offered limited targeted presentation regarding MoU issues to the public.
- Regarding the categories of actions, political elites dedicated disproportionately a lot to the negotiations with E.E., ECB and IMF, constituting one major element of propaganda
- Limited presentation of the specific actions mentioned in the MoU, referring mainly to loan conditions, jurisdictions regarding the representation of Greece and finally to wages and pensions.
- Propagandistic presentation of the causes and the consequences: PASOK---> the MoU is the only way out, it will bring about positive economic results. Opposition---> it's PASOK's fault, it will bring about negative economic and social results

# Basic Conclusions II

- Political elites appear “defensive” regarding the responsibilities of the political system on the current crisis
- Left parties presented the lowest agreement score regarding MoU
- In general, a low agreement score was evident regarding the MoU among opposition parties despite the fact that it is a crisis period
- Parties adopted a pre-electoral behavior. Opposition parties focused their attention on the responsibilities of the current government
- Lack of intra party organs demonstrates a lack of democracy within the parties
- Leaderships undertake the task of publication of parties' stances on the MoU (slight exception the ND)

# Limitations of current research

- Limited time period (focused only on presentation of the adoption of the MoU and not its implication)
- We examined only political discourse. Journalistic discourse appeared to be significantly different and in any case more analytical
- Restricted by the TV agenda and filters. In another medium (e.g. the internet), political discourse might appear differently

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

# Statistical tests

- Slide 9 > Reference level is grouped variable (no test conducted)
- Slide 12, 13 > Presented causes and consequences are grouped variable (no tests conducted)
- Slide 14 > ANOVA conducted, statistically significant difference between the means ( $p \text{ value} < 0.05$ )
- Slide 15 > Independent samples T-Test : PASOK no statistically significant difference between the means ( $p \text{ value} = 0.053$ )
- ND statistically significant difference between the means ( $p \text{ value} = 0.028$ )
- SYRIZA no statistically significant difference between the means ( $p \text{ value} = 0.511$ )
- LAOS no statistically significant difference between the means ( $p \text{ value} = 0.135$ )
- Slide 16 > Number of cells with value below 5 is 35% > 20%, therefore the chi square test is not valid