



UNIVERSITÉ LIBRE DE BRUXELLES,
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Compulsory voting in Belgium and in Europe

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European countries with compulsory voting

- Belgium
 - The Netherlands until 1970
 - Luxemburg (under 75 years old)
 - Cyprus
 - Greece
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- A small debate about Italy (IDEA)

Does the compulsory voting have an impact on turnout in European Countries?

35 countries taken into account (with several waves of democratization)

Average Rate for elections held during a decade

Elections with compulsory voting in green bold

In red bold : worse turnout

	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Malta	75,44	78,05	90,25	94,07	95,29	96,19	95,06
Belgium	93,07	93,15	91,31	92,97	95,62	91,47	91,35
Luxembourg	91,63	92,15	89,56	89,49	88,10	87,39	91,24
Cyprus				80,65	95,15	91,94	90,33
Denmark	86,03	81,77	87,37	87,51	86,04	84,35	86,09
Iceland	88,30	90,75	91,26	90,34	89,40	87,17	85,42
Sweden	77,56	78,70	86,42	90,42	89,06	84,96	82,60
Austria	95,70	95,32	93,79	92,34	91,51	83,59	80,46
The Netherlands	93,40	95,36	95,04	84,73	83,45	76,04	79,82
Italy	90,68	93,79	92,83	92,25	89,77	85,38	79,36
Norway	79,33	78,82	82,83	81,59	83,07	77,10	76,43
Germany	78,49	86,91	87,05	90,93	87,30	79,65	75,83
Greece				81,11	80,79	77,90	74,12
Spain				72,80	73,20	76,92	72,77
Hungary						63,38	69,18
Latvia						77,90	68,15
Finland	76,61	76,49	85,01	77,84	73,89	67,40	67,28

	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
Montenegro							66,19
Ireland	70,98	74,34	74,26	76,45	72,88	68,45	64,84
Slovenia						79,57	64,26
France	79,92	80,00	76,62	82,35	71,83	68,43	62,36
Slovakia						79,98	62,27
Macedonia							61,87
Portugal				87,44	77,82	65,69	61,79
Czech Republic						82,79	61,25
Bularia						76,94	61,10
Serbia							60,86
UK	72,55	80,24	76,56	75,02	74,13	74,61	60,63
Estonia						64,39	60,11
Croatia							59,31
Romania						79,55	53,08
Lituania						63,97	51,05
Albania							49,70
Poland						48,40	47,04
Switzerland	71,69	68,98	64,11	52,30	47,67	43,85	46,78

1. Europe of the 16 : Democratic countries since 1945
2. Europe of the 20 includes new democratic Southern countries
3. Europe of the 30 includes new ECE countries
4. Europe of the 35 includes some countries build from the ex-Yugoslavia

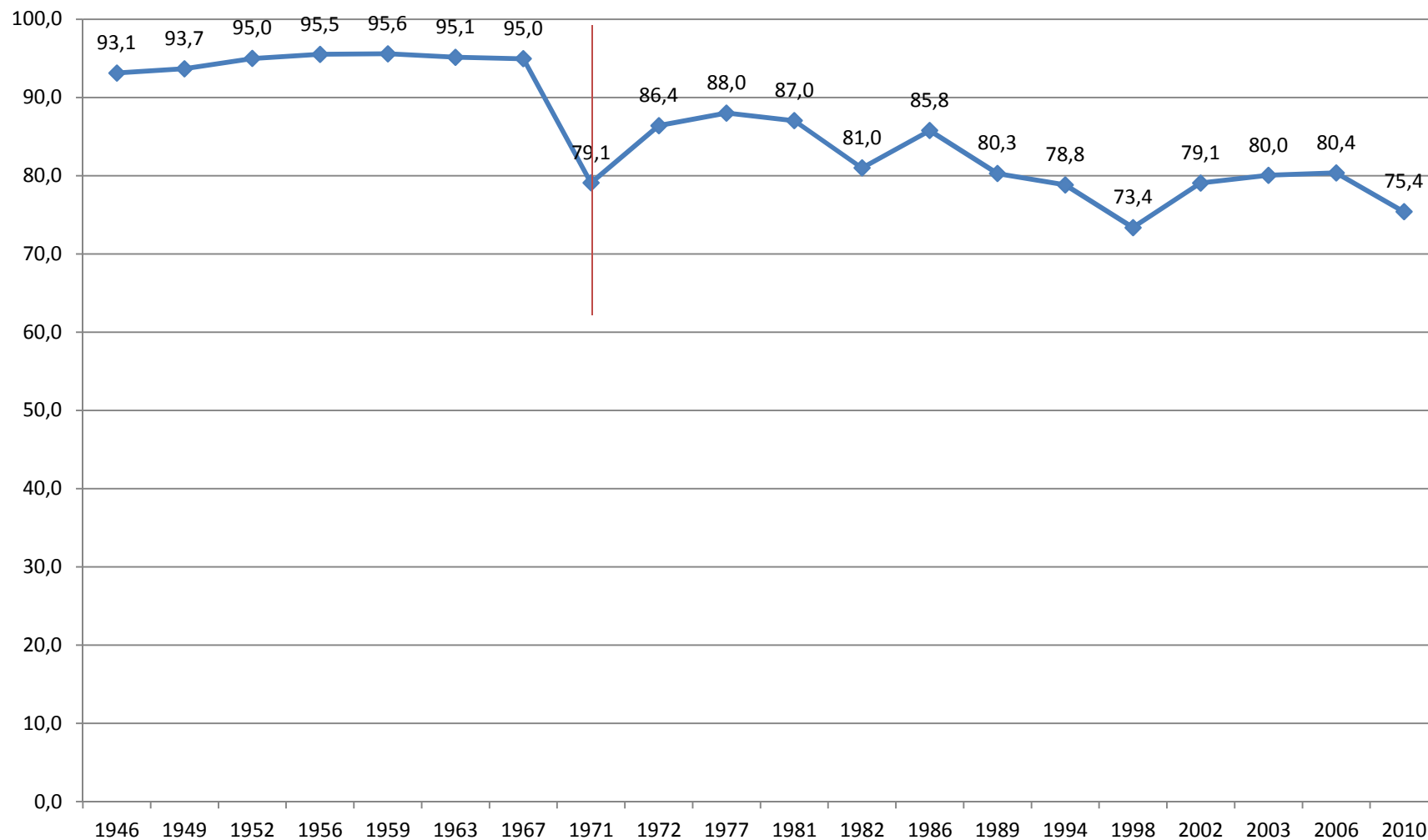
Green : turnout in countries with compulsory voting

Red : turnout in countries without compulsory voting

In case of abolishing the
compulsory voting in Belgium ?

Abolishing the compulsory vote : the case in the Netherlands in 1970

Turnout Evolution



Federal Elections 2007

In case of the abolishment of the compulsory voting, would you go voting ?
ISPO-PIOP

Always	42,7
Most of the time	14,9
Sometime	12,3
Never	29,3
Don't know	0,8
Don't answer	0,1
Total	100

Voters from Gent

The same question

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Always	43,5	48,3	46,9	46,3	50,5	52,9
Most of the time	17,5	14,2	16,4	15,2	15,3	15,7
Sometime	11,9	10,4	9,9	11,7	10,5	10,1
Never	21,6	20,9	18,9	20,5	18,0	16,0
Don't know	5,5	5,7	7,6	6,3	5	5,2

Possible impact for parties

the case of Flanders

ISPO

	Vote 2007	Always, Most of the time and sometime	Always & Most of the time	Always
CD&V/N-VA	27,6	29,4	30,4	29,2
Open VLD	18,5	20,1	20,1	20,5
Sp.a-Spirit	15,6	17,4	17,6	19,6
Vlaams Belang	18,8	16,5	16,6	15,5
Groen!	6,3	7,6	8,5	9,5
Lijst Dedecker	5,7	4,6	3,9	3,6
Others				
White/nil	7,5	4,4	2,9	2,2

The voters' point of view in 2003

Gent, Brugge, Antwerpen

	Always	Most of the times	Sometime	Never	Don't know
SP	56,2%	13,4%	9,0%	18,0%	3,4%
VLD	42,4%	17,8%	12,4%	21,7%	5,7%
VU-ID	38,9%	24,1%	11,1%	16,7%	9,3%
CD&V	56,7%	11,3%	10,2%	15,1%	6,7%
Agalev	51,7%	22,8%	11,2%	8,6%	5,6%
Vlaams Blok	45,4%	7,7%	10,1%	31,9%	4,8%
Others	34,2%	13,2%	15,8%	34,2%	2,6%

The French-speaking parties
Voters who would always go voting in the party
electorate PIOP-ISPO

	2003	1999
PS	45,30%	59,00%
MR	52,20%	57,70%
CDH	57,10%	71,30%
Ecolo	61,90%	57,60%
Total		

Why ?

At least three main possible answers

1. **Protest voters** would stop to vote → decreasing result for parties benefiting of protest votes (depends from one election to another !!!)
2. Usually, voters with a **weak level of diploma** tend to vote **less** than voters with a high level of diploma : From this point of view Greens and Liberals are always presented as possible winners of the suppression of the compulsory voting.
3. Some party voters **are encouraged** to vote by civil society organisations : CD&V voters (Church, Christian organisations, ...)

Voters who always would go voting in case of
compulsory vote abolishment
2003 : ISPO-PIOP

Primary	26,90%
Lower Secondary	35,30%
Upper Secondary	42,00%
Higher School	54,70%
University	67,30%