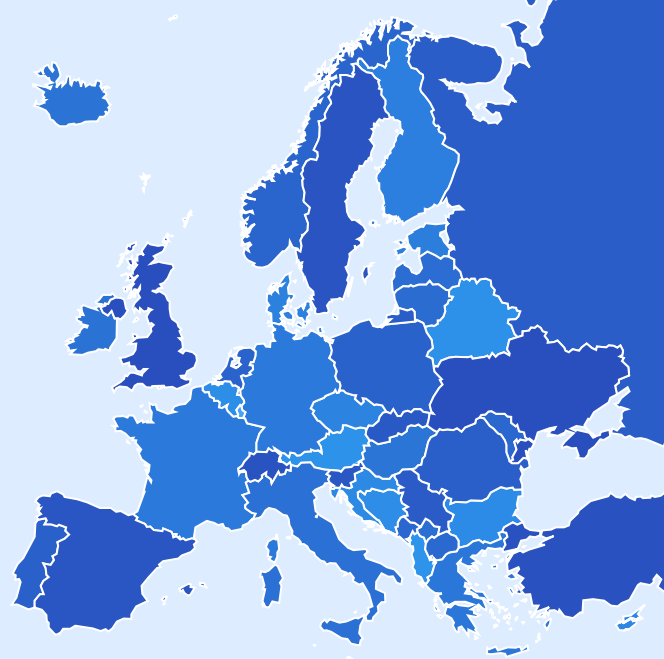


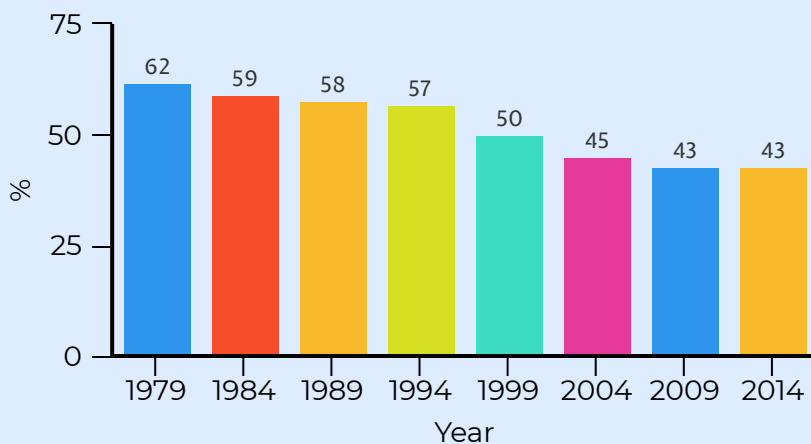
The Paradox of Participation



Explaining decreasing electoral participation despite of increasing competencies in the EU

Facts

Voter Turnout in European Parliament Elections: 1979 - 2014



"Low rates of voter participation are additional signs of democratic ill-health"

(Diamond, 2015; cited in Solijonov, p.43)

Paradox

The scope & importance of European elections have significantly increased over time. Hence, the voter has more power than ever before - However, the electoral participation rate has steadily declined since the first elections in 1979.

Developments in EU authority

- General significant increase of authority on EU-level
- Increase of competencies of EU parliament
e.g.: increased use of Ordinary Legislative Procedure

	1950	1957	1968	1992	2000	2010
Goods/services	1	2	3	4	4	4
Energy	1	2	1	2	2	3
Agriculture	1	1	4	4	4	4
Money/credit	1	1	2	2	5	5
Justice	1	1	1	3	3	3
Trade negotiations	1	1	3	5	5	5
Diplomacy	1	1	1	2	3	3

1 = exclusively national; 2 = mostly national; 3 = national and EU; 4 = mostly EU; 5 = EU only

How can the paradox of increasing competencies and declining electoral participation in the EU be explained ?



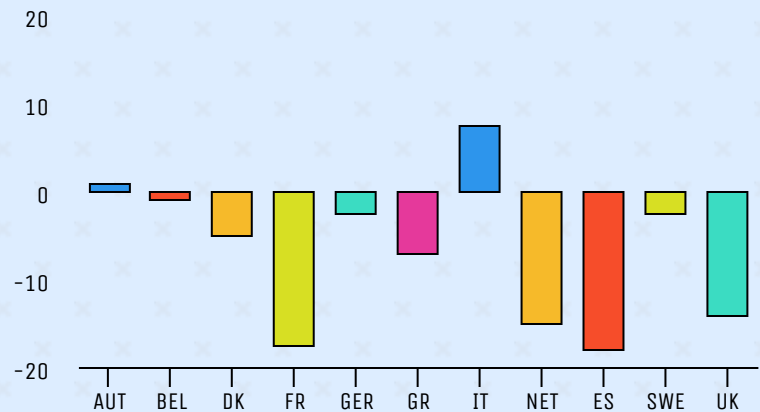
The 2nd-order election model

(Reif and Schmitt, 1997)

- Turnout in European elections is lower compared to the previously held national elections
- Parties in national executive government lose vote share
- Opposition, new, and small parties gain vote share
- National topics on the agenda in EU elections
- "Less-at-stake" theory → punishing vote

→ European elections are "second-order to first-order national elections"

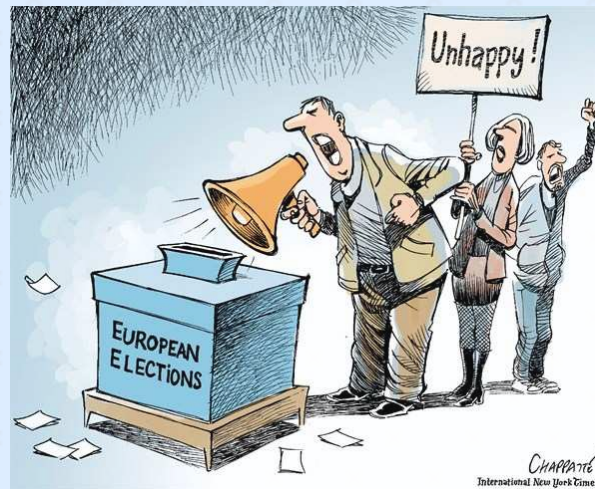
Vote share change EU elections compared to national elections (%)



Democratic Deficit

Lack of representation of the ordinary citizen

- Council takes most important decisions (EP not enough involved)
- EP not representative due to 2nd-order election dynamics



Lack of accountability of the EU institutions

- Council and Commission (non-elected bodies) are dominant
- Member State governments only indirectly accountable by national parliaments

Bibliography:

- European Parliament. Retrieved from: https://europa.eu/european-union/eu-law/decision-making/procedures_en.
- European Parliament. Retrieved from: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/en/turnout.html>.
- Follesdal, A., & Hix, S. (2006). Why there is a democratic deficit in the eu: A response to majone and moravcsik. *Jcms: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 44(3), 533-562.
- Freire, A., & Santana-Pereira, J. (2015). More second-order than ever? the 2014 european election in portugal. *South European Society & Politics*, 20(3), 381-401.
- Marsh, M. (1998). Testing the second-order election model after four european elections. *British Journal of Political Science*, 28(4), 591-608.
- Nugent, N. (2010). *The Government and Politics of the European Union* (7th edition), Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Reif, K., Schmitt, H., & NORRIS, P. (1997). Second-order elections. *European Journal of Political Research*, 31(1-2), 109-124.
- Seiffert, J. (2014). Deutsche Welle. Retrieved from: <https://www.dw.com/en/why-europeans-are-losing-interest-in-politics/a-17102465>.
- Smismans, S. (2016). Democracy and Legitimacy in the European Union In M. Cini & Nieves Pérez-Solórzano Borrágán (Eds.), *European Union Politics* (pp.339-351). 5th edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Solijonov, A. (2016). International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. Retrieved from: <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/voter-turnout-trends-around-the-world.pdf>.