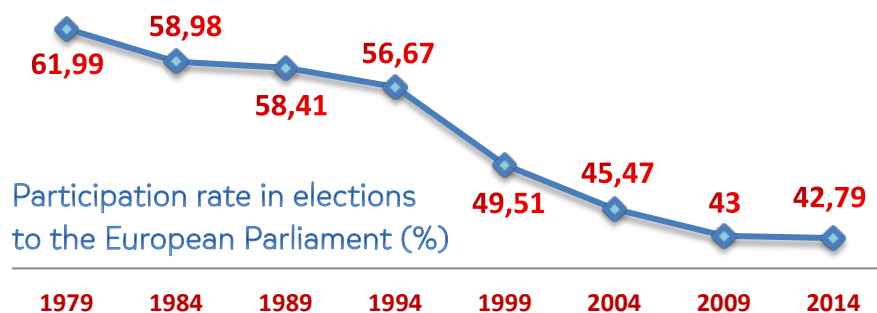


The Lowest of the Low

Turnout in the 2014 European Parliament elections in comparison with all other elections and referendums in the EU countries 1979-2014



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Summary and conclusions

- The European Parliament (EP) elections' turnout has once again been historically low – but maybe the turnout now has stabilized at a low level of around 42-43%.
- In comparison with other elections, the electorate is less interested in EP elections. EP elections reflect the highest level of apathy amongst voters.
- When EP elections and local or national elections and/or referendums are held at the same time, turnout in the EP elections increases.

The latter conclusions are akin to the view of the European political alliance Europeans United for Democracy (EUD): Elections to national parliaments and presidential elections constitute the essential democratic foundation of the European Union. The EUD believes that national parliaments are and should be the highest decision making bodies and that cooperation among sovereign states must be based on this fact.

The EUD is opposed to increasing the political power of the European Parliament. Moreover, it believes in devolution of power to national assemblies.

However, it should be noted that referendums on European Union issues with a high turnout have been held in some member states, showing that citizens are involved in and worried about the increased centralization of power in Brussels. Those voters seem not to participate in the EP elections. How can we get them to vote?

Conclusions – Suggestions for a higher turnout and voter interest

Compulsory voting, as in Belgium and Luxembourg for instance, is not recommended. Citizens must be free to express dissatisfaction by abstaining from voting. We could debate whether this is a good way to teach politicians a lesson or not, but still, the option must be given.

Voting via Internet and SMS are options that can be considered by the member States but they come with risks. It is of fundamental importance that citizens cast their ballots in a secure environment where their vote is kept secret.

The most concrete suggestion is:

- The strengthening of the political power of national parliaments, whose turnouts are highest.

Other suggestions that have been presented in the debate are:

- The member states could organise elections of their representative to the European Commission at the same day in which the EP elections are held. This would make it difficult or even impossible for other EU countries or the European Parliament to reject a country's candidate for the commission.

- Referendums on European issues could be held at the same time as EP elections. (Issues such as entering the euro zone for instance).
- Local elections and/or referendums could be held at the same time as the European elections. Historical facts prove this leads to a higher turnout. Costs will also be cut for the society when at least elections to two different levels are held the same day.
- Increase the possibility of postal voting as from three weeks before the Election Day. Voters should have easy access to polling stations close to their everyday life places during this period.

From a European Federalist point of view, holding elections to national parliaments/referendums and to the EP on the same day could be interpreted as a move to dishonour the European Parliament. However, we must ask ourselves the following question: Are there any alternatives?

Although a considerable budget was allocated to increase voter awareness in both the 2009 and the 2014 EP election, the turnout was low and the whole campaign proved to be a failure. Some fear that “European” issues will not get the necessary attention in an election campaign if local elections are held at the same time. One could argue that on many occasions several countries have had local and national elections on the same day and results prove that citizens are well aware of the different levels.

Just the fact that more than 390 million voters elect 751 members of the European Parliament (MEPs) makes the individual voter feel small and unimportant in a giant EU system. This is just how it is – smaller states have much higher turnouts because voters feel their vote has more importance.

Pre word

In this report the figures from all EP elections since 1979 will not be repeated. Instead our previous researches of the 2009 EP elections and the 2013 EP election in Croatia are recommended:

- Part I. The lowest of the low - Turnout in the European Parliament elections in comparison with all other elections and referendums in the European Union 1979-2009¹
- Part II. Composition and turnout – a social issue. European Parliament elections 2009. Part II²
- Part III. The lowest of the low: The Croatian election to the European Parliament³

Sources for this research are in general the websites of the responsible authorities for elections in the different member states. In some cases, detailed final results differ from one source to another, but usually these differences are not considerable. As everyone probably knows, final election results are sometimes a matter that must be taken to court. For example, the United States 2000 presidential election in Florida or the 2008 US Senator election in Minnesota. Election results can also be rushed to the media amid increased competition for breaking news. The results declared might not be the final figures and small differences can change the whole outcome. In the second round of the 2009 Romanian presidential election the result was contested by the opposition citing a "high number of void ballots, modified voting protocols, and massive electoral tourism". Only 70 000 votes differed between the two candidates out of a total 10 481 568 votes. Around 138 000 votes were declared invalid. But, interestingly enough it was the votes at the Romanian embassies throughout the world that gave the victory to the incumbent President Basescu. He won with around 85 000 votes in the electoral district of the Romanian embassies, which was essential to win the election as a whole.⁴ Close to 148 000 Romanians voted at the embassies in the second round, while in the first round around only 95 000 voted at the embassies.⁵ The Romanian Constitutional Court decided to recount all invalid votes, but only around 2 000 of them were revalidated. This did not change the result and sitting President Basescu was declared re-elected.

The member states of the European Union have in general more accurate records of the electorate as well as better transparency of election procedures compared with other countries in the world.

Historical election results might not always be found at the responsible authority's websites and in these cases other websites with historical election statistics have been used.

Sometimes there are variations between sources in their turnout figures, due to the use of different measurement methods. There might therefore be some discrepancies in turnout figures, but the variations are not big.

¹ <http://www.oceurope.com/attachment/EPElections2009%20Part%201%20-%20FinalFinal.pdf>

² <http://www.oceurope.com/attachment/EPElections2009%20Part%202%20-%20Final%20-%2086pl.pdf>

³ http://www.oceurope.com/attachment/oec_croatia_ep_election_2013_.pdf

⁴ http://www.bec2009p.ro/Documente%20PDF/Rezultate/Rezultate%20finale%20turul%20II/tur2_judete.txt

⁵ http://www.bec2009p.ro/Documente%20PDF/Rezultate/Rezultate%20finale%20turul%20I/P/statistici/p_judete_1.txt

Spoilt votes, blank votes or votes for "Mickey Mouse parties" are not counted consequently in the same way all over the European Union. Some countries base their calculation on valid votes only while spoilt ballots are not counted, other countries base turnout on total votes. Some member states use paper ballots, some member states use electronic voting, and that also means that voters have different possibilities when it comes to spoiling a vote.

Furthermore, the turnout among the different country's citizens living abroad is also counted in different ways country by country. Electoral registers sometimes are inaccurate. There might be a non-inclusion of individuals who are entitled to vote or large numbers of names are registered that for various reasons should not have been there.

Despite the fact that turnout figures given are only approximate, the huge difference between turnouts supports the conclusions of this paper.

European Parliament elections – the lowest turnouts of nearly all elections

The EU Treaties (Single European Act, Maastricht Treaty, Amsterdam Treaty, Nice Treaty, the Constitutional Treaty or Lisbon Treaty) have given the European Parliament more and more political clout and increased co-decision with the Council in the European Union. At the same time, voter turnout has followed a constant downward trend.

Some might argue that this downward trend applies to all elections. This is true to a certain extent, but the European Parliament is the number one loser when it comes to voter apathy.

The EP elections are one of the largest in the world in number of eligible voters, after India of course. However, there are voters that are registered in two countries at the same time if they have double citizenships, thereby possessing two votes in the EP elections. Also voters with a citizenship in one EU country but with residence in another EU country can register in the country of residence to vote in the EP elections. Double voting may occur as it is not totally controlled.

Member states of the European Union at the time of the European Parliament elections

- 1979 - EU9 - 9 Member States: Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, the UK, Denmark and Ireland.
- 1984 - EU10 - 9 Member States + Greece in 1981.
- 1989 - EU12 - 10 Member States + Spain and Portugal in 1986.
- 1994 - EU12 - 12 Member States.
- 1999 - EU15 - 12 Member States + Austria, Sweden and Finland in 1995.
- 2004 - EU25 - 15 Member States + Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Cyprus and Malta in 2004.
- 2009 - EU27 - 25 Member States + Bulgaria and Romania in 2007.
- 2014 – EU28 – 27 Member States + Croatia in 2013.

Table 1. EU 28 – 2014 European Elections turnout data

Country	Number of MEPs	Electorate	Number of vote	Number of rejected votes (invalid or blank)
BE - Belgium	21	7 948 854	7 125 161	434 450
DK - Denmark	13	4 141 329	2 332 217	55 523
DE - Germany	96	61 998 824	29 843 798	488 706
IE - Ireland	11	3 245 348	1 701 942	45 424
FR - France	74	46 544 712	19 747 893	792 132
IT - Italy	73	50 662 460	28 991 258	1 542 352
LU - Luxembourg	6	264 433	226 218	22 446
NL - Netherlands	26	12 815 496	4 782 251	28 505
UK – United Kingdom	73	46 481 532	16 545 761	90 812
EL - Greece	21	9 907 995	5 942 196	225 724
ES - Spain	54	36 514 084	15 998 141	649 492
PT - Portugal	21	9 753 568	3 284 452	243 681
SE - Sweden	20	7 359 962	3 758 951	42 173
AT - Austria	18	6 410 602	2 909 497	85 936
FI - Finland	13	4 440 297	1 738 037	9 743
CZ – Czech Republic	21	8 395 132	1 528 250	12 758
EE - Estonia	6	902 873	329 766	1 273
CY - Cyprus	6	606 916	266 891	7 977
LT - Lithuania	11	2 557 950	1 211 279	67 148
LV - Latvia	8	1 472 478	445 225	4 937
HU - Hungary	21	8 041 386	2 329 304	9 811
MT - Malta	6	344 356	257 588	5 737
PL - Poland	51	30 636 537	7 301 650	232 165
SI - Slovenia	8	1 710 856	419 661	17 590
SK - Slovakia	13	4 414 433	576 437	15 834
BG - Bulgaria	17	6 543 423	2 361 966	122 536
RO - Romania	32	18 221 061	5 911 794	345 011
HR - Croatia	11	3 767 343	951 300	29 456
EU 28 total	751	392 336 897	167 867 584	5 599 876

Sources:

Belgium: http://verkiezingen2014.belgium.be/nl/eur/results/results_start.html

Denmark: <http://www.dst.dk/valg/Valg1475795/valgopg/valgopgHL.htm>

Germany:

http://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/de/europawahlen/EU_BUND_14/ergebnisse/bundesergebnisse/

Ireland: <http://electionsireland.org/results/europe/2014euro.cfm>

France: <http://elections.interieur.gouv.fr/ER2014/>

Italy: <http://elezioni.interno.it/europee/scrutini/20140525/EX0.htm>

Luxembourg; <http://www.elections.public.lu/fr/elections-europeennes/2014/resultats/index.html>

Netherlands:

<http://www.verkiezingsuitslagen.nl/Na1918/Verkiezingsuitslagen.aspx?VerkiezingsTypeId=5>

United Kingdom: <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/RP14-32.pdf> and

<http://www.bbc.com/news/events/vote2014/eu-uk-results>

Greece: [http://ekloges.yves.gr/may2014/e/public/index.html#{"cls":"main","params":{}}](http://ekloges.yves.gr/may2014/e/public/index.html#{)

Spain:

<http://www.infoelectoral.mir.es/min/busquedaAvanzadaAction.html?codTipoEleccion=7&vuelta=1&isHome=1&codPeriodo=201405> and

<http://elecciones.mir.es/resultados2014/99PE/DPE999999TO.htm>

Portugal: <http://www.europeias2014.mai.gov.pt> and

http://www.cne.pt/sites/default/files/dl/pe_2014_mapa_resultados_a.pdf

Sweden: <http://www.val.se/val/ep2014/slutresultat/E/rike/index.html>

Austria: <http://euwahl2014.bmi.gv.at>

Finland: http://tulospalvelu.vaalit.fi/EPV2014/en/tulos_kokomaa.html

Czech Republic: <http://www.volby.cz/pls/ep2014/ep11?xjazyk=EN>

Estonia: <http://ep2014.vvk.ee/voting-results-en.html>

Cyprus:

http://live.elections.moi.gov.cy/English/EUROPEAN_ELECTIONS_2014/Islandwide

Lithuania:

http://www.2013.vrk.lt/2014_ep_rinkimai/output_en/rezultatai_daugiamand_apygardose/rezultatai_daugiamand_apygardose1turas.html

Latvia: <http://ep2014.cvk.lv/?lang=1>

Hungary: http://www.valasztas.hu/en/ep2014/422/422_0_index.html

Malta:

<http://www.gov.mt/en/Government/Government%20of%20Malta/Election%20Results/EP%20elections%202014/Pages/EP-Elections%20Ct%201-10.aspx>

Poland: <http://pe2014.pkw.gov.pl/pl/>

Slovenia: <http://www.volitve.gov.si/ep2014/en/index.html>

Slovakia: <http://ep2014.statistics.sk/EP-dv/def-en.html>

Bulgaria: <http://results.cik.bg/ep2014/rezultati/>

Romania: http://www.roaep.ro/bec_europ2014/

Croatia: <http://www.izbori.hr/2014EUParlament/rezult/rezultati.html>

Turnout figures – how serious can we take them?

There are a number of factors that show that the figures in Table 1 should not be seen as 100% accurate and final.

As can be seen in Table 1 the turnout all over EU28 should then be 42.79%.

The European Parliament actually gives two official figures for the turnout in the 2014 EP elections. In the report “Review. European and National elections figured out. Special edition – November 2014”⁶ the EP set the overall turnout overall for EU28 at 42.61%. However,

⁶ http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/elections_results/review.pdf

their figures of registered voters and of those that voted in the various countries on pages 50 to 52 in their report are more or less identical with the figures in Table 1 above.

The European Parliament's website gives the turnout at 42.54% for the EU28⁷, even if the figures of turnouts for the various countries are exactly the same as in the report they published in November 2014.

But, this website does not give any information on the numbers of the electorate or number of votes in the elections of the various countries. Therefore we do not know how they got to the conclusion of 42.54% turnout. The turnout is given in a percentage format of each country and these figures are more or less the same as in Table 1 above, with the calculations based on the electorate and those that went to vote. It is just details that differs depending on how turnout is defined. The EP has no interest what so ever of giving a lower turnout than necessary, but there is a big question mark about their figures. For example, one of the mistakes in the EP statistics for about a month after the election was that they listed the United Kingdom's turnout as 35.4%. But that was the turnout based on valid votes only. The UK turnout based on total votes was 35.6%. In the UK there has been a tradition to measure the turnout on valid votes and therefore this country reports this figure first.

The differences in turnouts between the statistics from the European Parliament in comparison to statistics when taken from the web pages of the national authorities are shown in Table 2 below.

⁷ see <http://www.results-elections2014.eu/en/turnout.html>

Table 2. European Parliament elections 2014 in EU 28 – Comparison of the turnout figures given by the European Parliament and the turnout figures given by national authorities

Country	Turnout in% according to European Parliament statistics ⁸	Turnout in% according to national authorities ⁹	Remarks
BE - Belgium	89.64	89.64	
DK - Denmark	56.32	56.32	
DE - Germany	48.10	48.14	
IE - Ireland	52.44	52.44	
FR - France	42.43	42.43	
IT - Italy	57.22	57.22	
LU - Luxembourg	85.55	85.55	
NL - Netherlands	37.32	37.32	
UK – United Kingdom	35.60	35.60	Stated as 35.4% earlier. See above for explanation
EL - Greece	59.97	59.97	
ES - Spain	43.81	43.81	
PT - Portugal	33.67	33.67	
SE - Sweden	51.07	51.07	
AT - Austria	45.39	45.39	
FI - Finland	39.10	39.14	These figures include voters living abroad
CZ – Czech Republic	18.20	18.20	
EE - Estonia	36.52	36.52	
CY - Cyprus	43.97	43.97	
LT - Lithuania	47.35	47.35	
LV - Latvia	30.24	30.24	
HU - Hungary	28.97	28.97	
MT - Malta	74.80	74.80	
PL - Poland	23.83	23.83	
SI - Slovenia	24.55	24.53	
SK - Slovakia	13.05	13.06	
BG - Bulgaria	35.84	36.10	
RO - Romania	32.44	32.44	
HR - Croatia	25.24	25.25	
EU 28 in total	42.54 & 42.61	42.79	

As can be seen above there are just minor differences between the statistics at the European Parliament web site and the statistics from the national authorities. The differences are more about how to count turnout, for example on the different categories of spoilt and invalid votes.

⁸ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/sv/turnout.html>

⁹ See sources to Table 1.

First, it should be noted that sometimes there exists at least two different versions of the official results from a country. Countries can also count their votes from abroad differently. For example Finland gives two official figures of turnout – one for turnout in Finland – 41.0%, and one for turnout in total for all their citizens – 39.1%. In Bulgaria there is a question mark on the exact figures, but as can happen a voter might have casted two ballots or someone has stuffed the ballot box with more ballots.

Second, our election study includes spoilt and other invalid ballot papers when measuring turnouts. Some election studies define turnout as the total number of valid votes as a proportion of the total electorate. The different EU countries do not have a uniform election procedure. Some countries give a figure of the number of voters that turned up to vote, and for example received an envelope for the ballot paper, but that does not necessarily mean that all voters returned the envelope with a ballot paper. Therefore there can be differences between the figures in this study and those published elsewhere.

Third, the maintaining of accurate electoral register differs between the member states. There are always difficulties to maintain accuracy, for example, due to migration between districts in a country or even migration between different EU member states or, the register of the deceased might not be regularly updated in the electoral register. In countries where the authorities have the electoral register internally online it is easier to update the register. But in countries that are not so computerized it is expensive and time consuming to keep the register fully up to date.

The newest member state, Croatia, is an interesting example of the debate regarding updating the electoral register. The Croatian voter list in 2007 included 555 012 ineligible voters. According to the Croatian State Election Commission, the voter list in 2007 totalled 4 402 045: 4 002 015 voters within Croatia and 400 030 diaspora votes. However, legitimate voters within Croatia numbered 3 447 003 (subtracting 990 457 individuals younger than 18 from the 2001 census figure of 4 437 460 citizens). The discrepancy of 555 012 has never been addressed (4 002 015 voters registered, with 3 447 003 being legitimate voters within Croatia).

In Croatia's parliamentary elections, held on 4th of December 2011, there has been claimed that there were more than 917 000 non-existing voters on the voter list. Instead of 3 175 000 legitimate voters on the voter list, Croatia's voter list comprised of 4 092 323 voters (for a country of 4 290 612 people). Croatia's Minister of Administration, Arsen Bauk, admitted in May 2012 that in his country of just 4.2 million people, "over 1 million surplus voters" were on the electoral list in 2011 December's parliamentary elections.

Croatia's authorities are claiming that they have "cleaned" the list of non-existent voters, and there were 300 000 less voters eligible to vote in the EP election on the 14th of April 2013. In total 3 748 815 persons were registered as eligible to vote.

However, independent groups and election experts were still sceptical about if this cleaning up of the electoral register really has worked out. Croatia's voter lists have never been accurate according to critics.

In the EP election on the 25th of May 2014, the total number of eligible voters were a little bit higher – 3 767 343 persons were registered. It is reasonable to believe that work with the update of the electoral register still needs to be done in Croatia.

The development of the turnout 2004-2014 - Turnout variations in elections to the European Parliament

The turnout from 1979 and onwards has not been developing in a positive way¹⁰.

But also in the latest three EP elections there has been interesting fluctuations. Turnout variations between the EP elections of 2004, 2009, and 2014 are in some member states quite easy to explain as can be seen in Table 2 below.

As can be seen in Table 1 the total electorate of the EU28 in May 2014 was 392 336 897, of which 167 867 584 voted. This gives a turnout of 42.79%, but the official figure for turnout from the European Parliament is 42.54%.¹¹

According to the figures we presented autumn 2009 in part I of “The lowest of the low - Turnout in the European Parliament elections in comparison with all other elections and referendums in the European Union 1979-2009” the electorate of the EU27 was 387 931 840, of which 166 163 415 voted, giving a turnout of around 42.83%. The official figure from the European Parliament gives the turnout to be around 43%. It can happen that some member states have revised their figures after these figures were collected.

In principle the turnout in 2014 was more or less the same as the turnout in the 2009 EP elections. If the European Parliament continues with big promotion campaigns to get the election campaign in the media and in to the awareness of the citizens of the different EU countries then this level of turnout might be maintained. If more and more countries, especially the bigger ones with a considerable number of voters, held other elections the same day as the EP elections the turnout can be increased, see Table 2 below.

As can be seen in Table 3 below, the turnout in the EP elections increased considerably when referendums were held the same day. Denmark is an example of this. Their turnouts in the EP elections of 2009 and 2014 beat all the turnouts of the EP elections 1979 to 2004. Berlin, Germany, is another example. They held a referendum at the same day as the EP election in 2014 and the turnout beat the turnout of the three previous EP elections in Berlin with a good margin of more than six percentage points.

In Lithuania there was a big dip in turnout 2009 when the presidential election was not held at the same day as the EP election.

¹⁰ See Table 2 in the Lowest of the low report from the EP elections 2009 shows.

¹¹ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/en/election-results-2014.html>

In Latvia it was the opposite – a record high turnout in 2009 when local elections was held at the same day as EP elections.

Other examples from the 1990's are as follows:

Ireland got an increased turnout of 6.3 percentage points in the 1999 EP elections, in comparison with the 1994 EP elections, when they started to hold local elections at the same day as the EP elections.

The United Kingdom got an increased turnout of 14.5 percentage points in 2004 EP elections, in comparison with the 1999 EP elections, when they started to hold local elections at the same day as the EP elections. Though in the United Kingdom there are not local elections all over the country in one year, in general the local elections are partial and one third of the local council is totally renewed.

Table 3. Turnout in the European parliament elections 2004-2014 per member state (percent).

	2004	2009	2014	Remarks
BE	90.81	90.39	89.64	2004 and 2009: Regional elections at the same day 2014: National and regional elections at the same day
DK	47.89	59.54	56.32	2009 and 2014: Referendum the same day
DE	43	43.3	48.14	2004: Local elections in 6 (of 16) Bundesländern and State election in one Bundesland. 2009: Local elections in 6 (of 16) Bundesländern, partial local in one Bundesland. 2014: Local elections in 11 (of 16) Bundesländern, partial local in one Bundesland, and a local referendum in Berlin
IE	58.58	58.64	52.44	2004, 2009, and 2014: Local elections the same day
FR	42.76	40.63	42.43	
IT	71.72	65.05	57.22	2004, 2009, and 2014: Partial local elections and in 2014 regional elections in two regions
LU	91.35	90.75	85.55	2004 and 2009: National elections the same day
NL	39.26	36.75	37.32	
UK	38.52	34.7	35.6	2004, 2009, and 2014: Partial local elections the same day. In 2004 all-postal votes in four English regions. In 2004 local elections in Wales at the same day.
EL	63.22	52.61	59.97	2014: Local elections second round the same day
ES	45.14	44.9	43.81	
PT	38.6	36.78	33.67	
SE	37.85	45.53	51.07	From 2009 made pre-poll stations more accessible.
AT	42.43	45.97	45.39	
FI	39.43	40.3	39.14	
CZ	28.3	28.2	18.20	
EE	26.83	43.9	36.52	From 2009 easier access to vote (e-voting)
CY	72.5	59.4	43.97	
LT	48.38	20.98	47.35	2004: first round presidential election the same day 2014: second round presidential election the same day
LV	41.34	53.7	30.24	2009: Local elections the same day
HU	38.5	36.31	28.97	
MT	82.39	78.79	74.80	2004 and 2009: Partial local elections on the same day***
PL	20.87	24.53	23.83	
SI	28.35	28.33	24.53	
SK	16.97	19.64	13.06	
BG*	29.22	38.92	36.10	
RO*	29.47	27.67	32.44	
HR**	-	20.84	25.25	
EU 28 in total	45.47*	42.83**	42.79	

Remarks:

* Bulgaria and Romania held their EP elections in 2007 when they became members. Their tallies are not included in the total turnout for 2004.

** Croatia held their EP election in 2013 when they became a member. Their tally is not included in the total turnout for 2009.

*** There were partial local elections in Malta in 2014. But they only concerned 8 240 eligible voters. In the EP elections in Malta there were 344 356 eligible voters.

Some facts to consider:

* In Belgium and Luxembourg voting is compulsory.

* In Cyprus, although voting is still nominally compulsory and every citizen over the age of 18 must vote, abstention is rarely prosecuted.

* In Greece, voting is compulsory but not enforced. In the past, a Greek citizen had to present an up-to-date election booklet in order to be issued a driver's license or a passport, or else justify why they did not vote (e.g. because of absence, infirmity, or advanced old age). Nowadays, the civic duty of voting is still considered "mandatory", but there are no sanctions for failing to vote.

* Italy practiced compulsory voting from 1945 to 1993. There were no formal sanctions, only possible arbitrary or social sanctions referred to as the "innocuous sanction", but it was never formalised.¹²

Comments on Table 3

The turnout in 2014 went up in ten countries, of which two (Greece and Lithuania) can be explained by other elections on the same day. In 18 countries the turnout went down of which two can be explained by the fact that they held other elections in 2009 but not in 2014.

For the EU as a whole the overall turnout is more influenced by changes of turnout in the larger member states. For example, increased turnouts in Germany, France and the United Kingdom effects the overall turnout more than, lower turnout in Malta, Luxembourg and Estonia. For example the number of votes increased nearly 3 million in Germany, which is more than ten times the electorate of Luxembourg, or close to the total number of the electorate of Ireland, or close to the total number who voted in Portugal.

To summarize, in the 2014 EP elections turnout went up in:

- Lithuania (due to presidential election the same day),
- Greece (due to local elections the same day),
- Sweden (due to easier access to pre-vote and a hotter political environment before national, regional and local elections in September),
- Germany (due to increased number of local elections at the same day – see Table 7 below),

¹² IDEA - Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance on compulsory voting. Source: http://www.idea.int/vt/compulsory_voting.cfm

- Romania (low turnouts both 2009 and 2014, pure randomness which one of the EP elections that attracts more voters),
- Croatian (extremely low turnout in 2013 when Croatia held a separate EP election),
- France (low turnouts both 2009 and 2014, pure randomness which one of the EP elections that attracts more voters).

The largest decrease of turnout in 2014 was in Latvia (- 23.46 percentage points), which had local elections in 2009 on the same day as the EP elections, but this was not the case in 2014.

In other EU countries where turnout decreased there were various reasons. For example, in Cyprus (- 15.4 percentage points), Cypriot non-voters answered 'lack of trust in politics in general' (56%) (highest among all EU countries) and 'vote has no consequences' (25%) (Cypriot non-voters second with this motivation of all EU countries non-voters) in the TNS Opinion poll.

The changes in the 2014 turnouts follow the same pattern as changes in turnouts in the EU countries in the 2009 EP elections. Then the turnout increased in:

- Estonia (easier access to vote with internet voting),
- Latvia (local elections the same day),
- Denmark (national referendum at the same day),
- Bulgaria (low turnouts both 2007 and 2009, pure randomness which one of the EP elections that attracts more voters),
- Sweden (easier access to vote and Pirate Party mobilized new voters),
- Poland (low turnouts both 2004 and 2009, pure randomness which one of the EP elections that attracts more voters),
- Austria (low turnouts both 2004 and 2009, pure randomness which one of the EP elections that attracts more voters),
- Slovakia (low turnouts both 2004 and 2009, pure randomness which one of the EP elections that attracts more voters).

More money spent on promotions for the 2009 EP elections might also have had an impact on the minor increases of turnouts in the countries above, but to what extent it is hard to say as in other countries the turnout went down.

In 2009 the turnout went down most in Lithuania (- 27.4 percentage points), as they had the first round of the presidential election on the same day as the EP elections in 2004, but in 2009 the planned second round of the presidential election was cancelled when a candidate obtained a majority in the first round.

Comparison of European Parliament elections with national elections

Particularly in comparison with national parliamentary elections and presidential elections in some countries, EP elections turnout scores poorly.

Table 4. Comparison – Turnout in the European parliament elections in May 2014 compared with the closest national parliamentary and presidential elections in the member states (year and month for national elections between brackets). (Percent)

	EP 2014	National Parliament elections	National presidential elections 1st round	National presidential elections 2nd round
BE ¹³	89.64	89.68 (2014-05)	-	-
DK ¹⁴	56.32	87.74 (2011-09)	-	-
DE	48.14	71.5 (2013-09)	-	-
IE	52.44	69.9 (2011-02)	56.11 (2011-10)	-
FR	42.43	57.22 (2012-06) ¹⁵	80.35 (2012-04)	79.48 (2012-05)
IT	57.22	75.20/75.22 (2013-02) ¹⁶	-	-
LU ¹⁷	85.55	91.15 (2013-10)	-	-
NL	37.32	74.57 (2012-09)	-	-
UK	35.60	65.1 (2010-05) ¹⁸	-	-
EL	59.97	62.49 (2012-06)	-	-
ES	43.81	68.94 (2011-11)	-	-
PT	33.67	58.03 (2011-06)	46.52 (2011-01)	-
SE	51.07	85.81 (2014-09)	-	-
AT	45.39	74.91 (2013-09)	53.57 (2010-04)	-
FI ¹⁹	39.14	67.4 (2011-04)	69.7 (2012-01)	66.0 (2012-02)
CZ	18.20	59.48 & 38.62/34.90/44.59 (2013-10 & 2014-10/2012-10/2010-10) ²⁰	61.31 (2013-01)	59.11 (2013-01)
EE	36.52	63.53 (2011-03)	-	-
CY	43.97	78.70 (2011-05)	83.14 (2013-02)	81.58 (2013-02)
LT	47.35	52.93 (2012-10) ²¹	52.23 (2014-05)	47.37 (2014-05) ²²
LV	30.24	58.85 (2014-10)	-	-
HU	28.97	61.8 (2014-04) ²³	-	-
MT	74.80	93.0 (2013-03)	-	-

¹³ Belgium has compulsory voting.

¹⁴ Denmark – in the national parliament election of 2011-09 the turnouts in Greenland and the Faroe Islands are excluded.

¹⁵ France – Parliament election 2012-06 First round.

¹⁶ Italy – Parliament election is for Chamber of Deputies/Senate, turnout in Italy only, Italians abroad not included.

¹⁷ Luxembourg has compulsory voting.

¹⁸ United Kingdom – Turnout on valid votes only.

¹⁹ Finland – Voters living abroad included. Turnout figures only for voters living in Finland was 41.0% EP election 2014-05, 70.5% national parliament election 2011-04, 72.8% presidential election first round 2012-01, 68.9% presidential election second round 2012-02.

²⁰ Czech Republic – The first figure is turnout in the election (2013-10) to the Chamber of Deputies, which is elected for a four year term by proportional representation with a 5% election threshold. The second turnout figures are for the three latest elections to the Senate. The members of the Senate are elected in single-seat constituencies elected by two-round runoff voting for a six year term, with one third renewed every even year in the autumn. The election turnouts for the Senate elections are for the first round.

²¹ Lithuania – National parliament election first round.

²² Lithuania – May 2014 Second round of presidential election held on the same day as the election to the European Parliament.

²³ Hungary – National parliament election first round

	EP 2014	National Parliament elections	National presidential elections 1st round	National presidential elections 2nd round
PL	23.83	48.92 (2011-10)	54.94 (2010-06)	55.31 (2010-07)
SI	24.53	51.73 (2014-07) ²⁴	48.41 (2012-11)	42.41 (2012-12)
SK	13.06	59.11 (2012-03)	43.4 (2014-03)	50.5 (2014-03)
BG	36.10	51.05 (2014-10) ²⁵	52.29 (2011-10)	48.25 (2011-10)
RO	32.44	41.76 (2012-12)	53.18 (2014-11)	64.11 (2014-11)
HR*	25.25	54.32 (2011-12)	43.96 (2009-12)	50.13 (2010-01)
EU 28 Average	43.32	67.0 ²⁶	57.1	58.7

Remarks:

* Observe that the turnout of 43.32% for the whole EU 28 is the average between the 28 states, not of the percentage of participating voters in EU 28. The turnout all over EU 28 was 42.79% when 167 867 584 persons voted out of an electorate of 392 336 897 (see Table 1).

* The presidential elections in the EU member states have different political importance. The presidential elections in France, Cyprus and Romania are among the most important while in Austria and Ireland the president is a figurehead.

Comments on Table 4

In comparison to the average turnout for national parliament and presidential elections we did in 2009²⁷ the average turnout in the member states has gone down slightly, mostly in the presidential elections, during the last five years.

Index – comparison of turnout

To better illustrate the difference in proportions between turnouts in national parliament and presidential elections in comparison with EP elections an index table has been made from Table 4. As an example the table should be read like this; the proportion of voters in the May 2014 Danish EP election was only 64.2% of the turnout in the Danish national parliament election in September 2011.

²⁴ Slovenia – Previous national parliament election in 2011-12 had a turnout of 65.6%.

²⁵ Bulgaria – Previous national parliament election had a turnout of 51.33% (2013-05).

²⁶ The elections to the Senates in Italy and the Czech Republic are excluded from the average figure for turnout in national parliament elections in the EU 28.

²⁷ See Table 4 in Part I. The lowest of the low - Turnout in the European Parliament elections in comparison with all other elections and referendums in the European Union 1979-2009.

<http://www.oecieurope.com/attachment/EPElections2009%20Part%201%20-%20FinalFinal.pdf>

Table 5. 2014 European election turnout indexed to member states national and presidential elections.

	National Parliament elections	National Presidential elections 1st round	National Presidential elections 2nd round
BE	100 (2014-05)	-	-
DK	64.2 (2011-09)	-	-
DE	67.3 (2013-09)	-	-
IE	75.0 (2011-02)	93.5 (2011-10)	-
FR	74.2 (2012-06)	52.8 (2012-04)	53.4 (2012-05)
IT	76.1/76.1 (2013-02)	-	-
LU	93.9 (2013-10)	-	-
NL	50.0 (2012-09)	-	-
UK	54.7 (2010-05)	-	-
EL	96.0 (2012-06)	-	-
ES	63.5 (2011-11)	-	-
PT	58.0 (2011-06)	72.4 (2011-01)	-
SE	59.5 (2014-09)	-	-
AT	60.6 (2013-09)	84.7 (2010-04)	-
FI	58.1 (2011-04)	56.2 (2012-01)	59.3 (2012-02)
CZ	30.6 & 47.1/52.1/40.8 (2013-10 & 2014-10/2012-10/2010-10)	29.7 (2013-01)	30.8 (2013-01)
EE	57.5 (2011-03)	-	-
CY	55.9 (2011-05)	52.9 (2013-02)	53.9 (2013-02)
LT	89.5 (2012-10)	90.7 (2014-05)	100 (2014-05)
LV	51.4 (2011-09)	-	-
HU	46.9 (2014-04)	-	-
MT	80.4 (2013-03)	-	-
PL	48.7 (2011-10)	43.4 (2010-06)	43.1 (2010-07)
SI	47.4 (2014-07)	50.7 (2012-11)	57.8 (2012-12)
SK	22.1 (2012-03)	30.1 (2014-03)	25.9 (2014-03)
BG	70.7 (2013-05)	69.0 (2011-10)	74.8 (2011-10)
RO	77.7 (2012-12)	61.0 (2014-11)	50.6 (2014-11)
HR*	46.5 (2011-12)	57.4 (2009-12)	50.4 (2010-01)
EU 28 Average	64.7	75.9	73.8

Comment on Table 5

The smallest difference between turnouts in the EP elections and national parliament and presidential elections are of course in countries which, as mentioned above, have other elections the same day as the EP elections. When those countries are excluded it can be noted that in Austria there is not so much difference between the turnout in their latest presidential election and their 2014 EP election. But the president in Austria is mostly a ceremonial figurehead. Malta also has relatively a lower difference in turnout between national parliament and EP elections due to their high turnout overall.

The biggest differences in turnout between national elections and EP elections have been Slovakia and the Czech Republic. They have record low turnouts in EP elections but in national elections their turnouts are similar to other countries with low turnouts.

Why do voters abstain from casting their ballots?

As after the 2009 EP elections TNS Opinion made a survey just after the 2014 EP elections.²⁸ According to the survey the main reasons given by citizens who went to the polls were, as in 2009: to do their duty as a citizen, because they always vote, or to support a political party to which they felt close. These 'traditional' reasons were immediately followed by specifically European reasons: to show their support for the EU, because they 'feel European or citizen of the EU', and because 'you can make things change by voting in the European elections'. Following the entry into force of the institutional provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon, a new item was entered on the list given to respondents who voted on 25 May 2014: 'To influence the choice of President of the European Commission'.

On average, 5% of voters chose this item from among the three answers they could give as a reason for voting. It is interesting to note that in three countries, this figure reached or exceeded 10%: in Austria (12%), Germany (10%) and Luxembourg (10%). Not surprising as these three countries are more or less the home turfs of the two leading candidates from the EPP and the PES.

With regard to the most popular reasons among non-voters, as in 2009, they related to a lack of trust and interest in politics in general: 'lack of trust in or dissatisfaction with politics in general', 'not interested in politics', and 'vote has no consequences or vote does not change anything'.

The trust voters have in the EU institutions is diminishing. There is less trust in 15 member states compared to 2009. This is particularly the case in some of the countries which have been the most severely affected by the crisis, such as Greece, Spain, Italy, Portugal and France. Thus, 43% expressed their trust in the EU institutions. In the 2009 post-election survey this figure was 50%. 55% of voters trust the EU institutions against 35% of non-voters. 52% (+12) of EU citizens do not trust the EU institutions.

The gap between male voting and female voting is getting wider and is now 4 percentage points, compared to 2 percentage points in 2009. Most important of all, as in 2009, there was a big divide on the basis of occupational category: managers and the self-employed were more engaged in the European elections and have more trust in the European Union. In contrast, the unemployed, manual workers and homemakers had the lowest turnout rates.

There was a more pronounced difference between the different age groups. The youngest Europeans (18-24) are more positive about the European Union than the oldest (55+), even

²⁸ 2014 post-election survey. European Elections 2014. Analytical overview + Socio-demographic annex. Coverage: EU28. Population: 27 331 EU citizens of voting age (aged 18 and over or 16 and over in Austria). Methodology: Face-to-face (CAPI). Fieldwork: 30 May - 27 June 2014, carried out by TNS opinion

though far fewer of them turned out to vote. Turnout was again highest among the oldest respondents. Some 51% of the 55+ group voted in the European elections, while only 28% did in the 18-24 age group. This is relatively unchanged from 2009.

Turnout was highest among managers (53%), the self-employed (52%) and retired people (50%), and significantly lower among homemakers (37%), students (37%), manual workers (35%) and the unemployed (31%). There was, however, an increase in participation among the unemployed and students (+3) and a significant fall among homemakers (-5).

There are clear differences according to age and occupational category when it comes to the time at which the voting choice is made, but almost no difference by gender.

Young people were more inclined to decide on the day of the elections or a few days before (28%, compared with 11% for the 55+ group). In terms of occupational category, students (27%) and managers (25%) were the most numerous in making their minds up in the week before the elections. More than half of the 55+ group (57%), retired people (57%) and homemakers (54%) chose to vote in the same way they always had, and had made that choice long before the election campaign began.

Voters made their decision to vote at a later stage than in 2009. The moment they decided to vote was closer to the day of election. This is getting more and more common in all countries in different elections. A majority of voters (45%) declared that they had always voted like that. However, this reply went down by 5 percentage points compared to 2009, when it was 50%, and more people made their decision to vote closer to the day of election.

The list of reasons given for casting a ballot remained stable compared to 2009. The main reasons given by voters were 'it is my duty as a citizen' (41%, -6) and 'I always vote' (41%, +1). This was followed by: 'to support the political party I feel close to' (22, -2%).

Three 'European' reasons were then given:

- 'You are in favour of the EU' (14%, -2),
- 'You feel European' (13%, =),
- 'You can make things change by voting in the European elections' (12%, -7).

Among the following replies, three significant developments can be noted: the number of those who take the view that one can vote 'to make things change' has gone down (12%, -7), while the number of those who wish 'to express disapproval of the EU' (7%, +5) and to 'express disapproval of the national government' (10%, +5) has gone up.

The profile of abstainers was similar to that of 2009. This analysis highlights the fact that nearly one non-voter out of five decided to abstain on the very day of the elections.

To analyse the results of this question TNS Opinion used the classification resulting from some desk research carried out after the 2009 elections. The comparison with 2009 shows that there are few differences in the profile of abstainers.

1. Unconditional abstainers

Those who never vote. They account for 24% of non-voters and have increased by 2 points compared to 2009.

2. 'Considered' abstainers

Those who decided to abstain in the few months before the elections (18%, as in 2009), or the few weeks before the elections (13%, -2). Altogether they account for 31% of abstainers (-2).

3. 'Impulsive' abstainers

Altogether they account for 34% of abstainers: those who decided to abstain from voting a few days before the elections (15%, -1) or on the day of the elections (19%, +3).

4. 'Indeterminate' abstainers

These non-voters, who account for 11% (-2) of abstainers, did not know when they decided not to vote in the European elections. This figure has fallen by 2 points in comparison with 2009.

While the 'lack of trust in politics in general' was, as in 2009, the main answer given as reasons for not voting by abstainers, it is an answer which is on a downward trend (23%, -5). Nationally, it was the most popular answer in Cyprus (56%, +12), Spain (41%, +17) and Bulgaria (38%, -7). Conversely, it was not a popular answer in Denmark (7%), Belgium (8%) and Luxembourg (9%). The second most popular answer given was 'not interested in politics', which secured 19% (+2). The third most popular reason given was 'vote has no consequences/does not change anything' (14%, -3).

There were differences between voters and non-voters: 63% of voters thought that EU membership was a 'good thing', against 42% of abstainers. It is worth noting that 29% of Europeans thought that EU membership was 'neither a good thing nor a bad thing': 22% of voters and 34% of non-voters.

In the survey there is also a question if people feel attached to Europe, which is quite general. But it is a leading step to the question if people feel they are citizen of the EU. 63% (-1) of the respondents feel that they are 'citizens of the EU'. This is the feeling of the majority, albeit in rather different proportions, of both voters (72%) and abstainers (56%).

Today, an absolute majority of EU citizens say they are 'not interested in politics' (54%), but with major differences between member states, of up to 43 percentage points.

However, 37% of voters and 68% of non-voters manifest such a lack of interest.

The two most common reasons people gave for voting was that it was their duty as citizens and that they always vote.

Women more often gave as the reason that they always vote (44%, compared with 38% for men) and that it was their duty as citizens (43%, compared with 39% for men).

The proportion of the oldest respondents who cited the fact that they always vote was much higher (46%, compared with 26% for the 18-24 group). They also more frequently mentioned their duty as citizens (42%, compared with 39-40% for the other age categories).

Managers were the most likely to say that they voted to support the European Union (22%).

Managers, students and the unemployed were the most numerous in thinking that they 'would be able to change things by voting at the European elections' (15% each).

Age and occupational category can be used as discriminant variables to analyse when a decision is taken not to vote in the European elections.

More people in the youngest age group (31%) say that they never vote than in the 55+ group (19%). However, this gap has closed since 2009, from 17 to 12 points.

More of the oldest respondents, on the other hand, had already decided several weeks or months before the elections (40%, against 19% for the 18-24 age group). There is little difference between the age categories when it comes to 'not voting as an impulse', i.e. choosing not to vote only a few days before or on the day of the elections (32-35%).

In terms of occupational category, as in 2009 it was managers (42%) who were the most numerous in deciding not to vote a few days before or on the day of the elections.

A 'lack of trust in politics in general' was the main reason given for not voting among all categories except the youngest respondents and homemakers (21% and 23% respectively, mentioning a lack of interest in politics) and students (19%, 'too busy at the moment'). More unemployed and self-employed people mentioned a lack of trust in politics (30% each).

The unemployed and retired people are also the most numerous in believing that 'voting has no effect or does not change anything' (18% and 17% respectively).

According to the survey a majority of citizens in all categories regarded membership of the European Union as a good thing. This was particularly the case among men (54%), the self-employed (54%), employees (55%), the young (57%) and, especially, managers (66%) and students (64%). The only groups in which more people trusted the EU institutions than didn't were students (55% against 39%), managers (52% against 44%) and 18-24-year-olds (48% against 45%). Nevertheless, trust is declining among all categories, particularly among students (-13 points) and the self-employed (-11 points). In 2009, the unemployed were the only group where fewer than half the people questioned did not trust the EU institutions. Attachment to Europe (but how can attachment to `Europe` be defined?) remains very strong in all categories. It is particularly high among managers (75%) and students (73%). Across the categories, attachment to Europe remains relatively stable by comparison with 2009: the strongest fall was registered among managers (75%, -4), men (63%, -4) and homemakers (54%, -4).

Apart from managers and students, the majority of respondents in the various categories agreed that 'the European Parliament does not properly take into account the concerns of European citizens'. This opinion is particularly strong among the unemployed (62%), homemakers (59%) and the oldest respondents (56%). Again, there are few differences on the basis of the gender of the respondents.

Comparison to the 2009 survey by TNS Opinion

These figures above can be compared with the 2009 EP elections. One week after the European Parliament elections of 2009 a survey was done by TNS opinion at the order of the European Parliament²⁹. This survey is very interesting to analyse. First of all, a third of the

²⁹ 2009 Post election survey. European Parliament Eurobarometer (Standard EB 71.3) - spring 2009. Fieldwork 12 June - 6 July 2009. Coverage EU 27, 26 830 European Union citizens.

electors voted in the national elections but not in the European Parliament elections, 39% voted in both elections, and 22% did not vote in either of the elections. Only 3% voted in the European Parliament elections but not in the national elections.

When it comes to the profile of the voters, there is no big difference in genders, 44% of the voters were men and 42% were women. But in age there are significant differences between different groups. The older the group is, the higher the participation rate is. The same when it comes to education, the higher the level of education, the higher the participation rate. Also when the voters are broken down in various categories out of their activities there is a clear social division between voters and non-voters. The highest participation rates are among executive directors and managers (53.5%), self-employed (51%), and pensioners (49%). The lowest participations rates can be found among unemployed (28%), students (33.9%), and manual workers (35.9%).

Turnout also decreases when the electors live in a big city. The turnout in villages is estimated at 44.1%, in towns and small cities 43.0% and in big cities 41.4%.

Among those that have a strained personal financial situation and find it difficult to pay their bills at the end of the month the abstention rate are 66.1%. That was the highest abstention rate of all groups.

Compared with national elections this is nothing new. All the results above could easily fit in at voting turnouts in national elections.

Just to add some more facts to the reasons why citizens abstain to vote, after the 2004 European Parliament election Swedish political scientists asked an open question to non-voters: why did they not vote in this election?

The results were: 25% lack of interest, 32% lack of knowledge and/or information about the election, 15% stated elections were unimportant (the outcome is unimportant, it does not concern the voter, the European Parliament is too far away, Sweden has no influence in the European Union, one single vote makes no difference, etc.), 12% stated they were highly sceptical about EU membership or disappointed about the result of the membership, including lack of confidence in Swedish politicians or in the EU. In this segment the differences between the political parties were not a determining factor. 21% faced some practical obstacles that did not give them time to vote.³⁰

Opinion polls have also been done on what the voters know about the top candidates that wanted to become president of the European Commission and what they know about the European political parties.

An opinion poll done by Emnid in Germany for *Bild am Sonntag* two weeks before the EP election found that the EPP candidate Jean-Claude Juncker could only be identified by seven percent (13% among the CDU/CSU voters). And the PES, and SPD, top candidate Martin Schulz was only recognized by 17% of all voters and among 23% of his own SPD supporters.³¹

³⁰ Holmberg, Sören & Oscarsson, Henrik (editors): "Europaval", Göteborg 2006.

³¹ <http://www.bild.de/politik/ausland/europawahl/wie-wichtig-ist-die-europawahl-wirklich-35912854.bild.html>

An opinion poll done in 15 countries directly after the EP election for the European political party AECR (Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists) showed that only 8.2% of respondents were able to name the European People's Party's lead candidate, Jean Claude Juncker. Awareness of the candidates in general was also low: only 13.6% of the respondents could name at least one of the candidates.

Furthermore, even when prompted with all the candidate names, around half of respondents (48.3%) could not recognise the candidates nominated by the European political parties (59.4% of non-voters). Naturally, knowledge of the candidates and the process was significantly higher in countries with a national candidate. In countries where there was no national candidate, ignorance remained high. Juncker was known among 78% of the respondents in Luxemburg (rather low when he has been a leading politician there for decades), but on average by only 22.2% of those from the other 14 countries polled.

The most recognisable candidate was the PES candidate Martin Schulz (30.3%) while Jean-Claude Juncker was recognised by 25.9%. Least known was the female Green candidate Ska Keller (5%).

Also, awareness of political parties at the European level was very low – less than 9% were able to recall one of the European level political parties. 44% of respondents replied incorrectly, with the name of a national political party.

Furthermore, when prompted with the names of all the political parties at the European level, awareness remains relatively low – 43% of respondents did not know any of the parties (30% of voters, 55% of non-voters). Fewer than 3 out of 10 respondents knew the names of the largest European political parties. Highest recognition was the Party of European Socialists (PES) 27.2%, followed by the European Green Party (EGP) 26.1%, and then the European People's Party (EPP) 24.4%.³²

Massive campaigning for higher turnout

In 2013 the European Parliament decided to fund their campaign for the 2014 election with 16 million euros. The money controlled by the EU is taken from the states membership fees which of course have been funded by the voters themselves by paying taxes. The people who don't want to vote must pay for a campaign designed to make them support the EU leaders by raising their election turnout and entitle their struggle to gain more power.

In 2014 the European Parliament also paid grants to the European political parties, which of course also had a lot of political activities in order to get the voters to the ballot box. In total the grants to the parties were budgeted at 27.7 million euros for 2014.

There was also criticism and question marks on how the President of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz, separated his costs and resources as president when he was the PES candidate to become president of the commission at the same time. Schulz was criticized because he transformed his European Parliament President Twitter account with some 80,000

³² <http://www.aecr.eu/media/AECRAMR-European-election-poll.pdf>

followers into a campaign account. It was not seen as appropriate to get followers on Twitter through promotions paid by the European Parliament and then transfer these followers to his party political campaign. Schulz tours as parliament president of course was mixed with his campaign as a candidate. For example, he represented the European Parliament on a trip to Italy on 24th of April, in Slovakia on 30th of April and in Germany on 8th of May, just hours before appearing in an election debate on German television. Undoubtedly financial resources of the European Parliament gets mixed up with election campaigning in such a situation.

Comparison with other elections and referendums in the different member states

The 28 member states have different traditions and laws for regional and local bodies. Practice and custom for the development of referendums vary from state to state. Nevertheless, turnout in EP elections are not impressive in comparison with all other elections and referendums in the 28 member States.

After the EP elections in May 2014 there have been some elections and referendums in different member states. The turnouts in comparison to the EP elections were as follows:

- Slovenia: 8th of June a referendum on an archives law - 11.74% turnout versus 24.53% in the EP election in that country.
- Lithuania: 29th of June referendum on forbidding the sale of land to foreigners – 14.98% turnout versus 47.35% in the EP election in that country.
- Slovenia: 13th of July national parliament election – 51.73% turnout versus 24.53% in the EP election in that country.
- Sachsen, Germany: 31st of August regional parliament election – 49.15% versus 49.20% in the EP election in that region.
- Thüringen, Germany: 14th of September regional parliament election – 52.69% versus 51.61% in the EP election in that region.
- Brandenburg, Germany: 14th of September regional parliament election – 47.88% versus 46.65% in the EP election in that region.
- Sweden: 14th of September national, regional and local elections - 85.81%/82.44%/82.84% versus 51.07% in the EP election in that country. It must be added that in the Swedish regional and local elections foreign nationals registered as living in Sweden also have the right to vote. However, the turnout is lower in these groups and that affects the turnout in the regional and local elections in comparison to the national election even if all three elections are held the same day.
- Scotland, United Kingdom: 18th of September Scottish Independence Referendum – 84.5% on valid votes in turnout versus 33.4% of valid votes in turnout in the EP election in that region.
- Vorarlberg, Austria: 21st of September regional parliament election – 64.31% versus 39.15% in the EP election in that region.
- Latvia: 4th of October national parliament election – 58.85% versus 30.24% in the EP election in that country.

- Bulgaria: 5th of October national parliament election – 51.05% versus 36.10% in the EP election in that region.
- Slovenia: 5th of October local elections, first round – 45.22% versus 24.53% in the EP election in that country.
- Czech Republic: 10th and 11th of October local elections – 44.46% versus 18.20% in the EP election in that country.
- Czech Republic: Senate elections first round 10th and 11th of October and a second round 17th to 18th of October to 27 of the 81 Senate seats - 38.62% took part in the first round and 16.69% in the second round versus 18.20% in the EP election in that country. These were elections that concerned only a third of all citizens in that country.
- Hungary: 12th of October local elections – 44.30% versus 28.97% in the EP elections in that country.
- Catalonia. Spain held a referendum on self-determination the 9th of November. There is no official estimate of the level of participation due to the uncertainty regarding the number of eligible electors. Based on estimates published in the media turnout ranged between 36% and 41% in comparison to 45.92% turnout in the EP election in that region.
- Romania: 2nd of November and 16th of November first and second round of presidential election – 53.18% and 64.11% in turnout versus 32.45% in the EP election in that country.
- Slovakia: local elections 15th of November – 48.34% in turnout versus 13.06% in the EP election in that country.
- Poland: first round of local elections 16th of November – 47.4% in turnout versus 23.83% in the EP election in that country.
- Italy: regional elections in Calabria and Emilia-Romagna 23rd of November 2014 – 44.1% and 37.70% turnout respectively versus 45.76% and 69.99% in the EP election in those regions respectively.

There have also been by-elections in the United Kingdom and Ireland after the EP elections were held. But it has not been possible to directly compare the turnout figures. For example, the by-election to the House of Commons on the 5th of June reached a turnout of 52.79%. But for the EP election we only have the turnout for the larger area (the lower-tier Council area) of Newark & Sherwood, which had a turnout of 36.0% in the EP elections.

As can be noted from above the EP election turnouts in May 2014 can only beat turnouts in referendums that have delimited political in issues or with local or regional elections that are only partial in an EU country.

Table 6. Comparison – Turnout in the 2014 European parliament elections compared with the closest regional and local elections and referendums since 2008 in the member states. (Percent)

Country & Region	EP 2014	Regional elect	Local elect	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum
BE-Brux	83.53	83.62 (2014-05) ³³	82.86 (2012-10)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
BE-Fland	91.38	92.53 (2014-05)	- (2012-10) ³⁴	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
BE – Wall	87.89	87.88 (2014-05)	84.53 (2012-10) ³⁵	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
BE – Germansp community	86.34	86.38 (2014-05)	- ³⁶	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DK	56.32	71.8 (2013-11)	71.8 (2013-11) ³⁷	55.85 (2014-05) ³⁸	58.3 (2009-06)					
DE – Brandenb	46.65	47.88 (2014-09) ³⁹	46.2 (2014-05) ⁴⁰							
DE – Schleswig-Holstein	43.3	60.18 (2012-05)	46.7 (2013-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DE – Saarl	54.1	56.6 (2012-03)	52.4 (2014-05) ⁴¹	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DE – Sachsen	49.2	49.15 (2014-08) ⁴²	48.9 (2014-05) ⁴³	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DE – Thür	51.6	52.7 (2014-09) ⁴⁴	51.4 (2014-05) ⁴⁵	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

³³ Belgium has compulsory voting and had elections to the national parliament and the regional parliaments on the same day as elections to the European Parliament.

³⁴ Belgium, Flanders – No figures at regional level has been given.

³⁵ Belgium, Wallonia - Local election figures for Wallonia is not totally comparable with regional elections or EP elections due to that the German speaking community is included in the Wallonia figures. However, the voters in the German speaking community are a small part of the number of total voters in Wallonia. In the EP election 2014 Wallonia had an electorate of around 2.5 million, while the German speaking community had around 50 000 registered voters.

³⁶ Belgium, German speaking community – Local election figures for the German speaking community is not comparable with regional elections or EP elections due to that the German speaking community is included in the Wallonia figures.

³⁷ Denmark – The regional and local elections were held the same day.

³⁸ Denmark – Both referendums in the table in 2014 and 2009 were held on the same days as the election to the European Parliament.

³⁹ Germany, Brandenburg – In previous regional election 2009-09 the turnout was 67.0%. But then the regional elections were held on the same day as the elections to the German Bundestag.

⁴⁰ Germany, Brandenburg – Local elections were held on the same day as the elections to the European Parliament.

⁴¹ Germany, Saarland - Local elections were held on the same day as the elections to the European Parliament.

⁴² Germany, Sachsen – Previous regional election in 2009-08 had a turnout of 52.2%.

⁴³ Germany, Sachsen - Local elections were held on the same day as the elections to the European Parliament.

⁴⁴ Germany, Thüringen – Previous regional election in 2009-08 had a turnout of 56.2%.

Country & Region	EP 2014	Regional elect	Local elect	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum
DE – Hessen	42.2	73.2 (2013-09) ⁴⁶	47.7 (2011-03) ⁴⁷	48.85 (2011-03) ⁴⁸	-	-	-	-	-	-
DE – Bayern	40.9	63.6 (2013-09)	55.0 (2014-03)	63.15 (2013-09) ⁴⁹	37.70 (2010-07)	-	-	-	-	-
DE – Hamburg	43.5	57.3 (2011-02)	40.9 (2014-05) ⁵⁰	68.7 (2013-09) ⁵¹	39.31 (2010-07)	-	-	-	-	-
DE – Niedersach	49.1	64.7 (2013-01)	52.5 (2011-09) ⁵²	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DE – Bremen	40.3	55.5 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DE – Baden-W	52.1	66.3 (2011-03)	49.1 (2014-05) ⁵³	48.3 (2011-11)	-	-	-	-	-	-
DE – Berlin	46.7	60.2 (2011-09)	-	46.1 (2014-05) ⁵⁴	29.1 (2013-11)	27.5 (2011-02)	29.16 (2009-04)	36.14 (2008-04)	-	-
DE – Mecklenb-Vorpomm	46.8	51.5 (2011-09)	46.3 (2014-05) ⁵⁵	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DE – Rheinland-Pfalz	57.0	61.8 (2011-03)	55.6 (2014-05) ⁵⁶	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
DE – Sachsen-Anhalt	43,0	51.2 (2011-03)	42.8 (2014-05) ⁵⁷							
DE – Nordrhein-Westfalen	52.3	59.6 (2012-05)	50.0 (2014-05) ⁵⁸	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

⁴⁵ Germany, Thüringen - Local elections were held on the same day as the elections to the European Parliament.

⁴⁶ Germany, Hessen – Regional election were held on the same day as the election to the German Bundestag.

⁴⁷ Germany, Hessen – In 2014-05 there were also partially direct local elections of, among others, mayors of cities and towns held on the same day as the elections to the European Parliament. But a total turnout for these local elections has not been given. When we compared the size of the electorates about 20% of the voters in Hessen had both local and EP elections the same day according to our estimations.

⁴⁸ Germany, Hessen – The referendum were held on the same day as the local elections.

⁴⁹ Germany, Bayern – The referendum was held on the same day as the regional election.

⁵⁰ Germany, Hamburg – Elections to the Bezirksversammlungen. Local elections were held on the same day as the elections to the European Parliament.

⁵¹ Germany, Hamburg - The referendum was held on the same day as the election to the German Bundestag.

⁵² Germany, Niedersachsen – In 2014-05 there were also direct local elections of among others mayors of cities and towns close to everywhere in Niedersachsen held on the same day as the elections to the European Parliament. But a total turnout for these local elections has not been given.

⁵³ Germany, Baden-Württemberg – Elections to the Gemeinderaten. Local elections were held on the same day as the elections to the European Parliament.

⁵⁴ Germany, Berlin – The referendum were held on the same day as the elections to the European Parliament.

⁵⁵ Germany, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern - Local elections were held on the same day as the elections to the European Parliament.

⁵⁶ Germany, Rheinland-Pfalz - Local elections were held on the same day as the elections to the European Parliament.

⁵⁷ Germany, Sachsen-Anhalt – Elections to the Gemeinderaten. Local elections were held on the same day as the elections to the European Parliament.

Country & Region	EP 2014	Regional elect	Local elect	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum
IE	52.44	-	51.6 (2014-05) ⁵⁹	39.17/38.41 (2013-10)	33.49 (2012-11)	50.6 (2012-05)	55.96/54.59 (2011-10)	59.0 (2009-10)	53.13 (2008-06)	-
FR	42.43	44.32/46.33 (2011-03/2010-03) ⁶⁰	63.55 (2014-03) ⁶¹	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT	57.22	-	- ⁶²	54.81-54.78 (2011-06) ⁶³	23.84-23.31 (2009-06) ⁶⁴	-	-	-	-	-
IT – Abruzzo	64.13	61.56 (2014-05) ⁶⁵	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT – Aosta Valley	49.58	73.03 (2013-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT - Apulia	51.52	63.19 (2010-03)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT – Basilicata	49.45	47.60 (2013-11)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT – Calabria	45.76	44.1 (2014-11) ⁶⁶	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT – Campania	51.08	62.97 (2010-03)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT – Emilia-Romagna	69.99	37.70 (2014-11) ⁶⁷	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT – Friuli-VG	57.63	50.48 (2013-04)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT – Lazio	56.38	71.96 (2013-02) ⁶⁸	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT - Liguria	60.70	60.92 (2010-03)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

⁵⁸ Germany, Nordrhein-Westfalen - Local elections were held on the same day as the elections to the European Parliament.

⁵⁹ Ireland - Local elections were held on the same day as the elections to the European Parliament.

⁶⁰ France – Cantonal elections 2011-03 1st round, regional elections 2010-03 1st round.

⁶¹ France – Municipal elections 2014-03 1st round.

⁶² Italy – Regional, provincial and local elections are not held at the same time all over the country but held different years in different regions.

⁶³ Italy – Referendums on four different issues 2011-06, turnout was 54.81, 54.82, 54.79, and 54.78%.

⁶⁴ Italy – Referendums on three different issues, turnout was 23.31, 23.31 and 23.84%.

⁶⁵ Italy, Abruzzo – Regional election on the same days as EP elections.

⁶⁶ Italy, Calabria – Previous regional election 2010-03 had a turnout of 59.27%.

⁶⁷ Italy, Emilia-Romagna – Previous regional election 2010-03 had a turnout of 68.07%.

⁶⁸ Italy, Lazio – Regional election on the same days as the national parliament elections.

Country & Region	EP 2014	Regional elect	Local elect	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum
IT – Lombardy	66.44	76.74 (2013-02) ⁶⁹	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT – Marches	65.60	62.77 (2010-03)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT – Molise	54.75	61.63 (2013-02)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT – Piedmont	67.44	66.43 (2014-05) ⁷⁰	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT – Sardinia	42.0	52.34 (2014-02)	-	35.5 (2012-05)	59.98 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-
IT – Sicily	42.88	47.41 (2012-10)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT – Bolzano	52.26	77.7 (2013-10)	-	26.8 (2014-02)	38.2-37.8 (2009-10) ⁷¹	-	-	-	-	-
IT – Trento	53.10	62.82 (2013-10)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT – Tuscany	66.71	60.71 (2010-03)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT – Umbria	70.5	65.39 (2010-03)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT – Veneto	63.93	66.42 (2010-03)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LU	85.55	-	- (2011-10) ⁷²	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
NL	37.32	55.97 (2011-03)	54.0 (2014-03)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
UK	35.60 ⁷³	-	35,3/31/32 (2014-05/2013-05/2012-05)	42.2 (2011-05) ⁷⁴	-	-	-	-	-	-

⁶⁹ Italy, Lombardy - Regional election on the same days as the national parliament elections.

⁷⁰ Italy, Piedmont – Regional election on the same days as EP elections.

⁷¹ Italy – Bolzano – Referendums on five different issues 2009-10, turnout was 37.9, 37.9, 37.8, 38.1, and 38.2%. The referendum questions did not reach the necessary quorum of 50% participation so the result was not valid.

⁷² Luxembourg – No national figure for turnout in the local elections have been given.

⁷³ United Kingdom – Turnout including invalid votes. Turnout when only valid votes are counted were 36.4%. United Kingdom has an old tradition only count turnout on valid votes in an election.

Country & Region	EP 2014	Regional elect	Local elect	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum
UK – Scotl	33.4 ⁷⁵	50.4 (2011-05) ⁷⁶	40 (2012-05)	84.5 (2014-09)	50.4 (2011-05) ⁷⁷	-	-	-	-	-
UK – Wales	32.0 ⁷⁸	41.4 (2011-05) ⁷⁹	38 (2012-05)	41.5 (2011-05) ⁸⁰	35.63 (2011-03)	-	-	-	-	-
UK – North Ireland	51.0 ⁸¹	55.7 (2011-05) ⁸²	- (2014-05) ⁸³	55.2 (2011-05) ⁸⁴	-	-	-	-	-	-
UK – Gibr	32.2 ⁸⁵	82.51 (2011-12)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EL	59.97	61.56 (2014-05) ⁸⁶	61.61 (2014-05) ⁸⁷	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES ⁸⁸	43.81	- ⁸⁹	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES – Andalusia	41.85	60.78 (2012-10)	63.61 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES – Basque Country	43.1	63.96 (2012-10)	63.61 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES – Catalonia	45.92	67.76 (2012-11)	55.01 (2011-05)	37.0- 41.6 (2014-11) ⁹⁰	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES – Galicia	38.67	54.91 (2012-10)	69.49 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

⁷⁴ United Kingdom – The referendum was held on the same day as regional and local elections. Turnout includes invalid votes. Turnout when only valid votes are counted were 42.0%

⁷⁵ United Kingdom, Scotland – Turnout on valid votes.

⁷⁶ United Kingdom, Scotland – Turnout on valid votes. Turnout here is for the regional vote.

⁷⁷ United Kingdom, Scotland – Turnout on valid votes.

⁷⁸ United Kingdom, Wales - Turnout on valid votes.

⁷⁹ United Kingdom, Wales - Turnout on valid votes.

⁸⁰ United Kingdom, Wales - Turnout on valid votes.

⁸¹ United Kingdom, Northern Ireland - Turnout on valid votes.

⁸² United Kingdom, Northern Ireland – Turnout includes invalid votes. Turnout on valid votes only was 54.7%.

⁸³ United Kingdom, Northern Ireland – Local elections on the same day as EP elections. No figure of turnout in total in Northern Ireland in the local elections has been given.

⁸⁴ United Kingdom, Northern Ireland - Turnout on valid votes.

⁸⁵ United Kingdom, Gibraltar - Turnout on valid votes.

⁸⁶ Greece – Turnout in the regional elections 1st round 18th of May 2014. 2nd round were held on the same day as the EP elections.

⁸⁷ Greece – Turnout in the local elections 1st round 18th of May 2014. 2nd round were held on the same day as the EP elections.

⁸⁸ Source for historical Spanish election results <http://www.historiaelectoral.com>

⁸⁹ Spain – 13 of the 19 autonomous communities /cities of Spain had regional elections on the same day as local elections all over Spain 2011-05. The turnouts in these regional elections were more or less identical with the turnout in the local elections. One regional community, Asturias, has since then held a new regional election. Four autonomous communities (Andalusia, the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Galicia) have separate regional election days.

⁹⁰ Spain, Catalonia - Referendum on self-determination 9th of November 2014. There is no official estimate of the level of participation due to the uncertainty regarding the number of eligible electors. Based on estimates published in the media, turnout ranged between 37.0% and 41.6%.

Country & Region	EP 2014	Regional elect	Local elect	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum
ES – Aragon	45.73	67.9 (2011-05)	69.34 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES – Asturias	38.97	51.15 (2012-03)	67.15 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES – Balearic Islands	35.6	58.8 (2011-05)	59.22 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES – Canary Islands	34.96	57.33 (2011-05)	62.74 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES - Cantabria	44.1	73.44 (2011-05)	73.14 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES – Castile-La Mancha	46.43	76.92 (2011-05)	75.23 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES – Castile and Leon	45.92	71.1 (2011-05)	71.39 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES – Extremadura	44.13	75.65 (2011-05)	76.27 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES – La Rioja	47.54	69.76 (2011-05)	72.71 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES – Madrid	46.45	65.86 (2011-05)	67.88 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES – Murcia	42.5	66.44 (2011-05)	67.58 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES – Navarre	44.55	67.4 (2011-05)	69.72 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES – Valencia	49.06	70.19 (2011-05)	70.52 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES – Ceuta	25.93	-	51.37 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ES – Melilla	26.05	-	58.19 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PT	33.67	-	52.6 (2013-09)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
PT – Azores	19.74	47.86 (2012-10)	54.01 (2013-09)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Country & Region	EP 2014	Regional elect	Local elect	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum
PT - Madeira	33.86	57.38 (2011-10)	52.52 (2013-09)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SE	51.07	82.44 (2014-09) ⁹¹	82.84 (2014-09) ⁹²	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
AT	45.39	-	-	52.4 (2013-01)	-	-	-	-	-	-
AT – Vorarlberg	39.15	64.3 (2014-09)	62.6 (2010-03) ⁹³	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
AT – Oberöst.	48.3	80.3 (2009-09)	79.0 (2009-09)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
AT – Salzburg	40.5	71.0 (2013-03)	64.81 (2014-03)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
AT – Kärnten	39.0	75.15 (2013-03)	80.62 (2009-03)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
AT – Tirol	35.42	60.4 (2013-04)	52.3/73.34 (2012-04/2010-03) ⁹⁴	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
AT – Niederöst	54.7	70.87 (2013-03)	71.6 (2010-03)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
AT – Wien	43.3	67.63 (2010-10)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
AT – Steierm.	42.6	69.54 (2010-09)	55.47/77.28 (2012-11/2010-03) ⁹⁵	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
AT – Burgenl.	53.7	77.3 (2010-05)	82.49 (2012-10)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FI	39.14	-	58.3 (2012-10) ⁹⁶	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

⁹¹ Sweden – Regional and local elections on the same day as national parliament elections.

⁹² Sweden – Regional and local elections on the same day as national parliament elections.

⁹³ Austria, Vorarlberg and the other states of Austria - As local elections are here defined the municipal “Gemeinden” elections.

⁹⁴ Austria, Tirol – Partial municipal elections. Municipal election in Innsbruck 2012-04 and in the rest of Tirol 2010-03.

⁹⁵ Austria, Steiermark – Partial municipal elections. Municipal election in Graz 2012-11 and in the rest of Steiermark 2010-03.

⁹⁶ Finland – Turnout calculated on citizens living in Finland only.

Country & Region	EP 2014	Regional elect	Local elect	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum
FI - Åland	57.3	66.9 (2011-10) ⁹⁷	64.3 (2011-10)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CZ	18.20	36.89 (2012-10)	44.46 (2014-10) ⁹⁸	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
EE	36.52	-	57.97 (2013-10)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CY	43.97	-	69.0 (2011-12)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LT	47.35	-	44.08 (2011-02)	14.98 (2014-06)	52.58 (2012-10)	48.43 (2008-10)	-	-	-	-
LV	30.24	-	45.99 (2013-06)	71.13 (2012-02)	44.73 (2011-07)	22.90 (2008-08)	41.54 (2008-08)	-	-	-
HU	28.97	-	44.30 (2014-10) ⁹⁹	50.51 (2008-03)	-	-	-	-	-	-
MT	74.80	-	83.3/ 59.2 (2013-03/ 2012-03) ¹⁰⁰	71.6 (2011-05)	-	-	-	-	-	-
PL	23.83	- ¹⁰¹	47.4 (2014-11) ¹⁰²	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SI	24.53	-	45.22 (2014-10) ¹⁰³	11.74 (2014-06)	30.31 (2012-03)	40.44/4 0.42/40. 46 (2011-06)	33.99 (2011-04)	14.78 (2010-12)	42.66 (2010-06)	10.98 (2008-06)
SK	13.06	20.11 (2013-11) ¹⁰⁴	48.34 (2014-11) ¹⁰⁵	22.84 (2010-09)	-	-	-	-	-	-
BG	36.10	-	50.11 (2011-10) ¹⁰⁶	20.23 (2013-01)	-	-	-	-	-	-

⁹⁷ Finland, Åland – Regional and local elections held the same day.

⁹⁸ Czech Republic – Previous local election 2010-10 had a turnout of 48.5%.

⁹⁹ Hungary – Local elections. The turnout in the previous local elections in 2010-10 was 46.64%.

¹⁰⁰ Malta – In 2014-05 there were also some local elections on the same day as the EP elections. However, only 8,240 voters were concerned in comparison to that there were 344,356 eligible voters in Malta in the EP elections.

¹⁰¹ Poland – Elections to provincial “voivodeship sejmiks” are held on the same day as the 1st round of the local elections. Turnout was identical with the turnout in these last mentioned elections.

¹⁰² Poland – Local elections 1st round. In the previous local elections first round in 2010-11 the turnout was 47.32%.

¹⁰³ Slovenia – Local elections, first round. The turnout in the previous local elections, first round, in 2010-10 was 50.98%.

¹⁰⁴ Slovakia – Regional elections 2013-11 1st round.

¹⁰⁵ Slovakia – Local elections. The previous local elections 2010-11 had a turnout of 49.69%.

¹⁰⁶ Bulgaria – Local elections 2011-10 on the same day as the 1st round of the presidential election.

Country & Region	EP 2014	Regional elect	Local elect	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum	Referendum
RO	32.44	- ¹⁰⁷	56.26 (2012-06) ¹⁰⁸	46.24 (2012-07)	50.95 (2009-10)	-	-	-	-	-
HR	25.25	- ¹⁰⁹	47.28 (2013-05) ¹¹⁰	37.90 (2013-12)	43.51 (2012-01)	-	-	-	-	-

Comments to Table 6

As noted in the table above, the turnouts in the EP elections are in general the lowest in comparison to regional and local elections as well as national and regional referendums. There are exceptions however they can be explained.

Out of 82 regional elections in Table 6 76 of them beat, or in some rare cases are equal to, the turnout in the EP election in the same region respectively. Only some regional elections in Italy have a lower turnout than the EP elections. But Italy is a special case as the EP elections are held on the same day as many local elections.

Nationwide turnouts for local elections are not always published and some countries also have partial local elections. A number of local elections are also held on the same day as the EP elections and the turnout differs to the turnout in the EP elections because the electorates are not identical. But out of 77 local elections where turnout is given in the table above, excluding local elections held on the same day as the EP elections, there are only four countries or regions that have local elections with lower turnouts than the EP elections. The first is two regions in Belgium, which is a special case due to compulsory voting and EP elections were boosted by being held on the same day as national and regional parliament elections. The second case is Lithuania where the EP election was boosted by being held on the same day as the first round of the presidential election. The third case is a partial local election in Malta 2012 that was beaten in turnout by the EP election on Malta. But this is the rare exception as Malta in general has very high turnouts.

Out of 48 national and regional referendums (in some cases several issues were up for referendum but they have been counted as one referendum) counted from autumn 2009, 28 of them had a higher turnout than the EP elections respectively in these countries or regions. Of the twenty referendums with lower turnout than the EP elections, ten were regional referendums in delimited issues. Eight others were referendums in Ireland, Italy, Lithuania and Slovenia, countries that quite often have referendums in delimited issues and were it

¹⁰⁷ Romania – Regional elections are held but a national figure has not been calculated as the election in the capital Bucharest is both a regional election and a local election. Regional and local elections are held on the same day.

¹⁰⁸ Romania – As local election has here been defined the elections of local councillors.

¹⁰⁹ Croatia - Regional (county council) elections are held but a national figure has not been calculated as the election in the capital Zagreb is both a regional election and a local election. Regional and local elections are held on the same day.

¹¹⁰ Croatia – Local elections 1st round.

happens that a referendum issue has quite a low political interest among the citizens. Only two referendums have surprisingly a lower turnout than the EP elections in those countries. The referendum 2013 in Bulgaria on building a new nuclear power plant had only a turnout of 20%, which is surprising as nuclear power can be a sensitive issue among many voters. Furthermore, the divorce referendum in Malta 2011 had a lower turnout than the EP election 2014, 71.6% against 74.8%. Not a big difference though but still the EP election was more popular to attend for the Maltese voters.

One election that the EP election beat in turnout was an extra regional election called in Sweden the 15th of May 2011. Due to problems with vote count in the election in September 2010, the voters in West Sweden (Västra Götaland Regional Council) were called to vote in an extra election to their regional parliament. In general Sweden has elections every fourth year on the same day for national, regional and local levels. So it was interesting to see what sort of turnout it would be when voters only had a regional parliament to vote for. Turnout in the extra regional election on the 15th of May 2011 reached 44.05%. This was considerably lower than in the September 2010 election that had 78.07% turnout. But it was also lower than both of the EP elections closest in time in that region. In the EP elections in June 2009 and in May 2014, the turnouts were 46.53% and 52.22% among the voters in Västra Götaland Regional Council. So turnouts in EP elections can sometimes beat turnouts in regional parliament elections, but it is rare. Money is not either spent in the same proportion in regional election campaigns to get the voters to the polls and in EP elections. Regional elections do not get the same attention in media as EP elections. The latter elections also give “spillover-effects” all over Europe. But in spite of all this EP elections in general do not beat regional or local elections in turnouts.

Germany – how to increase the turnout in the European Parliament elections

The number of Bundesländern that arrange local elections on the same day as the EP elections has increased over the years. In 2014 there was only three Bundesländern (Bayern, Bremen, and Schleswig-Holstein) that did not have any significant, or only minor local by-elections, at local level. Berlin arranged a local referendum that worked good to complement the EP election.

The impact of turnout in local elections in Germany on the elections to the European Parliament can clearly be seen in the 2009 EP election. Those that study Table 8 in our previous report “The lowest of the low - Turnout in the European Parliament elections in comparison with all other elections and referendums in the European Union 1979-2009”¹¹¹ can clearly see how turnout was higher in those Bundesländern that held local elections the same day. Furthermore, Table 9 in the mentioned report shows turnout in kreisen and cities in the Bundesland Sachsen-Anhalt that held partial local elections on the same day as the EP elections 2009. In kreisen that only held partial local elections, or in one case no local elections at all, the turnout in the EP election fell most in comparison to their 2004 turnout.

¹¹¹ <http://www.oeciurope.com/attachment/EPElections2009%20Part%201%20-%20FinalFinal.pdf>

Analysis of the turnout in the 2014 EP elections in Germany also shows that local elections held on the same day as the EP elections for sure has a positive impact at the turnout of the latter elections as can be seen in the table below.

Table 7. The turnout in the Bundesländern in the 2014 European Parliament elections sorted by the size of turnout and in comparison with the Bundestags election in September 2013

Increase/ decrease of turnout 2014 compared with 2009	Bundesland	Turnout in percent 2014	Turnout in percent 2009	Notes
+16.8%	Brandenburg	46.7	29.9	2009: No other elections the same day 2014: Local elections the same day
+11.6%	Berlin	46.7	35.1	2009: No other elections the same day 2014: Regional referendum the same day
+10.5%	Nordrhein-Westfalen	52.3	41.8	2009: No other elections the same day 2014: Local elections the same day
+ 8.8%	Hamburg	43.5	34.7	2009: No other elections the same day 2014: Local elections the same day
+ 8.6%	Niedersachsen	49.1	40.5	2009: No other elections the same day 2014: Local elections the same day
+ 6.5%	Schleswig-Holstein	43.3	36.8	2009: No other elections the same day 2014: No other elections the same day
+ 5.2%	Sachsen-Anhalt	43.0	37.8	2009: Partial local elections the same day 2014: Local elections the same day
+ 4.3%	Hessen	42.2	37.9	2009: No other elections the same day 2014: Partial local elections the same day (around 18% of the voters could take part in two elections)
+ 1.7%	Rheinland-Pfalz	57.0	55.6	2009: Local elections the same day 2014: Local elections the same day
+ 1.6%	Sachsen	49.2	47.6	2009: Local elections the same day 2014: Local elections the same day
+ 0.4%	Bremen	40.3	38.9	2009: No other elections the same day 2014: No other elections the same day
+ 0.1%	Baden- Württemberg	52.1	52.0	2009: Local elections the same day 2014: Local elections the same day
- 1.4%	Thüringen	51.6	53.0	2009: Local elections the same day 2014: Local elections the same day
- 1.4%	Bayern	40.9	42.3	2009: No other elections the same day 2014: No other elections the same day
- 1.8%	Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	46.8	48.6	2009: Local elections the same day 2014: Local elections the same day
- 4.5%	Saarland	54.1	58.6	2009: Local elections the same day 2014: Local elections the same day

As can be seen in the table above, the top five Bundesländern when it comes to increased turnout had local elections in 2014 (in the case of Berlin a regional referendum) but no other election on the same day in 2009. Two more of the ten Bundesländern with increased EP election turnouts had increased the number of local elections on the same day as the 2014 EP elections. For example, an increase in turnout in the largest Bundesland, Nordrhein-Westfalen, has an impact on the turnout for the whole of Germany.

All the advertisements paid by the European Parliament to boost the interest for the election, the media attention for the “presidential candidate”, for example Martin Schulz of the German SPD that was highlighted in German media – what impact did they have on turnout? At best the two different elections on the same day helped each other to boost the turnout. The turnouts in local elections and EP elections were more or less the same. The number of eligible voters is not identical in these two different kinds of elections even if they are held on the same day in a state.

France – EP election is the least popular

Of all elections in France, municipal, cantonal, regional, national parliament, presidential and European Union levels, the last mentioned has the lowest turnout.

Abstention rates in France to the European Parliament 1979 - 2014 have been the following:

1979 39.3%
1984 43.3%
1989 51.2%
1994 47.3%
1999 53.2%
2004 57.2%
2009 59.4%
2014 57.6%

The lowest abstention, 39.3%, was in the first EP election in 1979 and the elections and referendums after that in France that have had higher abstentions are the following (second rounds of elections excluded):

1988-09 Cantonal elections 50.9%.
1988-11 Referendum to approve the right of New Caledonia residents to vote for self-determination 63.1%.
1994-03 Cantonal elections 39.7%.
1998-03 Regional elections 42.0%.
1998-03 Cantonal elections 39.6%.
2000-09 Referendum on the mandate of the President of the French Republic 69.7%.
2007-06 National Parliament elections 39.6%.
2010-03 Regional elections 53.7%.
2011-03 Cantonal elections 55.7%.
2012-06 National Parliament elections 42.8%.

As can be noted the turnouts in the first rounds of the national parliament elections are down to the level of turnouts in the first two EP elections thirty years before. However, there is an explanation for this. Since 2002 the president is elected for a five year term and not for seven years as before. From 2002 the presidential election is held in two rounds in April and May. After that the parliamentary election is held in two rounds in June. Analysis has shown that some voters that sympathize with a candidate that has lost the presidential election abstain to vote in the parliament election that follows immediately after. The turnout in the presidential elections has more or less stayed at the same level over the years though. In France the voters and the media are focused on the executive political power that lies with the president, not the government or the national assembly. In more or less all other EU countries the focus from voters and media lies with the national governments.

The trend during the last thirty years has unfortunately been that abstentions in the French elections, with the exception of the presidential elections, have increased. As can be observed in the table above – in comparison with all regional and local elections and referendums during the period 1979-2014 there are only two referendums in much delimited issues that have scored a lower interest among voters than the 2014 EP elections.

Italy is the only comparison above in which the EP election turnout was high. In March 2010 13 of the 20 Italian regions (in Table 6 the Italian/German speaking region Trentino-Alto Adige is separated in Bolzano and Trento) had regional elections. In six of these thirteen regions the turnout was lower than in the EP elections of 2014. However EP elections were helped by the partial local elections the same day. But nevertheless, Italy is actually the only country where turnout in the EP elections has a chance to beat the turnout in other elections.

For other countries with lower turnouts in regional or local elections or in referendums there are reasonable explanations. Many of the cases in which regional or local election turnouts are close to the same as the turnout in the EP elections were held on the same election day. The electorate is not identical in a regional or local election as in an EP election for various reasons, even if the election is held on a common date. In the OEIC report “Part I. The lowest of the low - Turnout in the European Parliament elections in comparison with all other elections and referendums in the European Union 1979-2009”¹¹², Table 10 shows turnout variations in EP elections since 1979. When the EP elections are held on the same day as another election the result is a higher turnout in the EP election. But if the EP election is held alone, the turnout falls.

In Denmark during 2009 there was a referendum about the Succession Act on the same day as the EP election. In 2014 there was a referendum on joining the Unified Patent Court. By having these referendums on the same day as the EP elections the turnout has improved between four to twelve percentage points in comparison to the EP elections 1979 to 2004.

¹¹² <http://www.oecieurope.com/attachment/EPElections2009%20Part%201%20-%20FinalFinal.pdf>

In 2014 the turnout in the referendum was 0.47% less than in the EP election. Out of an electorate of a little bit more than 4.1 million voters there were around 16 600 more eligible voters in the EP election.

In 2009 Denmark scored a record turnout for their EP election. The referendum on the Succession Act had a turnout of 1.2 percentage points lower than the 2009 EP election. However, the electorate differed more in 2009 than in 2014. Voters in Faroe Islands and Greenland could not vote in the EP elections but they could vote in the referendum. Their turnout was low, 11.8% in Faroe Islands and 21.8% in Greenland. In Denmark itself there was 4 057 100 eligible voters for the EP elections and 4 039 427 for the referendum. The turnout in Denmark in the referendum was 59.09% and in the EP election 59.54%. Around 15 000 more voters took part in the EP elections than in the referendum. There were probably both EU citizens that could not vote in the referendum as well as Danish voters that did not want to vote in a referendum about the order of succession in the Royal Family. But in general the European Parliament could profit from those Danish voters who wanted to vote on the Succession Act and then voted in the EP election when they went anyway to cast their votes.

In Germany, a few Bundesländern have arranged state referendums. Sometimes pressure groups have been able to get their referendum request through. The issues are not always of interest to all voters. When the Berliners had a referendum about introducing statutory education in ethics/religion in May 2009 the turnout was less than in the EP elections one month later. But when the Berliners had the referendum on whether to keep Tempelhof for air transports or not in May 2008 the turnout was higher than in the EP elections, thirteen months later, although an election held nationwide (and even European wide) tends to get better media attention than a state referendum.

Bayern held a referendum (volksentscheid) on protection for non-smokers on 4th of July 2010 that had a turnout of 37.7% which was close to the 40.9% in turnout in Bayern in the EP election in May 2014.

For the case of the referendum in Sachsen-Anhalt in January 2005 on a regional issue about child care and education, which had a lower turnout than the EP election in 2009 and in 2004 in that state, a distinction must be made between these two levels. In Sachsen-Anhalt, the 2009 EP election was even helped by local elections in almost all of the Gemeinde Councils (Gemeinderäten) and in two cities and two Kreisen on the same day (see Table 9 below). It is bad for the EP election to be lower when compared to this level.

In Ireland, the second referendum on the Treaty of Lisbon had a turnout of 59.0%, which was higher than the turnouts in both the EP election in June 2009 (57.5%) and in May 2014 (52.4%). The first referendum on the Lisbon Treaty in June 2008 had a turnout of 53.1%. However, the EP election had the advantage of being held on the same day as the local elections in Ireland. In those two EP elections in Ireland that had not been arranged on the same day as another election, 1984 and 1994, the turnout was 47,6% and 44,0% respectively.

As mentioned above, the regional elections in Italy in March 2010 are more or less the only elections in EU 28 in which the EP elections have a chance to match the turnouts. It is also true that the five referendum occasions in Italy since June 2003 have had a lesser turnout than the EP elections. But it is getting closer. The latest national referendums in Italy in June 2011 had a turnout only 3.4 percentage points lower than the turnout in the EP election in May 2014.

In countries with a tradition of arranging many referendums in comparison with the average among the EU member states, the turnouts are low. Occasionally, smaller pressure groups have been able to get their referendum request through. But the issue may not always be of interest to a majority of the voters. Issues in referendums are sometimes rather specific and delimited. This goes for Latvia, Slovenia and Romania as well. It is understandable that many voters might feel that it is not that urgent to vote in a referendum about a complicated new law on how to elect representatives to the national parliament as in Romania in November 2007.

The turnout in the EP elections in the United Kingdom is now at almost the same level as the turnout in their local elections due to the fact they have been held on the same day since 2004. The last time the EP elections were held on their own in the United Kingdom in 1999, there was a disastrous result of 24% in turnout. In 2014, the turnout in the local elections increased in comparison to the previous two years. An allocation of the same election day of both local and EP elections probably boosted the interest for both elections. Local elections in 2012 and 2013 had lower turnout than the 2014 local elections. But it should be noted that these local elections were not held all over the country but were partial. One other sort of election that actually has a lower turnout than the EP elections is the Police and Crime Commissioner elections. On Thursday the 15th November 2012 these direct elections were held in most police areas in England and Wales. The turnout was only 15% overall. However, it is not impressive that turnouts in EP elections only can beat turnouts in these kinds of elections. Turnouts in national and regional elections as well as in referendums held the last five years have all had higher attendance.

The turnout of the referendum in Spain on the Constitutional Treaty in February 2005 is also lower than the EP elections in 2009 in Spain. In percentage points the EP election had a 3.1 higher turnout. But considering the fact that the whole establishment supported the yes side and only some small parties supported the no side, it was considered a clear win for the yes side already before the day of the referendum. The debate about the Constitutional Treaty got hotter a couple of months later when France and the Netherlands voted no to this Treaty. However, that a referendum, though important, had a 3.1 percentage points lower turnout than an election to a legislative body for a five year term mandate is quite astonishing – in a negative way – for the European Parliament.

In Malta turnouts in the local elections are lower, though not always. But local elections are not held nationwide but in a third of the councils every year and therefore these elections have a disadvantage to compete in attention for voters in comparison with EP elections.

“The Gap” in turnout between national elections and the European Parliament elections - Comparison of election turnouts 1979-2014

Turnout in almost all elections has decreased since 1979. It is interesting to study the difference in percentage points between the European Parliament elections since 1979 and the national parliament and presidential elections.

Some European federalist politicians have argued that the national elections also lose ground in turnout and for that reason the turnout to the EP elections should not be targeted for criticism. But in a comparison – which sort of elections have lost the most when it comes to turnout?

EP elections has lost a lot over the years but have maybe stagnated now as the turnout in 2009 and 2014 were more or less the same overall in the EU28.

In many countries other elections like regional and local elections will most likely stagnate at a turnout of around 50%. National parliament and presidential elections are more in the range of 60% turnout with some dips down to 50%.

Table 8. “The Gap”

*Comparison in percentage points. European Parliament elections turnout in minus or plus in percentage points compared with the closest national parliament, and in some cases the presidential, election turnout in each member state during these years. EP elections were in June from 1979 to 2009, in 2014 they were in May, the month and year for national parliament elections and presidential elections are given in brackets. In countries with both sorts of elections presidential elections are marked * and national parliament elections are marked **. (Percent)*

	1979	1981	1984	1987	1989	1994	1995	1996	1999	2004	2007	2009	2013	2014
BE ¹¹³	-3.2 (1981-11) -3.4 (1978-12)		-1.5 (1985-10)		-2.0 (1991-11) -2.7 (1987-12)	-0.4 (1995-05)			+/-0 (1999-06)	-1.1 (2003-05)		-0.9 (2007-06) +1.2 (2010-06)		+/-0 (2014-05)
DK ¹¹⁴	-35.4 (1981-12) -37.8 (1979-10)		-36.0 (1984-01)		-36.6 (1990-12) -39.5 (1988-05)	-31.4 (1994-09)			-37.2 (2001-11) -35.4 (1998-03)	-36.6 (2005-02)		-27.1 (2007-11)		-31.4 (2011-09)
DE ¹¹⁵	-22.9 (1980-10)		-32.3 (1983-03)		-15.5 (1990-12) -22.0 (1987-01)	-19.0 (1994-10)			-37.0 (1998-09)	-34.7 (2005-09) -36.1 (2002-09)		-27.5 (2009-09)		-23.4 (2013-09)
IE ¹¹⁶	-10.2 (**1982-02) -12.6 (**1981-06)		-25.3 (**1982-11)		-0.2 (**1989-06) -5.0 (**1987-02) +4.2 (*1990-11)	-24.5 (**1992-11)			-15.7 (**1997-06) +2.6 (*1997-11)	-4.0 (**2002-05)		-8.4 (**2007-05)		-17.5 (**2011-02) -3.7 (*2011-10)
FR ¹¹⁷	-20.4 & -24.9 (*1981-04 & 1981-05) -9.6 (**1981-06) -22.6 (**1978-03)		-21.8 (**1986-03)		-32.6 & -35.3 (*1988-04 & 1988-05) -16.9 (**1988-06)	-25.7 & -27.0 (*1995-04 & 1995-05) -16.2 (**1993-03)			-21.2 (**1997-05)	-28.8 & -36.9 (*2002-04 & 2002-05) -21.6 (**2002-06)		-43.2 & -43.4 (*2007-04 & 2007-05) -19.8 (**2007-06)		-37.9 & -37.1 (*2012-04 & 2012-05) -14.8 (**2012-06)

¹¹³ Belgium – Compulsory voting. 1989 regional elections on the same day as EP elections, 1999 national parliament and regional elections on the same day as EP elections, 2004 and 2009 regional elections on the same day as EP elections. 2014 national parliament and regional elections on the same day as the EP elections. The turnout in the national parliament elections are for the elections to the Chamber.

¹¹⁴ Denmark - 2009 referendum on the Danish Act of Succession on the same day as the EP elections. 2014 referendum on joining the Unified Patent Court on the same day as the EP elections.

¹¹⁵ Germany - The following Bundesländern had the following elections on the same day as the EP elections: Saarland and Rheinland-Pfalz local elections 1979-2014, Sachsen local elections 1994-2014, Sachsen-Anhalt local elections 1994-2014, Thüringen Landestags election 2004 and local elections 1994, 1999, 2009 and 2014, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern local elections 1994-2014 and 1994 also a state referendum, Baden-Württemberg local elections 1994 and 2004-2014, Brandenburg local elections 2014, Berlin regional referendum 2014, Nordrhein-Westfalen local elections 2014, Niedersachsen local elections 2014, Hamburg local elections 2014, Hessen partial local elections 2014.

¹¹⁶ Ireland – 1979, 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2014 on the same day as the EP elections there were local elections. 1989 on the same day there were both national parliament election and EP elections.

¹¹⁷ France - In details different sources give inconsistent figures about turnout when it comes to details. Sources: "Jean-Jacques Becker: Histoire politique de la France depuis 1945, Armand Collin 1996", and Le Mondes special editions of election results, compilations 1998, 1999 and 2002.

	1979	1981	1984	1987	1989	1994	1995	1996	1999	2004	2007	2009	2013	2014
IT ¹¹⁸	-4.9 (1979-06-03)		-5.5 (1983-06)		-7.7 (1987-06)	-9.3 (1996-04) -12.5 (1994-03) -13.8 (1992-04)			-11.6 (2001-05)	-9.5 (2006-04)		-15.4 (2008-04)		-18.0 (2013-02)
LU ¹¹⁹	+/-0 (1979-06)		+/-0 (1984-06)		+/-0 (1989-06)	+0.3 (1994-06)			+0.8 (1999-06)	-0.5 (2004-06)		+2.0 (2009-06)		-5.6 (2013-10)
NL	-28.9 (1981-05)		-34.9 (1986-05) -30.1 (1982-09)		-32.8 (1989-09)	-43.1 (1994-05)			-43.3 (1998-05)	-40.7 (2003-01) -39.8 (2002-05)		-43.6 (2006-11) -39.7 (2010-06)		-37.3 (2012-09)
UK ¹²⁰	-43.6 (1979-05)		-40.1 (1983-06)		-38.9 (1987-06)	-41.3 (1992-04)			-47.4 (1997-05)	-20.9 (2001-05)		-26.7 (2005-05)		-29.5 (2010-05)
EL ¹²¹		-0.4 (1981-10)	-3.2 (1985-06)		+0.8 (1990-04) -0.7 (1989-11) -4.5 (1989-06)	-3.1 (1996-09) -5.0 (1993-10)			-4.7 (2000-04)	-13.3 (2004-03)		-18.3 (2009-10) -21.5 (2007-09)		-2.5 (2012-06) -5.2 (2012-05)
ES ¹²²				-2.0 (1986-06)	-15.0 (1989-10)	-18.2 (1996-03) -17.3 (1993-06)			-5.6 (2000-03)	-30.6 (2004-03)		-28.9 (2008-03)		-25.1 (2011-11)
PT ¹²³				+ 0.8 (** 1987-07) - 3.0 & - 5.6 (* 1986-01 & 1986-02)	- 16.7 (** 1991-10) - 11.1 (* 1991-01)	- 30.8 (** 1995-10) - 30.8 (* 1996-01)			- 21.2 (** 1999-10) - 9.8 (* 2001-01)	- 25.7 (** 2005-02) -22.9 (** 2002-03) - 22.9 (* 2006-02)		- 22.9 (** 2009-09)		-12.9 (*2011-01) -24.4 (** 2011-06)
SE							-45.2 (1994-09)		-42.6 (1998-09)	-42.2 (2002-09)		-36.5 (2006-09) -39.1 (2010-09)		-34.7 (2014-09)

¹¹⁸ Italy – The turnout figures are for the election to the Chamber. In 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, and 2014 there were also partial local and provincial elections in a first round at the same time as the European Parliament elections. Since late 2001 Italian citizens living abroad can vote by postal ballot.

Main source for turnout figures: Historical Archive of Elections <http://elezionistorico.interno.it/index.php>

¹¹⁹ Luxembourg – Compulsory voting. The EP elections 1979-2009 was held on the same day as national parliament elections. The electorate differs, and there are around 4-5% more voters in the EP elections.

¹²⁰ United Kingdom - Turnout based on valid votes only. 2004, 2009 and 2014 there were partial local elections on the same day as the EP elections.

¹²¹ Greece – 1981 and 1989 national parliament and EP elections on the same day. 2014 local elections second round and EP elections the same day.

¹²² Spain – 1987 and 1999 local elections on the same day as EP elections. 1994 Regional election in Andalusia on the same day as European Parliament elections. Source: Archivo Histórico Electoral, <http://www1.pre.gva.es/argos/archivo/index.html>

¹²³ Portugal – 1987 election on the same day to both the national parliament and the European Parliament. There were around 143 000 fewer eligible voters in the EP election. Source: <http://eleicoes.cne.pt/>

	1979	1981	1984	1987	1989	1994	1995	1996	1999	2004	2007	2009	2013	2014
AT ¹²⁴								-18.3 (**1995-12)	-31.0 (**1999-10) -25.0 (*1998-04)	-36.1 (**2006-10) -41.9 (**2002-11) -29.2 (*2004-04)		-32.8 (**2008-09) -7.6 (*2010-04)		-29.5 (**2013-09)
FI ¹²⁵								-21.9 & -22.0 (*1994-01 & 1994-02) -11.6 (**1995-03)	-45.5 & -48.8 (*2000-01 & 2000-02) -36.9 (**1999-03)	-32.8 & -36.1 (*2006-01) -28.6 (**2003-03)		-27.6 (**2007-03)		-31.8 & -27.9 (*2012-01 & 2012-02) -29.5 (**2011-04)
CZ										-29.7 (**2002-06)		-34.3 (**2010-05) -36.3 (**2006-06)		-41.3 (**2013-10) -43.1 & -40.9 (*2013-01)
EE										-31.4 (2003-03)		-18.0 (2007-03)		-29.0 (2011-03)
CY										-18.1 (*2003-02) -19.3 (**2001-05)		-30.2 & -31.4 (*2008-02) -29.6 (**2006-05)		-39.2 & -37.6 (*2013-02) -34.7 (**2011-05)
LT ¹²⁶										+/-0 & -4.1 (*2004-06) +1.6 (**2004-10)		-30.8 (*2009-05) -27.6 (**2008-10)		-4.9 & +/-0 (*2014-05) -5.6 (**2012-10)
LV ¹²⁷										-30.1 (2002-10)		-6.3 (2011-09) -9.4 (2010-10) -8.5 (2006-10)		-28.6 (2014-10)
HU ¹²⁸										-32.0 (2002-04)		-28.1 (2010-04) -31.5 (2006-04)		-32.8 (2014-04)

¹²⁴ Austria – 13th of October 1996 election to the EP and to the Wien City Council on the same day.

¹²⁵ Finland – Please observe: all turnout figures are for citizens living in Finland only. In 1996 there were local elections and EP elections on the same day.

¹²⁶ Lithuania – 2004 there was the first round of the election of president for the republic on the same day as elections to the European Parliament. 2014 there was the second round of the election of president for the republic on the same day as elections to the European Parliament.

¹²⁷ Latvia – 2009 local elections on the same day as EP elections.

¹²⁸ Hungary – Turnout from the first round in national parliament elections.

	1979	1981	1984	1987	1989	1994	1995	1996	1999	2004	2007	2009	2013	2014
MT ¹²⁹										-13.3 (2003-04)		-14.5 (2008-03)		-18.2 (2013-03)
PL										-28.8 & -30.1 (*2005-10) -19.7 (**2005-09)		-25.2 & -26.5 (*2005-10) -29.4 (**2007-10)		-31.1 & -31.5 (*2010-06 & 2010-07) -25.1 (**2011-10)
SI										-42.9 & -36.8 (*2002-11 & 2002-12) -32.2 (**2004-10)		-29.4 & -30.2 (*2007-10 & 2007-11) -37.2 (**2011-04) -34.8 (**2008-09)		-23.9 & -17.9 (*2012-11 & 2012-12) -27.2 (**2014-07)
SK										-30.9 & - 26.5 (*2004-04) -53.1 (**2002-09)		-24.0 & - 32.1 (*2009-03 & 2009-04) -39.2 (**2010-06) -35.1 (**2006-06)		-30.3 & -37.4 (*2014-03) -46.1 (**2012-03)
BG										-15.1 & -13.6 (*2006-10) -26.6 (**2005-06)		-5.3 & -3.8 (*2006-10) -22.0 (**2009-07)		-19.2 & -12.2 (*2011-10) -15.0 (**2014-10) -16.4 (**2013-05)
RO ¹³⁰										-29.0 & -25.7 *2004-11 & 2004-12) -29.0 (** 2004-11)		-26.7 & -28.3 (*2009-11 & 2009-12) -11.5 (**2008-11)		-20.7 & -31.7 (*2014-11) -9.3 (**2012-12)
HR													-23.1 & -29.5 (*2009-12 & 2010-01) -33.5 (**2011-12)	-18.7 & -25.1 (*2009-12 & 2010-01) -29.1 (**2011-12)

Sources:

¹²⁹ Malta – 2004 and 2009 local elections in around a third of Malta's councils on the same day as the EP elections. There were partial local elections in Malta in 2014. But they only concerned 8 240 eligible voters. In the EP elections in Malta there were 344 356 eligible voters.

¹³⁰ Romania – 2004 national parliament elections and presidential election first round on the same day.

* European Parliament website (the European Parliament's table varies in details from some member States).

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/archive/staticDisplay.do?language=EN&id=211>

* <http://www.electionresources.org/>

* IDEA. Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. Voter Turnout since 1945. A Global Report (2002)

(Sometimes the different sources give inconsistent information when it comes to one tenth of percentage in turnout. A subjective evaluation has been made and it is a source to trust when it comes to final results).

Comments and conclusions about the situation in the different countries

In general the EP elections beat very few other elections or referendums in the EU28 when it comes to turnout. The turnouts in the EP elections can be exceptionally higher than some few cases of regional and local elections that are held only partially in a country or on a referendum issue that has limited interest in general among the voters.

Belgium and Luxembourg have compulsory voting and must be disregarded. Luxembourg has even had national parliament elections on the same day as EP elections (but not in the 2014 elections due to an early general election in October 2013).

Denmark – the referendums held at the same time as both the 2009 and the 2014 EP elections obviously improved the turnouts to a record level.

The local elections and the EP election 2014 that were held on the same day in Ireland, had a lower turnout than the previous 2009 elections on the same day. The turnout was down around six percentage points.

Ireland had in 1989 both national parliament and EP elections on the same day which of course led to a record turnout. The local elections on the same day as the 1979 EP election and from 1999 have of course also boosted the EP election turnout considerably. When the EP election was the only election on the day in 1984 and 1994 the turnout in these EP elections was around 25 percentage points below national parliament election turnouts. However, the presidential elections in the Republic of Ireland are not more interesting for the voters than the EP elections. The presidency is largely a ceremonial office and on some occasions all political parties in the national parliament have agreed in supporting a candidate. For example in 1976, 1983 and 2004 only one candidate was nominated and there were no need for the voters to go to the polls, the only candidate was elected unopposed.

If there had not been local elections in Germany on the same day as the five last EP elections the turnout would have decreased even more. The turnout in other elections in Germany has also gone in the same direction - downwards.

The turnout in the EP elections in France hit an all-time low in 2009 with 40.6%. In 2014 it improved marginally to 42.4%. Compared to the first EP election in 1979 when France had a turnout of 60.7%, the turnout has fallen with 20.1 percentage points. However, the turnout gap between the EP elections and the national parliament elections has diminished. The national parliament elections turnout has also fallen from 83.3% in March 1978 to 57.2% in June 2012, representing a fall of 26.1 percentage points. For an explanation of this, see the section above, under the headline *France – EP election is the least popular*. But when it comes to the turnout of the French presidential elections, little has changed when the presidential elections of 1981 and 2012 are compared (-1.6 percentage points in the first round and -5.2 percentage points in the second round). Over time, of all elections and referendums in France since the introduction of the EP elections in 1979 there are only two referendums that have had lower interest among the French electorate than the elections to the European Parliament. One referendum was on New Caledonia's status in 1988 and the other referendum was on the time period of the president of the republic (from seven to five years). It is quite understandable that there are problems in mobilising the electorate in such delimited issues. When in general the turnout over the years since 1979 have declined in all elections the EP elections have maintained their position as the least popular elections among the voters.

However, the referendum in France in September 2005 on the Constitutional Treaty for the European Union got a quite good turnout though: 69.4% shows that the electorate is not uninterested in the future of the European Union.

Italy has historically had good turnouts in the EP elections but has lost ground. Between 1979 and 2009 the turnout in the EP elections has decreased by 28.5 percentage points while the turnout in the national parliament elections 1979 to 2013 has decreased 15.4 percentage points. As EP elections are held on the same day as partial local elections, and in 2014 two regional elections, it is hard to say what interest there would be from Italian voters if only an EP election was held. The two regions that had regional elections on the same day as the EP election had higher turnouts in the EP elections in their regions than the average in Italy as a whole. Some regional elections held single handed without other elections the same day sometimes gets lower turnout than the EP elections.

The Netherlands had a low mark of turnout in 1999 with 30%. The three EP elections after that have been better, but not much. Voters cannot be said to be uninterested in European issues though. In June 2005 when Netherlands had the referendum on the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe the turnout was 63.3%, far above EP election turnout. This is a shame because the low turnout in the EP elections means that many voters that expressed their opinion about the future of the European Union in the referendum were not represented when delegates were elected to the European Parliament to further discuss these issues.

The turnout in the EP elections in the United Kingdom hit a low mark in 1999 with a turnout of 24%, 23% in Great Britain. In the EP elections of 2004 and 2009, local elections have been held on the same day. This has increased the turnout in the EP elections. But also the

possibility to cast postal ballots has an influence on the turnout. In the EP election of 2004 all-postal ballots were held in the four northernmost regions of England. Turnout in all-postal ballot areas was five percentage points higher than in other areas in 2004. In 2009 turnout fell sharply in these four regions that held all-postal ballots in 2004 but not in 2009. The turnout also fell by 10.9% points in Wales, where local elections were held concurrently in 2004 but not in 2009.¹³¹ These factors were among the most important to cause the loss in turnout nationwide in the United Kingdom in 2009. In the 2014 EP elections UK voters had to apply for postal voting before 5pm the 7th of May 2014. To apply beforehand to give a postal vote decrease the number of postal votes in comparison if voters can give a postal vote spontaneously.

In Greece the turnout increased in the 2014 EP election in comparison to 2009. But the second round of local elections was held the same day. The turnout in the EP election in Greece on the 25th of May 2014 was more or less 60%, a week before in the first round of the local elections the turnout was 61.6%. The turnout figures are interesting to compare against each other, but the exact figures should not be seen as precise and accurate. For example in the local elections of 2010 the official turnout for the first round was 60.88%. But the true turnout for the first round has been estimated at 72.8% because of the poor record keeping in the Greek electoral register which inflates the number of registered voters.¹³²

However, the EP elections get the lowest attendance by voters in Greece when it comes to turnout but the difference to the turnout in other elections is not that huge. Compared to the 2009 EP election in Greece other elections have around ten percentage points higher turnout. In the past, a Greek citizen had to present an up-to-date election booklet in order to be issued a driver's license or a passport, or else justify why he/she did not vote. Also, the political parties influence over supporters is not what it used to be and EP elections are not the highest priority for the parties to make efforts to mobilize their voters. Many Greeks choose to retain their voting rights in their family's original home, sometimes by reason of tradition, sometimes by reason of patronage. This makes it necessary for many to travel back to their native home for election day and the will to do that is of course stronger when there is a national election, and weaker when there is a EP election that feels more distant for many voters.

For Spain it is very clear that other elections on the same day boost the turnout for the EP election. The highest turnout in EP elections has been in those two elections, 1987 and 1999, when there were local elections all over Spain on the same day. Also when Andalusia had a regional election in 1994 on the same day as the EP elections, it had the highest turnout in the EP elections of all regions in Spain at 67.2% compared to 59.1% for the whole country. In the last two EP elections the turnout in Spain has been just below 45%. All other local, regional and national parliament elections are well above in turnouts. Only referendums in Spain

¹³¹ Sources: "House of Commons Research Papers 04/50 European Parliament elections 2004" and "House of Commons Research Papers 09/53 European Parliament Elections 2009".

¹³² Gemenis, Kostas: "The 2010 Regional Elections in Greece: Voting for Regional Governance or Protesting the IMF". Department of Public Administration, University of Twente, Enschede, Netherlands. 16 March 2012.

sometimes have lower turnout. When Catalonia on the 6th of November 2014 had its “citizen participation process on the political future of Catalonia”, a non-binding vote, the participation process did not have an official electorate. Turnout estimates published in media ranged between 37.0% and 41.6%, which is lower than the turnout in Catalonia in the EP election of 45.92%.

In Portugal, the turnout has gone downwards after the first democratic elections in the 1970’s. The EP elections have the lowest turnout of all elections in Portugal including the referendum in 2007. The only time an EP election had a good turnout was in the first election of this kind in Portugal in 1987. But then the EP election was on the same day as the national parliament election. The turnout in the EP election was then slightly higher in percent (0.8%) but the number of eligible voters was two percent higher in the national parliament elections.

The Swedish voters used to vote in September. In 2014, the EP elections were scheduled for May instead of June, which was more comfortable for the Swedish voters. An election held in June is uncomfortable for an election when it is at the same time as the school year ends and the short Swedish Summer has started. Also, Sweden is one of the few countries in the world that has a single common election day for all other political levels of decision making with national, regional and local elections on the same day in September, first every third, now every fourth year, since 1970. Due to these reasons Sweden has one of the largest discrepancies between national parliament elections turnout and EP elections turnout. The turnout improved in the EP elections of 2009 and 2014. Probably better conditions for pre-voting were the main reason for that. Voters could in 2014 pre-vote from the 7th of May before the day of election the 25th of May, for example, in the public libraries all over Sweden (voting card could be printed out directly for voters). However, in 2009 the success of the Pirate Party, to a certain extent, was based on young male voters, who usually do not vote in EP elections. In 2014 a hotter political climate was built up before the national election in September, which might also have had a mobilising effect on some voters. Also, the success of the Feminist Initiative in the 2014 EP election probably attracted new voters, especially among women. However, the Pirate Party almost fell back in obscurity and did not secure a seat in the EP.

In Austria the gap in turnout between EP elections and national parliament elections diminished both in 2009 and 2014. In 2009, the turnout in the EP election went slightly up from a low level at the same time as the turnout in the national parliament elections had lost some ground. In 2014, the turnout in the EP election diminished with around a half percentage point at the same time as the turnout in the national parliament election in 2013 decreased with close to four percentage point in comparison to the national parliament election in 2008.

There is an interesting observation to be made from Austria. In October 1996 the EP election was held at the same time as the election to the Vienna city council, the only election that has been on the same day with EP elections in Austria. In the EP election in 1996 Vienna had a turnout of 69.3%, slightly above the national average of 67.7%. But in this period Vienna had

a lower turnout in general than the whole country, in the national parliament election in December 1995 the national turnout was 86.0% but only 79.3% in Vienna and in the national parliament election in October 1999 the national turnout was 80.4% but only 73.7% in Vienna. Local elections at the same time in Vienna in October 1996 undoubtedly increased the turnout.

But what must be underlined about Austria is that no other election or referendum held has had a lower turnout than the EP elections. Even when there have been only partial local elections in the cities of Graz, Innsbruck and Krems an der Donau, during the last five years period these local elections in turnout has beaten the turnout in the EP elections.

Finland's best turnout for the EP elections was in October 1996 when they held their first EP election at the same time as the nationwide local elections. In the next EP elections in June 1999 the turnout in Finland was only around half of that in the previous election. The last five years the EP elections seem to have stabilized at around 40% in turnout while in other elections about two thirds of the electorate votes, with the exception of the local elections in October 2012 that had a turnout of 58.3%.

In Czech Republic an already low turnout in the 2009 EP elections (28.2%) fell even more in the 2014 EP elections (18.2%). The latest national parliament election in October 2013 had a turnout of 59.5%, which was the second lowest turnout for such elections. Their lowest turnout in the national parliament elections was in 2002 when the turnout was 58.0%, but it went up to 64.5% in 2006 and then 62.6 in 2010. These are low figures in comparison with the four national parliament elections in the 1990's. In 1990 the turnout in the first democratic parliamentary election was 96.8% for the whole of Czechoslovakia. That went down to 85.1% in 1992. Then in the national parliament election for the Czech Republic in 1996 the turnout went down to 76.4% and then to 74.0% in 1998. Regional and local elections in the Czech Republic have an even worse turnout, but they have a better turnout than the EP elections. The latest local elections in October 2014 had a turnout of 37.9% and the latest regional elections in October 2010 had a turnout of 38.6%. The first round of Senate elections in around one third of the country on the same day as these elections may also have boosted the turnout. However, in the latest Senate elections in October 2014 there was a record low turnout of 16.7% in the second round. This beats even the low turnout in the 2014 EP election. But these Senate elections took place as mentioned earlier only in one third of the country. If turnouts continue to be so low in the second rounds of Senate elections the Czech Republic might have consider election reform. To have a legislative body elected with such a low turnout deeply affects its legitimacy.

Estonia was the world's first country to arrange a nationwide election where part of vote casting was allowed in the form of remote electronic voting via the Internet in the national parliament election in March 2007. In the EP election in June 2009, voters could cast their vote using either Internet or SMS. In the EP election of 2014, 31.28% of those that voted did so by an electronic vote, 11.45% of the total eligible electorate. The turnout decreased 7.36 percentage points from 2009 to 2014 but it is very likely that when voters can cast their votes

in this easy way the turnout increases. So without the electronic vote the turnout would have been lower in Estonia.

Cyprus as well as Malta has a tradition of high turnout in all elections. Smaller countries with a polarised debate between left and right tend to mobilise voters. Every vote is important in these smaller countries. The EP election in 2004 had a decent turnout in comparison with other EU countries, even if the turnout was low by Cypriote standards. In 2009 it seems that the voters in Cyprus were even more reluctant to vote and in 2014 the interest to vote sank even lower. The turnout in Cyprus is now just around one percentage point above the EU- 28 average and very low in comparison with all other elections and referendums held in that country. From 2006 to 2011 the turnout in elections to the national parliament decreased by around nine percentage points. The turnout in the second round of presidential elections decreased by around seven to nine percentage points from 2008 to 2013. But in the EP election the turnout decreased by more than fifteen percentage points from 2009 to 2014. The Cypriot voters seem to shun the EP election to a larger extent than the other elections when voting apathy increases.

The EP elections held in Lithuania is a good example of how EP elections gain in turnout when held on the same day as another election. In 2004 Lithuania held the first round in the country's presidential election on the same day as the EP election which resulted in high turnout, 48.38%, in comparison. In 2009, unfortunately the first (and only necessary) round of election for president was held three weeks before the EP elections (turnout 51.8%) so the run-off was cancelled. This led to a disastrous result in turnout, 20.98%, for the EP election. The turnout was less than half of the turnout in 2004 EP election and the presidential election. In 2014 the EP election once again was planned to be held on the same day as the second round of the presidential election. But this time a run-off had to be held between the two candidates that received the most votes in the first round. In the first round of the presidential election on 11th of May 2014, the turnout was 52.23%, in the second round of the presidential election the 25th of May the turnout was 47.37% and in the EP election the same day it was 47.35%. But the Lithuanian voters had lower interest for a referendum on forbidding the sale of land to foreigners on the 29th of June 2014, where only 14.98% voted. An issue so delimited that it attracts far less interest from the Lithuanian voters than even EP elections.

Latvia's turnout in the 2009 EP elections improved due to nationwide local elections being held on the same day. But in 2014, when no other election was held the same day, the turnout went down to around 30%. Three referendums on delimited issues in Latvia have had lower turnouts between 22 and 25%, but 30% is a record low for elections in Latvia. The local elections in June 2009, together with the EP elections, had a turnout of 53.75%. However, turnout in the June 2013 local elections fell to 46%, - 7.8 percentage points, when they were held separately from the EP elections, the latter falling - 23.5 percentage points, three times more.

The turnout in Hungary decreased around seven percentage points from 2009 to 2014 and is now below 30%. The turnout in the national parliament elections have also decreased, from 2002 to 2014 it has decreased around nine percentage points. But Hungary's national parliament election on the 6th of April 2014, one and a half month before the EP election, had more than double the turnout than the EP election in that country.

Malta has the highest turnout in the EU28 if Belgium and Luxembourg (due to compulsory voting) are excluded. The turnout in the 2014 EP election decreased slightly (also in 2009 there was a slight decrease in comparison to their first EP election in 2004) and the gap to the national parliament election increased even though the national parliament turnout in March 2013 was a record low ("only" 93.0%) since 1971.

The turnout in elections in Poland has never been particularly high. The record turnout is 68.2% in the second round of the 1995 presidential election. The highest turnout in a Polish national parliament election was in the first free election at the end of the Communist era with a turnout of 62.7% in the first round. After a record low turnout in the national parliament election in 2005 of 40.6%, the turnout improved in the next election in 2007 and went up to 53.8%. In the latest parliamentary election it sank to 48.9%. The second round of the latest presidential election had a turnout of around 55%. Local elections combined with first round of regional elections in 2010 and 2014 seem to have stabilized at a turnout just above 47%. However, the EP election has the lowest turnout of all elections and the improvement of the turnout from 20.9% in 2004 to 24.5% in 2009 fell down to 23.8% in 2014.

In Slovenia, the turnout in the first two EP elections seemed to be stable at 28.3%, but in 2014 turnout decreased to 24.5%. These are very low figures and are more or less only beaten by lower turnout in some of the often held referendums in Slovenia. Since the 2009 EP election there have been eight different referendums held on six different occasions. Only two of these referendums have had a lower turnout than the EP elections in Slovenia. The referendum on a new public broadcaster law on the 12th of December 2010 only had a turnout of 14.78% and the referendum on the archive law on the 8th of June 2014 only had a turnout of 11.74%. Both referendums can be considered delimited issues of little interest to the common voter. Turnout in elections have decreased in Slovenia since the first democratic elections in 1990. However, Slovenia is not alone in this trend which has been seen among the EU member states that have joined after 2004. In the first national parliament elections in 1990 and 1992 the turnout was 83.5% and 85.6% respectively. Then the turnout went down and hit a low mark in 2004 with 60.6% and then in 2008 it went slightly upwards to 63.1% and 65.6% in 2011. But squabbles in domestic politics have made voters tired of political parties. During the early election in July 2014 just after the EP elections in May, only 51.73% voted. In the latest presidential election in November and December 2012 the turnouts was respectively 48.4% and 42.4% in the first and second round. In the latest local elections for the whole country in October 2014 the turnout in the first round was 45.2%; in the previous

local elections in October 2010 it was 51.0% in the first round. Yet, all these turnout figures are well above the turnout in the EP elections.

Slovakia once again beat the all-time low turnout record with 13.05% in the 2014 EP elections. Already in 2004 Slovakia had the lowest turnout of all EU countries at the then embarrassing level of less than 17%. In spite of efforts the turnout increased marginally in 2009 to 19.6%. General turnout in Slovakia has also gone downwards and in the latest local and presidential elections barely half of the voters bothered to vote. The two latest national parliament elections have had close to 60% turnout. The first rounds of the two regional elections have been more close to the turnouts in the EP elections with around 20-22% turnouts. With such low interests in these last mentioned elections it would be better if they were held on the same day as, for example, the local elections.

Bulgaria was one of the countries where the turnout in the 2009 EP election increased and reached a level not far below other election turnouts. In 2014 the turnout dropped slightly to 36.1%.

The national parliamentary election in Bulgaria in July 2009, just one month after the 2009 EP election, had a turnout of 61%, which was far better than the 38.9% turnout in the EP election. But there have now been two more national parliament elections since then, with considerably lower turnouts. In May 2013 the turnout was 51.3% and in October 2014 51.05%. The turnout in the latest presidential election in October 2011 was 52.3% and 48.3% in the first and second round respectively, which was an improvement of around six to eight percentage points in comparison to the 2006 presidential election. The latest local elections were held on the same day as the first round of the presidential election and got a turnout of just above 50%.

Still, the turnout in the EP elections is the lowest of all elections in Bulgaria. But a referendum on the 27th of January 2013 on building a new nuclear power plant had a lower turnout at 20.2%.

In general, the development of the turnout in Bulgaria is a sad story. In the first two rounds of the first presidential election in January 1992 the turnout was 75.9% and 75.4% respectively. In the first democratic election in June 1990 to the Grand Assembly the turnout was 90.6% and in the election to the national parliament in October 1991 the turnout was 83.9%.

Romania's turnout in the EP election increased slightly and the gap to the national parliament election turnout is now less. This is due to the fact that the most recent national parliamentary election in December 2012 had an incredibly low turnout of 41.76%, which was an increase from the parliament election in November 2008 that had a record low turnout of only 39.2%, a record low score in Europe for national parliamentary elections. There has been strong criticism of how the election procedure is done in Romania and allegations of electoral fraud are plenty.

Croatia joined the European Union the 1st of July 2013, and held its first EP election on the 14th of April 2013. It hit a close to low record for all EP elections – just 20.84% turnout. The first round of local elections a month later had a turnout of 47.28%. Furthermore, a constitutional referendum about to amend the constitution to define marriage as being a union between a man and a woman, which would create a constitutional prohibition against same-sex marriage, was held the 1st of December 2013, with a turnout of 37.90%. But the EP election in May once again proved the EP election to be the most uninteresting election for the Croatian voters – this time 25.24% turnout. It should be added as mentioned above in this report that there has been strong criticism of the electoral register in Croatia. However, it does not change the fact that the EP elections have the lowest attendance of all elections and referendums in this country.

In short, turnout in the EP elections can be increased rather easily by holding local elections and EP elections on the same day in the member states. Local elections can more easily be set on fixed dates than national parliament elections, which in many countries are called when the Prime minister finds it convenient or politically necessary to break a deadlock.

Summary and conclusions

- The European Parliament (EP) elections' turnout has once again been historically low – but maybe the turnout now has stabilized at a low level of around 42-43%.
- In comparison with other elections, the electorate is less interested in EP elections. EP elections reflect the highest level of apathy amongst voters.
- When EP elections and local or national elections and/or referendums are held at the same time, turnout in the EP elections increases.

The latter conclusions are akin to the view of the European political alliance Europeans United for Democracy (EUD): Elections to national parliaments and presidential elections constitute the essential democratic foundation of the European Union. The EUD believes that national parliaments are and should be the highest decision making bodies and that cooperation among sovereign states must be based on this fact.

The EUD is opposed to increasing the political power of the European Parliament. Moreover, it believes in devolution of power to national assemblies.

However, it should be noted that referendums on European Union issues with a high turnout have been held in some member states, showing that citizens are involved in and worried about the increased centralization of power in Brussels. Those voters seem not to participate in the EP elections. How can we get them to vote?



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