

Effects of Low Turnout on Election Outcomes

Evidence from the European Election Studies
1989, 1994, 1999 and 2004

Cees van der Eijk
and
Marcel van Egmond

Addresses of the authors:

Cees van der Eijk
Social Sciences Methods and Data Institute
University of Nottingham
Nottingham, NG7 2RD, UK
cees.vandereijk@nottingham.ac.uk

Marcel van Egmond
Social Research Centre
University of Queensland
Brisbane, Qld 4072, Australia
m.vanegmond@uq.edu.au

Paper prepared for European Election Study meeting on the 2004 European
Parliament Elections, organized by the Institute of Social Sciences of the
University of Lisbon (ICS) with the support of the CONNEX Network of Excellence
(an activity of the 6th framework programme of the European Commission).

Effects of Low Turnout on Election Outcomes

Abstract

This article estimates for member states of the EU the effect of low levels of turnout on parties' share of the vote in national elections. It does so by comparing the distribution of party choices in national elections for all those who participate in those elections on the one hand, and for the much more restricted group of those who participate in European Parliament elections on the other. As European elections register lower turnout than other nation-wide elections, this comparison provides an extreme, but empirically observed case of low turnout. Turnout effects prove comparatively small, and are non-negligible in only few cases. Turnout effects are slightly different for different kinds of parties: right-wing parties benefit slightly from them (on average) and left-wing parties are (on average) somewhat hurt. Although significant, these differences are exceedingly small, and explain no more than a few percent of variation in turnout effects. No significant effects are found from other party characteristics (such as their size, government status, position on European integration, or interactions of these with government approval or time since the last national election). The analyses are based on data from European election studies in 1989, 1994, 1999 and 2004.

Introduction

The lower the level of turnout in an election, the more often do we see politicians and commentators proclaim that this affected parties' fortunes in that election. Some parties are believed to be disadvantaged, others to have benefited from low turnout. The tendency to attribute parties' vote shares (in part) to low turnout is particularly strong when the outcome of the election is considered to be 'surprising', which usually means that it deviates from someone's prior expectation. If the interpretation of election results as dependent on levels of turnout were justified, this would diminish the effectiveness of low-turnout elections as channels to communicate the political preferences of a population. This is often the subtext underneath the explanation given by politicians of parties that fared poorly. But, to what extent, and in which circumstances are such interpretations justified?

In this paper we argue that second-order national elections may provide excellent venues for systematically investigating turnout effects, because turnout in such elections is usually considerably lower than in (first-order) national parliament elections. Survey studies make it possible to compare party preferences of the (restricted) group that actually cast their ballots in second-order elections with those of the (usually much larger) group of those who participate in first-order national elections (or indicate that they would do so). We will illustrate this by focusing on elections to the European Parliament, which of all second-order national elections are the ones that typically generate the lowest turnout in their respective countries. This focus provides us not only with an opportunity to investigate parties' electoral success at sometimes extremely low but nevertheless actual levels of turnout, it also provides us with a larger number of observations than single national contexts would, thus allowing us to escape the idiosyncrasies of a single party or a single election context and to assess general patterns instead.

In the remainder of this paper we first describe our research design. This involves elaborating the reasons for choosing European elections as a venue for studying turnout effects, and specifying our approach for measuring these effects. In this same context we describe the empirical data on which our analyses are based. We then report the magnitude of the turnout effects that we find, and how they vary between countries and election years. This descriptive analysis is the stepping-stone to a multivariate analysis aimed at explaining variations in turnout effects between parties and contexts. We conclude with some reflections on the political implications of low turnout, and on European elections as mechanisms of expressing the party preferences of populations.

European elections as venues to observe turnout effects

European elections are so-called second-order national elections (Reif and Schmitt 1980; also Reif 1997 and Marsh 1998). Such elections are characterized by the national political arena being dominant over the specific political arena for which the election is ostensibly meant, i.e. the European one. The distinction between first-order and second-order elections is particularly that the latter do not have direct consequences for the allocation of government power. In this respect

there is less ‘at stake’, a difference that goes a long way in explaining the large differences in turnout between various elections, including turnout differences between European and national parliamentary elections.¹

Election studies of second-order national elections provide excellent venues for studying the extent to which parties’ strengths are affected by differential turnout, particularly when such studies contain information about party choice in elections to the national parliament. The uniquely useful aspect of the context of European Parliament elections is that actually observed levels of turnout are invariably lower —often very much lower— than in elections to the national parliament, while the character of electoral participation in both kinds of elections is the same. The level of turnout in European elections can therefore sensibly be regarded as a realistic lower boundary for turnout at a given place and time.² This allows a valid comparison of party preferences of the restricted group who actually cast their votes in a low-turnout context with the (usually much larger) group of those who vote in a national parliamentary election. We will elaborate this argument below.

A necessary condition for considering electoral participation and turnout in European elections and in national first-order elections to be of the same kind, is that the major actors — the citizens who are eligible to vote and the political parties— are the same in both.³ For all practical purposes, this condition is satisfied, possibly with a few exceptions of minor relevance.⁴

Those eligible to vote —we will refer to this group as the electorate— can in principle be quite different in European and in national elections, owing to the fact that European citizens have the right to vote in the EU country in which they reside, even when not holding citizenship. This possibility does not exist in first-order elections, which require that one holds the nationality of the country in question. This potential discrepancy between the electorates in national and in

¹ For an exhaustive and definitive discussion on the relationship between turnout on the one hand and ‘what is at stake’, see Franklin (2004). Rivalling interpretations of low turnout in European elections that interpret non-voting as an expression of opposition to or lack of trust in European integration are not supported by empirical evidence, as will be discussed below.

² Our argument here is that electoral *participation* is of the same nature in European elections and in national parliamentary elections. It is not required that the character of party choice is identical in both kinds of elections, as will be explained below. Indeed, it could be argued that there may be more ‘sincere’ voting when there is ‘less at stake’ (see, e.g., Van der Eijk and Oppenhuis 1990). Whether or not this is the case, is immaterial for our procedure to assess turnout effects, as we do not compare choice in European elections with choice in national parliament elections.

³ An additional requirement would be that the rules of the game —the electoral systems used in national and European elections— are identical, or at least not sufficiently different to generate differential turnout among the potential supporters of the various parties. It has to be noted that electoral systems do indeed differ between the two kinds of elections, in ways that are likely to affect party choice and political representation (cf Oppenhuis et al. 1996; Farrell & Scully 2002). We see no reason, however, for these differences to generate differential effects for parties, nor do we know of analysts who have suggested that they do.

⁴ That the electorate and the party system are the same in both kinds of elections may well be regarded as implied in the concepts of first- and second-order elections. In order to avoid that the veracity of our findings would be contingent on accepting our interpretation of European elections as predominantly second-order in character we support our contention with empirical evidence.

European elections is, however, negligible, with the possible exception of Luxembourg.

The political parties that are listed on the ballot in European elections are usually the same as the parties that traditionally contest national elections, even using the same names. There are some noteworthy exceptions to this rule. In some countries, such as France, the national parties that vie for votes in European elections do so occasionally under different names than those by which they are known domestically. As a case in point, in 1994 the *Front National* was listed on the ballot as *Liste contre l'Europe de Maastricht, Allez la France!*, but all indications are that ordinary French voters knew exactly which of their well-known national parties was designated by these different names on the ballot.⁵ A real exception to the rule that the same parties compete for votes in national and European elections exists in Denmark, where two lists only compete in European elections, and not in national ones: the *Folkebevægelsen* and the *Juni Bevægelsen* (see also Worre 1996).⁶ As a consequence, estimates of turnout effects in Denmark may be less pertinent to our argument than those from other countries.⁷

In addition to well-established national parties it is quite common for new parties to be on the ballot in European elections. In our view these do not really constitute an exception to the rule that voters are confronted with the same party system in both kinds of elections. On the contrary, the very fact that almost without exception the successful ones of these newcomers subsequently attempt to establish themselves as national political parties by competing in national elections underscores our contention that what is on offer to voters is the same in both kinds of elections, with the only real exceptions existing in Denmark.⁸

The equality of electorates and party systems is, as stated, only a necessary condition for considering electoral participation in European and national elections as truly comparable phenomena—and thus to use European elections to identify the group of voters in a low turnout context on the basis of observed behavior. For electoral participation to be comparable in both contexts it is also necessary that the determinants of electoral participation are identical in both kinds of elections. If citizens' decisions to turn out to vote or not would in

⁵ This difference in party names is rarely ever mentioned in analyses of voter behavior in European elections, and analysts customarily compare results in European and first-order national elections as if all parties used the same name in both contests. This habit extends to well-known local analysts, which suggests that ordinary citizens were well aware of the identity of the various lists, a suggestion that is supported by a wealth of survey data. See, e.g. Lodge (1996) and Gruenberg et al. (2000).

⁶ The *Junilistan* in Sweden, which shares the Euroskeptic orientation of the two Danish lists, participated for the first time in the 2004 European elections and won 3 seats in the European Parliament. In contrast to its Danish counterparts, however, the list has announced its intention of taking part in the elections to the national parliament.

⁷ The substantive results of the analyses reported later in this article are not affected, however, when Denmark is omitted from the analyses.

⁸ Our proposition does not imply that the choices on offer to voters are identical over time. Party systems evolve over time as new parties spring up, old ones split up, disappear, merge etc. But the party system that presents itself to the voters at any given moment is not systematically different in national and European elections, with the exception of Denmark.

different elections be motivated by different kinds of considerations, then it would make little sense to use the context of European elections to learn much about the political effects that differential turnout may have in national elections. The most obvious kind of difference that one can imagine to exist between determinants of electoral participation in European and national elections is opposition to or lack of trust in European integration as a motivation for non-voting in European elections that has no relevance in national elections.

With respect to the question whether or not low turnout is caused by Euro-skeptic attitudes, we find two different approaches in the literature. The first does not find any evidence of such attitudes and opinions. Schmitt and Mannheimer, in their analysis of the 1989 European Election Study data, find that participation in European Parliament elections is virtually unrelated to attitudes about European integration. In 1989 at least, electoral participation was mostly a matter of habitual voting —“people went to the polls because they are used to doing so on election day” (1991: 50). Later analyses based on the same 1989 European Election Study included not only individual level factors but also systemic and contextual characteristics and their interaction with individual-level variables (see Oppenhuis 1995; Franklin et al. 1996). Again, attitudes about European integration and the European Community were found to be virtually irrelevant to lower turnout in European elections.⁹ The second approach, however, does claim that Euroskepticism affects turnout. Blondel, Sinnott and Svensson conducted an extensive study of electoral participation in the 1994 elections to the European Parliament. In contrast to the conclusions about the 1989 elections referred to above, Blondel *et al.* conclude “voluntary Euro-abstention to be significantly affected by attitudes to European integration, by attitudes to the European Parliament, and by attitudes to the parties and candidates in the election, and that it is not significantly affected by second-order considerations and calculations” (Sinnott 2000: 70, summarizing Blondel et al. 1998: 222-236).

As this seemingly conflicting evidence is based on different election years, Schmitt and van der Eijk (forthcoming) extended these analyses to include three different European election years: 1989, 1994 and 1999. In addition, they analyze the research design of both approaches. Their empirical analyses reaffirm the earlier finding that low levels of turnout in European elections cannot be attributed to voters’ feelings of support of or opposition to European integration. The quite different interpretation by Blondel et al. is caused by defects in their research design and by under-specification of their explanatory model.¹⁰ In

⁹ This negative result seems to be quite unpalatable for people who are emotionally attached to the conventional wisdom of politicians and journalists that non-participation must indicate lack of support for European integration. Smith, for example, is one of those who after correctly noticing that „Franklin, van der Eijk and Oppenhuis have challenged the sort of claims made in this section ...” dismisses these results and contends without any empirical evidence or argument whatsoever that “... Despite their skepticism it seems that attitudes do have a part to play in explaining behavior in EP elections” (1999, p. 123, footnote 10).

¹⁰ The design and analyses by Blondel *et al.* are plagued by three major problems, each of which undermines the substantive validity of their main conclusions. First, many of their analyses are marred by selection bias (i.e. by deleting groups of cases that are selected on their values on the dependent variable). Second, in their multivariate analysis of electoral participation they fail to

conclusion, and returning to our concerns in this paper, we see no indication in the existing empirical literature for suspecting electoral participation in European and in national elections to be qualitatively different.

Finally, our contention that voting participation in European and national elections are of the same kind is strongly affirmed by the recurrent finding that both behaviors reflect a single underlying behavioral dimension that is of equal relevance to the context of national and to the context of European elections.¹¹

The empirical findings summarized above have important implications. First, the differences between voters and non-voters in European elections are of the same nature as those between voters and non-voters in national elections. This makes it possible to consider the low levels of turnout in European elections as actually observed (hence not imaginary) lower boundaries of electoral participation in the EU member states.¹² This, in turn, allows us to assess turnout effects in first-order national elections by comparing the distribution of party choice for national parliament elections of only those who participated in European elections with the distribution of those same choices of the much larger group that turns out to vote in elections for national parliament.¹³ Because the difference in turnout between European and national elections is larger than between national elections only, our basis of comparison provides us more statistical leverage to uncover systematic differences in how parties are affected by low turnout.

The measurement of turnout effects

Our interest in the political *consequences* of turnout variations implies that our units of analysis are parties. When estimating turnout effects we want to know what each party's proportion of the vote would be at different levels of turnout. The differences between these proportions are the turnout effects that we are

control for habitual (non)voting, which results in misattributing causal effects. Finally, and related to the second problem, they do not take into account that survey questions that ostensibly tap attitudes towards 'Europe' are not Europe-specific at all but rather indicators of more generic latent political orientations; they are equally related to electoral participation in European and in national elections and can therefore not be interpreted as distinct explanations of turnout in European elections (cf van der Eijk 1984).

¹¹ We find that electoral participation in European and in national elections are very strongly homogeneous, that is, that they are manifest indicators of a single underlying latent trait. In other words, they are qualitatively the same, and differ only in terms of their 'difficulty'. These analyses are based on the application of Mokken scaling (a versatile form of stochastic cumulative scaling). They have been reported by van der Eijk (1984), and were confirmed at subsequent European elections. For the method of Mokken scaling see Mokken (1971), Niemöller and Van Schuur (1983) and Van Schuur (2003).

¹² The notion of a lower boundary is based on the empirical observation that, almost without exception, turnout in European elections falls below the level of turnout in any other nation-wide second-order election such as elections for municipal and regional councils.

¹³ Similarly, it would in principle be possible to estimate turnout effects in the results of European elections by comparing the choices of those who actually voted in European elections with the choices in that election had a higher level of turnout been achieved. This requires information about the choice that non-voters in European elections would have made had they turned out to vote. As such information is not available, we focus in this article on turnout effects in national, first-order elections.

interested in. We obtain our observations from surveys that ask all respondents about their party choice in first-order national elections, and that also allow us to distinguish between those who actually voted in a European election and those who did not. The difference between on the one hand a parties' (first-order) vote share among all national voters, and on the other hand its (first-order) vote share among the much smaller number of voters that did participate in the European Parliament elections yields the desired information. For each of the parties it states how much larger (or smaller) its proportion of votes in a national parliamentary election would be if turnout in national elections were to drop to the observed level of a European election, in other words if participation in the national elections were to be limited to only those voters who participated in the EP election.

As our source of empirical information we use the European Election Studies (EES) of 1989, 1994, 1999 and 2004. These studies consist of sample surveys of the electorates of each of the member states of the European Union in the respective years, conducted immediately following the European elections in those years.¹⁴ The studies included questions about intended electoral participation and party choice in national elections 'were those to be conducted tomorrow' and about electoral participation and party choice in the European election. Our measure of turnout effects is based on (intended) party choice in national elections—the distribution of which is compared for different groups, which are distinguished on the basis of reported electoral participation in the European election. This implies that our estimates of turnout effects is entirely based upon empirical observations, not on some form of theoretical approximation or deduction.¹⁵

As an illustrative example, we present in Table 1 the observations that lead to the estimated turnout effects for Germany in 1999. The columns under the heading 'intended NE behavior' reflect the responses to the question how respondents would vote in national elections 'were those to be held tomorrow'. These columns distinguish between the respondents who did not vote in the European elections and those who did. Note that these columns also reflect that some respondents stated that they would not turn out to vote in national elections. In the next set of columns ('NE vote shares') we omitted the intended

¹⁴ These studies have been deposited in data archives such as the ZA (Cologne), Steinmetz Archives (Amsterdam), and the ICPSR (Ann Arbor) and can be used freely for secondary analysis. Supporting documentation and auxiliary information—including the composition of the workgroup in various years, funding agencies and publications based on these data—can be obtained from <http://www.europeanelectionstudies.net>

¹⁵ A slightly different strategy would have been to focus on reported party choice in the most recent national elections instead of intended party choice in national elections 'were those to be conducted tomorrow'. We considered that a less attractive option, first because it would by necessity omit from the analyses first-time voters at the time of a European election, who tend to participate less than other cohorts (cf Franklin 2004), and who can thus contribute more than others to turnout effects. Moreover, a focus on choice in the last national election runs the risk of being affected by memory distortions which are particularly pronounced among those who change in preference (cf Van der Eijk and Niemöller 1983). This would lead to conflating two different phenomena: actual turnout effects on the one hand, and changes in party preferences in the period between the last national elections and the current European elections.

non-voters, because only the votes that are (or will be) cast are relevant in the determination of the outcome of an election. The second column of this set of 3 (labeled 'EE voters') shows the distribution of NE party preferences for only those people who stated that they had participated in the European election. The third column shows the distribution of party preferences for EE voters and non-voters combined, i.e., all respondents who indicated a choice of party in a national election (and who thus indicated that they would not abstain in a national election). The final column ('turnout effect') is the difference between the two previous columns.¹⁶

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Before presenting our analyses, a few comments have to be made in order to prevent misunderstanding. First, our estimates of turnout effects do not reflect the contrast in choices between EE voters and EE non-voters. Those differences (which are visible in Table 1 in the columns headed 'Intended NE behavior') are of interest when comparing various categories of the electorate. In our case, we are primarily interested in parties, as the argument that election outcomes are affected by turnout is an argument that centers on vote shares of parties. The estimate of changes in a party's vote share as a consequence of turnout differences involves the comparison of 2 distributions of vote shares that are overlapping (the columns 'EE voters' and 'Total'). Because of this overlap the contrast between these distributions is less pronounced than the contrast between the non-overlapping groups of EE-voters and EE-nonvoters. As a case in point, we find that the CDU-CSU is much more popular amongst those who voted in the European election than amongst those who did not: the difference is 14.9 percent. Yet, the advantage that accrued to the CDU-CSU in term of vote share because of this much higher popularity amongst voters was a paltry 1.9%. This 'muting' will be stronger, the larger the group of voters is compared to the group of voters that only participates in national parliamentary elections.

Secondly, our estimates of turnout effects pertain to party choice in national elections, not to party choice in European elections. Those choices are not identical, and we can thus not derive from the analyses presented here how parties would have fared in European elections had turnout been higher in those elections.¹⁷ Our analyses yield, however, relevant information to address such questions as well, and we will return to them at the end of this paper.

¹⁶ We calculated turnout effects in this way only for parties that hold seats in the national parliament of a country or in the European parliament. We leave out smaller parties, as for them these estimates would be very unstable owing to the small numbers of respondents on which they would be based.

¹⁷ The actual choices that voters make in European and national parliamentary elections are not necessarily the same. As stated above, European and national elections differ in 'what is at stake' (i.e., the allocation of executive power), and this difference affects voters mainly in two ways. First, because there is less at stake in European elections, turnout is lower. Second, because there is less at stake party choice in European elections is less influenced by strategic considerations that operate in national elections, while the importance of expressive considerations is larger in European elections. This yields differences in choice that can be most directly observed in those countries where European and domestic elections are conducted concurrently. In non-concurrent situations, these differences can be estimated from relevant

Descriptive analyses

How large are the differences in parties' shares of the votes that would result from a decline of turnout in national elections from their 'normal' levels to those obtained in European elections? Table 2 presents the average of the absolute turnout effects in the member states of the EU in 1989, 1994, 1999 and 2004.¹⁸ Table 2 shows quite limited (average) magnitudes of turnout effects: their average (absolute) magnitude over all years and all countries is 1.3%. In other words: vote shares of political parties in national parliament elections would on average change (in either a positive or a negative direction) by 1.3% if turnout in national elections would be depressed to the level observed in European elections. To put this in a relevant perspective, we also indicated in Table 2 how large the combined electoral consequences of these effects are for a country, which we expressed in the so-called Pedersen index. This measure is defined as half of the sum of all absolute differences in parties' vote shares between two elections (or, in this case, between two distributions of vote shares).¹⁹ We find distinct variations between countries, which are particularly related to the turnout difference between a European and the most recent national election (we will return to this in our multivariate analyses, below).

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

Averaged across all countries and elections, the extent of electoral change (expressed in terms of the Pedersen index) generated by these turnout effects is 4.8%, which is quite limited in comparison to the average net electoral change of 13% that can be observed between consecutive (first-order) elections in Western European countries in the 1990s (Mair 2002a,b). If turnout differences between national elections were of the same magnitude as those between national and European elections, then approximately one third of the actual electoral fluctuations between successive national elections could be attributed to turnout effects. As turnout differences between first-order elections are actually much smaller, we can only conclude that only a fraction of the electoral changes between consecutive national elections can be attributed to variations in turnout.

Averages do not tell the entire story and there are, of course, instances of individual parties that are strongly hurt (or advantaged) by differences in turnout. But such cases are few and far between. In some 80% of the cases does the absolute value of the estimated turnout effect not exceed 2%, and for less than 5% of the cases does it exceed a magnitude of 5%, and all these cases have been estimated for a drop in turnout that is far larger than between national

survey data (cf. van der Eijk and Oppenhuis 1990; Oppenhuis et al. 1996; van Egmond forthcoming; see also footnote 12, above).

¹⁸ We deleted Luxembourg from the analyses because a reliable estimate of turnout effects is hindered by the combination of small sample size, compulsory voting, concurrent European and national elections and (because of the latter) somewhat differently formulated survey questions with respect to choice in national elections. Moreover, necessary information was missing from the Belgian and Lithuanian questionnaires in 2004.

¹⁹ The values for the Pedersen index can be calculated (within rounding error) from Table 2 by multiplying the average absolute turnout effect with the number of parties, and dividing the product by 2.

elections. As a consequence, the occasions in which a party is strongly hurt or advantaged by historically observed declines in turnout in national elections are very rare. The first conclusion from these analyses is thus quite straightforward:

lower levels of turnout in national elections by themselves will rarely have important effects on parties' shares of the vote.

This is even the case in those situations where a direct comparison of behavior (or of behavioral intentions) of the mutually exclusive groups of voters and non-voters in European elections show statistically significant contrasts (see our discussion about the information for CDU-CSU in Table 1, above). This is only counter-intuitive if one unwittingly confuses levels of analyses—the individual and the aggregate level—and if one does not consciously look at the arithmetic involved. In most cases the necessary conditions are not met for really strong turnout effects to occur. Those would require contrasts between the preferences of voters and non-voters of a magnitude that are exceedingly unlikely to be found short of electoral boycotts or civil war.²⁰ In short: the conditions in which turnout effects could reach politically dramatic magnitudes are exceedingly rare. This is not to say that there will never be instances in which a party is significantly affected by changes in turnout. After all, the averages in Table 2 tell only part of the story, and occasionally we do see a party that is really advantaged or hurt by the low levels of turnout that occur in European elections. Yet, when looking from a more comprehensive perspective, we must conclude that drastic drops in turnout contribute only a small part to the overall levels of electoral change that normally occur, and that smaller variations in turnout levels—which are the norm when comparing first-order national elections with one another—have electoral consequences that are usually close to irrelevant.

Explanatory analyses

The small magnitude of the turnout effects that we estimated does not imply that they are the same for different kinds of parties. In order to explore this we conducted a series of multilevel and OLS regression analyses, the results of which we will summarize below.²¹ The cases in this analysis are the parties that

²⁰ That such large contrasts are quite unlikely can be deduced from the low levels of explained variance in electoral participation that are commonplace in the literature— R^2 's in excess of 0.25 are quite rare—and moreover from the fact that variables related to party preference feature usually weakly in such analyses.

²¹ OLS is not the most appropriate method of analysis, yet, in our view, adequate in this case. One problem is, of course, that the cases—parties—are not independent observations in view of the fact that turnout effects across all parties sum to zero by necessity. This problem is mitigated by two circumstances. The first is that we only include in the analyses those parties that have seats in the national and/or European parliament. The remaining parties are excluded, which removes some of the otherwise deterministic dependencies between the cases. The second problem is that the structure of the data would actually require multi-level analysis, with years, countries and parties as different levels of analysis. Such an analysis is hampered by the small number of units at the higher levels of analysis (countries and especially time points). Performing a two-level analysis (parties grouped within countries) yields no substantively different outcomes than our OLS analysis. The small number of time-points—three—precludes a three-level analysis of parties grouped within years within countries. With OLS we risk underestimating standard errors at the higher levels of analysis, increasing the chance of false positives. Our negative

we can distinguish in each year, yielding n 's of approximately 400, dependent on the exact specifications of an analysis (see below). The dependent variable is the turnout effect for each of these parties (see, e.g., the measures reported in the last column of Table 1, above). As independent variables we investigated various subsets of the following pool of independent variables:²²

- ***Political locations of parties***

In order to determine whether parties' political stances affect their susceptibility to turnout effects, we included for each party its position on two different dimensions. One was the left/right dimension, the other a pro/anti European integration dimension.²³ In addition, we calculated the extremity of parties' position on these dimensions, being (within each of the countries) the absolute distance between the (interpolated) median position of a party and the position of the median voter on the same dimension.

- ***Party family***

Dummy indicators representing party families were included. The following party families were distinguished: Christian-Democrats, Social Democrats, Greens, extreme left parties and extreme right parties, as well as an 'other' category (which comprised mainly liberal parties). Conventional wisdom has it that Christian-Democratic parties are thought to benefit from low turnout, while Social-Democratic parties are thought to suffer.

- ***The political 'weight' of a party***

Party size (the percentage of votes in the previous national parliamentary elections) and a government/opposition dummy both reflect parties' importance in the national political arena. Large parties and government parties typically fare worse in European elections; these variables allow us to assess to which extent this is reflected in turnout effects for national elections (when assessing the consequences of a drop in turnout to the level of a European election).

- ***Position of the European election within the national election cycle.***

This variable indicates the timing of the interviews in the domestic electoral cycle. Although we do not investigate party choice in European elections —for which this temporal location has repeatedly be shown to be of importance²⁴— it could be argued that such timing is also of importance for intended choice in national elections when this is asked outside an actual national election context. In the analyses, the electoral cycle is standardized to correct for differences in term length between countries, and runs from zero to one. Zero indicates that the EP elections were held

finding (see main text, below) that no variables at the higher levels have significant effects is therefore not endangered by the bias in the standard errors —on the contrary.

²² It is obvious that not all of these variables could be included simultaneously in a regression model.

²³ Parties' positions were indicated by the interpolated median of respondents' perceptions, which is less subject to the centripetal effect of measurement error than the mean (cf Van der Eijk 2001: 339). Parties' positions on the pro/anti European integration dimension were not available for all parties in 1994 and for the Swedish parties in 2004.

²⁴ Cf. Oppenhuis *et al.* (1996), Franklin (forthcoming).

‘the day after’ national parliamentary elections, while ‘1’ indicates that both elections are held concurrently.

- **Unique party electorate**

This variable indicates the extent to which a party’s potential electorate overlaps with that of other parties (cf. Van der Eijk and Oppenhuis 1991; Marsh 2005). An unpopular party whose potential electorate overlaps largely with other parties may see its voters defect to other parties rather than stay home. Conversely, parties with a comparatively large ‘unique’ electorate are more likely to be affected by variations in turnout, as many of its supporters have no other alternatives than voting for ‘their’ party or abstaining.

- **Government approval**

This variable was included on the basis of the reasoning that unpopularity of a government may give rise to (negative) turnout effects for government parties. Therefore it was interacted with the government/opposition dummy.

- All **2-way interactions** between the variables mentioned above.

Modelling the impact of these independent variables is complicated by severe heteroskedasticity in the data. This reflects that, *ceteris paribus*, turnout effects are bound by the variations in turnout at the aggregate level. Large turnout effects are only possible when the difference between turnout in national and in European elections is large.²⁵ Small declines in turnout (from national to European elections) will by necessity generate smaller turnout effects than large declines. This problem of heteroskedasticity can be solved in a number of ways, three of which we used when estimating explanatory models.²⁶ The first is to include as independent variable in regression models the drop in turnout from a national election to the subsequent European election.²⁷ A second possibility to model the heteroskedasticity is to specify a fixed-effects model by including dummies for countries and election years.²⁸ A third possibility is the application of quasi-likelihood estimation, which may be appropriate for the kind of dependent variable that we analyse (cf. Papke & Wooldridge 1996). We used each of these approaches and found that they all lead to the same substantive conclusions. We will therefore only report results of the first of these approaches.²⁹

We report in Table 3 the outcomes of a series of regression analyses that assess whether particular kinds of parties are systematically advantaged or hurt if turnout in national elections declines below its normal level. The dependent

²⁵ The limiting case is a zero decline in turnout, which by necessity yields zero turnout effects.

²⁶ Yet other ways to handle heteroskedasticity include data transformation, and various forms of GLS or WLS.

²⁷ Because turnout effects can be positive as well as negative, we attributed the same sign as the value of the dependent variable to this independent variable.

²⁸ We feel that this solution is less suitable because it loses almost all statistical power to test the significance of the coefficients of the independent variables of substantive interest.

²⁹ We prefer the first of these alternatives also because it substantively specifies the origin and the nature of the heteroskedasticity that was observed in the data, whereas the other procedures are substantively less informed and rather mechanical.

variable is turnout effect, measured in the manner explicated above. One way to distinguish between different parties is by means of party families — operationalized with dummy variables for Christian-Democratic, Social-Democratic, Green, Extreme-Left and Extreme-Right parties, while using the group of ‘other’ (mainly consisting of liberal and conservative parties) as reference. A different way is by looking at parties’ position on ideological or policy-related dimensions, which makes it possible to take into account that members of a party family are not fully homogeneous in ideological terms. Of these dimensions, only the Left/Right dimension yielded significant effects in some of the models; the pro/anti EU integration dimension was not significantly related with turnout effect in any of the numerous models we evaluated, and is therefore not included in the models that we report. All models in Table 3 (and all models that are not explicitly reported) included as a correction for heteroskedasticity the difference in turnout between the European election in question and the most recent previous national parliamentary election (see our discussion above).

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

As a baseline for comparison we report one model in which only one independent variable is included: the correction for heteroskedasticity (Model I). Model II adds the set of party family dummies, Model III adds Left/Right position and Left/Right extremity of parties as independent variables. Model IV, finally, drops from Model III the dummies for the mainstream party families and (because of multicollinearity) Left/Right extremity of parties.

Model I —which includes only the variable that accounts for heteroskedasticity— is of little substantive interest, but functions as a baseline for assessing the explanatory value of the subsequent models. Its explanatory power ($R^2=0.44$) indicates that almost half of the total variance is heteroskedastic in nature. Only the excess over this value of substantively more interesting models indicates the extent to which different kinds of parties are systematically advantaged or hurt by declining turnout.

Model II shows that —compared to liberals, conservatives and other parties which constitute the reference group— only Social-Democrats are significantly hurt by declining turnout.³⁰ How small the systematic differences between party families are, is clearly indicated by the R^2 , which is only .015 in excess of Model I. Adding parties’ Left/Right position and extremity (Model III) adds no more than .020 to the explanatory power of the model. It is obvious that party family and Left/Right measures are to some extent multicollinear, which calls for some caution in interpreting significance. Model III suggests that how parties are affected by declining turnout is dependent on their ideological position, with rightwing parties profiting somewhat from declining turnout, and leftwing parties being hurt. This relationship is not perfectly linear, however, as the effect is to some extent suppressed for Extreme-Right parties. Model III also

³⁰ It should be kept in mind that the significance of effects of party family dummies is dependent on which group is taken as reference category. It is therefore that the coefficients of all dummies should be inspected in conjunction.

suggests that it is the extremity of party families (what is known as the ‘extreme’ left and right) that matters rather than the extremity of individual parties. These suggestions lead to Model IV, which has the same explanatory power as Model III but which is more parsimonious

In addition to the independent variables included in Models I-IV, we assessed several other variables (listed earlier), either by themselves or interacted with each other or with any of the independents in these models. None of these other independent variables or their interactions came close to yielding significant effects.

Less than 3% explained variance is added by the characterization of parties in terms of left/right position and extremity and in terms of party family. Right-wing parties benefit somewhat from declining turnout, but this advantage is muted for extreme-right parties. Left-wing parties are somewhat hurt by declining turnout. Leftwing parties suffer (somewhat) from declining turnout—but this is not the case for the Extreme Left.

The fact that parties of the right fare (slightly) better than those of the left when turnout declines fits with common findings from individual-level analyses of electoral participation that religious people (who preponderantly support right-wing rather than left-wing parties) are somewhat more likely to turn out and vote than others (cf Oppenhuis 1995: 191).³¹

The overall conclusion must be, however, that all substantively interesting effects are exceedingly weak. Although some parties do appear to be slightly advantaged while others are hurt somewhat by declining turnout, these effects are too weak to support any strong conclusions about parties’ political profiles on the one hand and their susceptibility to losses because of declining turnout on the other hand.

Turnout effects in European Elections

Because of the obvious political significance of first-order elections, we focused so far on the effects of declining turnout for parties’ vote shares in national elections. We did so by assessing how national Parliamentary vote shares would change if turnout would be reduced from normal levels to that of European Parliament elections. But the question of turnout effects can, of course, also be addressed with respect to parties’ vote shares in European elections themselves: how would parties’ vote shares change if turnout in European elections were at the same level as in national elections? Unfortunately, non-voters were not asked how they would have voted for the European Parliament had they turned out rather than abstained. Therefore we have to resort to an indirect approach. Our data show that the party choices of those who voted in the European elections often deviate from what they would have voted in national elections.³² It would thus be naïve to suggest that non-voters, had they turned out to vote in a

³¹ Other aspects of people’s socio-economic location that are related to left versus right preferences (class, union membership and income) are less clearly related to electoral participation and provide therefore no adequate basis for interpreting the small effects reported in Table 3 (see Oppenhuis 1995:191).

³² See, e.g., Mackie et al. 1996; van Egmond forthcoming.

European election, would have voted for the same party as the one they support in national elections. But if we assume that the pattern in which European choices deviate from choices in national elections is the same for non-voters in European elections as for those who did turn out (while controlling for party preference for first-order elections), we can estimate the distribution of the votes that were not cast in the European election but that would have been so at a higher level of turnout.³³ In a similar fashion as was illustrated in Table 1, above, we subsequently estimate turnout effects in the European election and analyze their relationship with the same independent variables as described above. Although these estimates of turnout effects are not identical to the ones analyzed above for first-order national elections, they nevertheless lead to the same substantive conclusions. Turnout effects are generally of the same order of magnitude, and show very little systematic connection to independent variables of substantive interest.

Discussion and implications

The main findings of this paper are twofold. First, the consequences of variations in turnout for parties' vote shares are generally small in the member states of the EU, for national as well as for European elections. The effects that we estimated are those that would occur in first-order elections were turnout to drop from its normal national level to that of European Parliament elections. Turnout effects are likely to be smaller yet between national elections, as variations in turnout between successive national elections are considerably smaller than between national and European elections. Second, the effects that differences in turnout exert on parties' vote shares are virtually unrelated to substantively interesting characteristics of parties or contexts.

The first of these findings—small magnitude of turnout effects—may seem surprising in view of the often non-negligible differences between party preferences of voters and of abstainers that seem to provide *prima facie* plausibility to the notion that parties are affected differentially by declines (or, for that matter, by increases) in turnout. Yet, this finding should not be surprising at all. Analyses of electoral participation—why some people vote and others abstain—almost invariably yield weak explanations; levels of explained variance rarely exceed 25%, and are often considerably lower. Such weak relationships cannot but produce weak turnout effects at best. Moreover, differences in party preferences between voters and abstainers often look impressive when inspected in terms of differences between distributions, but that is particularly so because that is what we tend to focus on: differences. The usually much more impressive base of concordance between such distributions is visually more difficult to detect.³⁴ And finally, when thinking of what consequences changes in

³³ This procedure has been applied and described in more detail by van der Eijk and Oppenhuis (1991) and Oppenhuis et al. (1996).

³⁴ Consider, for example, the distributions of intended party choice of EE-voters and EE-non-voters as reported in Table 1, above. 38.3% of non-voters chose CDU/CSU, while 53.2% of the EE-voters do so. The almost 15% difference is striking, but it is dwarfed by the agreement in this respect (38.3%) between these two groups, which is over twice as large.

turnout would have for parties' strengths, it is easy to forget that such consequences do not derive only from the contrast between the party preferences of voters and abstainers. The question is how much a distribution of vote shares changes when cases are added to or taken out from a given base. Politically significant turnout effects require —at least in relatively proportional electoral systems³⁵— much stronger differences between voters and abstainers than we observe, and also very large changes in turnout. Such conditions can, of course, occur, but they are not very frequent in established political systems.

The small average magnitude of turnout effects should not obscure the fact that occasionally a party seems indeed to be advantaged or hurt significantly by changes in turnout. But such cases are few and far between. Moreover, the finding that turnout effects are virtually unrelated to a number of party characteristics implies that these relatively rare cases have to be explained in other —more idiosyncratic— terms.³⁶

Our findings imply that outcomes of elections, and the changes from previous elections, usually cannot be explained away by invoking alleged differential effects of changes in turnout. There is much more reason to see such changes in parties' strengths as the consequence of changes in the electorate's preferences, partly caused by generational replacement, partly by individuals switching between parties. Levels of turnout may generate concerns when they are low —as is often the case for European elections— or when they are declining. But these concerns can only be motivated from the normative perspective that all citizens should vote. Until now, however, there seems to be little reason for the concern that declining levels of turnout diminish the efficiency of elections as channels to express the distribution of party preferences in a population.³⁷

³⁵ The political impact of turnout effects is rather straightforward in proportional systems. It is less so in majoritarian systems, although the magnitude of the effects documented in Table 2, above, would in those systems only be politically consequential if they occurred at that particular distribution of party support where they could affect which party will hold a majority in parliament. We may however venture the assumption that our findings also apply within constituencies, which would imply that turnout effects are likely to be politically significant in first-by-the-post systems if the race has a neck-to-neck character. It should also be understood that in presidential elections small turnout effects can indeed have very large political consequences, but again only if they happen at a pivotal distribution of support for the candidates.

³⁶ Surveys rarely yield information on party characteristics that may give rise to the few cases of non-negligible turnout effects, such as serious internal divisions, conflicts within party leadership, the presence of unusually charismatic party leaders.

³⁷ Obviously, our analyses support this conclusion only for the 1989-2004 period and for the states that at that time were members of the EU. The major findings from comparative research on elections and voting leads us to believe, however, that they are equally relevant for other years and for other consolidated liberal democracies.

References

- Blondel, Jean, Richard Sinnott & Palle Svensson (1997) Representation and Voter Participation. *European Journal of Political Research* (32:4) 243-272.
- Blondel, Jean, Richard Sinnott & Palle Svensson (1998) *People and Parliament in the European Union : Participation, Democracy, and Legitimacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brug, Wouter van der & Cees van der Eijk (eds) (forthcoming). *European Elections and Domestic Politics. Lessons from the Past and Scenarios for the Future*. Notre Dame (In.), University of Notre Dame Press.
- Egmond, Marcel van (forthcoming). European Elections as Counterfactual National Elections. In: Wouter van der Brug & Cees van der Eijk (eds.) *European Elections and Domestic Politics*. Notre Dame (In), University of Notre Dame Press.
- van der Eijk, Cees & Mark Franklin (1996). *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Eijk, Cees van der, Mark Franklin & Wouter Van der Brug (1999). Policy Preferences and Party Choice. In: Hermann Schmitt & Jacques Thomassen (eds.), *Political Representation and Legitimacy in the European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eijk, Cees van der, Mark Franklin & Michael Marsh (1996) What Voters Teach Us About Europe-Wide Elections; What Europe-Wide Elections Teach Us About Voters. *Electoral Studies*, 15:149-166.
- Eijk, Cees van der, Mark Franklin & Erik Oppenhuis (1996). The Strategic Context: Party Choice. In: Cees van der Eijk & Mark Franklin (eds.), *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press
- Eijk, Cees van der and Kees Niemöller (1983), *Electoral Change in the Netherlands. Empirical Results and Methods of Measurement*, Amsterdam: CT Press.
- Eijk, Cees van der & Erik Oppenhuis (1991). European parties' performance in electoral competition. *European Journal of Political Research* 19:55-80.
- Eijk, Cees van der and Erik Oppenhuis (1990), Turnout and Second-order Effects in the European Elections of June 1989 - Evidence from the Netherlands. *Acta Politica*, 25:67-94.
- EES - European Election Study (1989, 1994, 1999, 2004)
<http://www.europeanelectionstudies.net> .
- Franklin, Mark (forthcoming). Effects of Space and Time on Turnout in European Parliament Elections. In: Wouter van der Brug & Cees van der Eijk (eds.) *European Elections and Domestic Politics*. Notre Dame (In), University of Notre Dame Press.
- Franklin, Mark (1996). Electoral Participation, in: Laurence Leduc, Richard Niemi and Pippa Norris (eds.) *Elections and Voting in Global Perspective*. Thousand Oaks (Ca): Sage.
- Franklin, Mark (1999). Electoral Engineering and Cross-National Turnout Differences: What Role for Compulsory Voting? *British Journal of Political Science* (29:1) 205-216.
- Franklin, Mark (2001b) The Dynamics of Electoral Participation in Laurence Leduc, Richard Niemi and Pippa Norris (eds.). *Elections and Voting in Global Perspective* 2. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage.
- Franklin, Mark (2001c). How Structural Factors Cause Turnout Variations at European Parliament Elections. *European Union Politics* 2: 309-28.

- Franklin, Mark (2004). *Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies since 1945*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Franklin, Mark, Cees van der Eijk & Erik Oppenhuis (1995) Turnout Decline and the Motivational Basis of British Participation in the European Elections of 1994, in: Colin Rallings, David Farrell, David Broughton and David Denver (eds), *British Elections and Parties Yearbook 1995*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Franklin, Mark, Cees van der Eijk & Erik Oppenhuis. 1996. The Institutional Context: Turnout, in: C. v. d. Eijk and M. N. Franklin (eds.), *Choosing Europe*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Gray, Mark & Miki Caul (2000) Declining Voter Turnout in Advanced Industrialized Democracies, 1950 to 1997 *Comparative Political Studies* 33: 1091-1122.
- Grunberg, Gerard, Pascal Perrineau & Colette Ysmal (2000). *Le vote des Quinze: les élections européennes du 13 juin 1999*. Paris, Presses de Science po, 2000
- Jaccard, J., Turrisi, R., & Wan, C. K. (1990). *Interaction effects in multiple regression*. (Sage university papers series on quantitative applications in the social sciences, 07-072). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Jackman, Richard (1987) Political Institutions and Voter Turnout in Industrial Democracies *American Political Science Review* (81) 405-423.
- Lodge, Juliet (ed.) (1996) *The 1994 elections to the European Parliament*. London: Pinter, 1996
- Mackie, Thomas (1996). Appendix D. The Results of the 1989 and 1994 European Parliament Elections, in: Cees van der Eijk & Mark Franklin (eds.), *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Mackie, Thomas, Mark Franklin & Cees van der Eijk (1996). The Dog That Did Not Bark: the 1994 Elections in the Light of 1989, in: Cees van der Eijk & Mark Franklin (eds.), *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Mair, Peter (2002a). De eigenaardigheden van de Nederlanders. De verkiezingen van 2002 in een vergelijkend perspectief, *B en M - Tijdschrift voor Beleid, Politiek en Maatschappij* 29: 160-163.
- Mair, Peter (2002b), In the Aggregate: Mass Electoral Behaviour in Western Europe, 1950-2000. In: Hans Keman (ed.) *Comparative Democratic Politics. A Guide to Contemporary Theory and Research*, pp 122-140. London: Sage.
- Marsh, Michael (1998). Testing the second-order election model after four European elections. *British Journal of Political Science*, 28, 591-607.
- Mokken, Robert J. (1971). *A Theory and Procedure of Scale Analysis. With Applications in Political Research*. Den Haag: Mouton.
- Niemöller, Kees. and Wijbrandt van Schuur (1983). Stochastic models for unidimensional scale analysis according to Mokken and Rasch (sections 1 and 3). In: McKay, D., Schofield, N. and Whiteley, P. (eds.), *Data analysis and the social sciences*, London: Pinter, 120-121 and 147-170.
- Oppenhuis, Erik (1995). *Voting Behavior in Europe. A Comparative Analysis of Electoral Participation and Party Choice*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.
- Oppenhuis, Erik, Cees van der Eijk & Mark Franklin (1996). The Party Context: Outcomes, in: Cees van der Eijk & Mark Franklin (eds.), *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Papke, Leslie E. & Jeffrey M. Wooldridge (1996), Econometric Models for Fractional Response Variables with an Application to 401 (K) Plan Participation Rates. *Journal of Applied Econometrics*, 11, 619-632.

- Pappi, F. U. (1996). Political Behaviour: Reasoning Voters and Multi-Party Systems, in: R. E. Goodin & H.-D. Klingemann (eds.), *A New Handbook of Political Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996.
- Pedersen, M.N. (1979). The Dynamics of the European Party Systems: Changing Patterns of Electoral Volatility. *European Journal of Political Research* 7:1-26.
- Reif, Karlheinz (1985, ed.). *Ten European Elections*. Aldershot: Gower.
- Reif, Karlheinz (1985). 'Ten Second Order National Elections', in: Karlheinz Reif (ed.), *Ten European Elections*. Aldershot: Gower, pp. 1-36.
- Reif, Karlheinz & Hermann Schmitt (1980). Nine Second-Order National Elections. A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results. *European Journal for Political Research* 8: 3-44.
- Schmitt, Hermann & Cees van der Eijk. 2003. Die politische Bedeutung niedriger Beteiligungsraten bei Europawahlen. Eine empirische Studie über die Motive der Nichtwahl, in: F. Brettschneider, J. van Deth & E. Roller (eds.), *Europäische Integration in der öffentlichen Meinung*. Opladen, Leske + Budrich, pp. 279-302.
- Schmitt, Hermann & Renato Mannheimer (1991). About Voting and Non-voting in the European Parliament Elections of June 1989. *European Journal of Political Research* 19: 31-54.
- Schmitt, Hermann & Jacques Thomassen (1999, eds.). *Political Representation and Legitimacy in the European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schram, Arthur (1989). *Voter Behavior in Economic Perspective*. Alblasterdam: Kanters
- Schuur, W.H. van (2003). Mokken Scale Analysis: between the Guttman Scale and Parametric Item Response Theory. *Political Analysis*, 11:139-163
- Sinnott, Richard (2000). European Parliament Elections: Institutions, Attitudes, and Participation, in: H.C. Agné, C. van der Eijk, B. Laffan, B. Lejon, P. Norris, H. Schmitt & R. Sinnott (2000). *Citizen Participation in European Politics*. (SOU 1999: 151, Demokrati Utredningens skrift nr. 32). Stockholm: Statens Offentliga Utredningar., op. cit.
- Worre, Torben (1996). Denmark: Second-Order Containment. In: Cees van der Eijk & Mark Franklin (eds.), *Choosing Europe?*. Ann Arbor (Mi.): University of Michigan Press, pp. 97-114.

Table 1: Individual observations and estimated turnout effects — Germany 1999

	Intended NE behavior Percentages			NE Vote shares			Turnout effect
	EE non- voters	EE voters	Total	EE non- voters	EE voters	Total	
CDU/CSU	38.3	53.2	47.2	49.2	54.5	52.6	-1.9
SPD	30.9	29.1	29.8	39.7	29.8	33.2	3.4
B90/Gr	3.9	6.2	5.3	5.0	6.4	5.9	-0.5
FPD	1.3	2.1	1.8	1.7	2.2	2.0	-0.2
Republikaner	2.9	4.9	4.1	3.7	5.0	4.6	-0.5
PDS	0.6	1.1	0.9	0.8	1.1	1.0	-0.1
Other parties	0.0	1.0	0.7	0.0	1.0	0.8	
Would not vote	22.2	2.4	10.2				
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
(n)	(311)	(468)	(779)	(242)	(457)	(699)	

Note: data based on weighted sample (EES 1999)

Table 2: Average absolute turnout effect per country by election year

	# of parties				Average absolute turnout effect				Political consequences (Pederson index)			
	1989	1994	1999	2004	1989	1994	1999	2004	1989	1994	1999	2004
Austria			5	4			1.7	1.6			4.3	3.2
Belgium ¹	6/6	6/5	6/5	<i>na</i>	0.5	0.3	0.2	<i>na</i>	1.4	0.8	0.7	<i>na</i>
Cyprus				4				1.6				3.2
Czech Rep.				7				1.5				5.4
Denmark	9	10	12	7	1.3	1.7	0.5	1.9	6.0	8.3	2.7	6.5
Estonia				6				2.9				8.6
Finland			7	8			2.1	1.5			7.5	5.9
France	6	5	9	7	1.5	0.6	0.3	2.3	4.4	1.6	1.4	8.1
Germany	5	5	5	5	0.8	0.8	1.1	1.6	2.0	2.0	2.8	4.1
Great Britain	3	5	9	7	1.3	1.1	3.0	2.5	2.0	2.8	13.5	8.8
Greece	5	5	5	5	0.0	0.5	0.2	1.6	0.1	1.2	0.5	4.0
Hungary				4				1.2				2.4
Ireland	6	6	8	7	0.7	2.0	1.1	1.3	2.0	5.9	4.6	4.5
Italy	8	16	17	14	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.9	1.2	2.2	2.2	6.1
Latvia				9				1.0				4.6
Netherlands	6	7	7	9	1.2	2.7	2.6	1.9	3.7	9.6	9.2	8.6
Poland				8				2.6				10.3
Portugal	5	4	5	4	0.9	1.6	1.1	1.3	2.2	3.3	2.8	2.5
Slovakia				7				3.4				11.8
Slovenia				8				3.7				14.9
Spain	7	6	6	5	0.4	0.9	0.3	3.7	1.2	2.6	0.8	9.3
Sweden			7	8			2.2	3.0			7.6	12.2
average					0.8	1.1	1.2	2.0	2.4	3.7	4.3	6.9

¹: # of parties in Flanders and Wallonia respectively

Table 3: Regressions of turnout effects

	Model I			Model II			Model III			Model IV		
	B	Beta	Sig.	B	Beta	Sig.	B	Beta	Sig.	B	Beta	Sig.
(Constant)	-0.075		0.377	0.153		0.226	-1.031		0.027	-1.302		0.000
Decline in turnout NE to EE	0.053	0.667	0.000	0.050	0.633	0.000	0.050	0.625	0.000	0.051	0.643	0.000
Christian Democratic party				0.340	0.044	0.262	0.563	0.073	0.068			
Social Democratic party				-0.778	-0.128	0.002	-0.317	-0.053	0.295			
Green party				-0.556	-0.074	0.059	-0.127	-0.016	0.716			
Extreme left party				-0.320	-0.050	0.206	0.183	0.029	0.707	0.729	0.115	0.019
Extreme right party				-0.437	-0.047	0.219	-1.090	-0.116	0.016	-0.990	-0.106	0.015
Party left-right position							0.144	0.146	0.052	0.222	0.225	0.000
Extremity of party left-right position							0.129	0.074	0.169			
<i>Adjusted R-square (N)</i>			<i>0.44 (394)</i>			<i>0.46 (394)</i>			<i>0.48 (372)</i>			<i>0.48 (372)</i>

Dependent Variable: Turnout effect (%)
 [negative values=lower vote share with declining turnout]