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Democratic engagement in second order elections. would compulsory voting make a difference in the European Union?

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Democratic engagement in second order elections: would compulsory voting make a difference in the European Union?



Democracy and Representation

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Abstract

This research attempts to isolate the impact of compulsory voting on democratic engagement in the European Union (EU), with a focus on elections for the European Parliament (EP). I examine if compulsory voting influences democratic engagement in between election cycles, particularly within the context of second-order elections like the European Union example. Employing a Small-N comparative approach, this study assesses how Belgium and Luxembourg compare to Ireland and the Netherlands, which share known predictors for political participation but differ in compulsory voting implementation. Data from the Eurobarometer and an additional followership experiment are analyzed to explore cognitive and active democratic engagement. The findings provide insight into the role of compulsory voting as a mechanism to enhance democratic engagement within the EU, addressing concerns regarding the current perceived democratic deficit.

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Introduction

This study will look into the potential impact of compulsory voting on democratic engagement in Europe. Currently, political engagement in the EU faces challenges such as low voter turnout in elections, a perceived democratic deficit due to complex decision-making processes, limited awareness of the role and significance of the European Parliament among citizens, and a lack of direct accountability mechanisms between EU institutions and the European electorate. These factors contribute to a sense of disconnect between European citizens and their representatives in the European Parliament, impacting the legitimacy and effectiveness of EU governance (Hix & Høyland, 2022; Schmitz et al., 2015; Sorace, 2017).

Currently, several European countries employ compulsory voting in their national elections, with varying degrees of enforcement and sanctions for non-compliance. For example, Belgium and Luxembourg have long-standing mandatory voting policies for both national and European Parliament (EP) elections. In these countries, citizens are legally required to cast their votes, and failure to do so results in fines or other penalties. Whilst Belgium and Luxembourg extend their mandatory voting policies to EP elections, other EU member states typically do not enforce compulsory voting for these elections, these countries rely on voluntary participation in EP elections.

If citizens do not interact with their political system, this has a negative impact on the democratic legitimacy of that system, with the lack of interaction signaling a disconnection between the government and the governed, potentially eroding trust in the political process and weakening the democratic bond between people and parliament (Hix & Høyland, 2022). If a system, in this case the EP, does not have a satisfactory degree of interaction between politicians and citizens we speak of a 'democratic deficit', described by Hix and Høyland (2022) as a set of contributing factors that make the European Parliament too distant for the average European citizen to participate in, like they would in their domestic political processes. One of the explanations for this democratic deficit is the fact that European members of parliament are rarely held accountable for EU policy decisions, since the distance and disengagement between members of the EP and the European voters is much higher than the distance between voter and politician on the national level (Hix & Høyland, 2022; Schmitz et al., 2015). Hence, citizen participation in the European elections and political systems afterwards is very uneven between member states, resulting in discrepancies between voter turnout and political awareness between countries (Sorace, 2017). This results in

uneven representation of interests between member states with high levels of participation and states with low levels of participation.

This thesis will investigate whether compulsory voting for EP elections has a measurable impact on the degree of democratic engagement amongst citizens of the EU. When discussing democratic engagement there are two main forms of engagement considered. One is called cognitive political engagement, the other active political engagement (Carreras, 2016). Active political engagement in between electoral cycles is defined as the involvement citizens seek out as a result of sparked interest in politics. Although the relationship between compulsory voting and domestic political engagement is already quite well covered by existing literature and study, the impact of compulsory voting on engagement in a second order election like the EP is still speculative (Carreras, 2016). It is proven by Birch (2009) that compulsory voting has a positive effect on active democratic engagement in national politics, increasing the participation in lawful demonstrations and other forms of participation in democratic processes, Birch does however still dispute the improvement of cognitive engagement, like political interest and knowledge.

Contrary to Birch's findings, Carreras concludes in 2016 that compulsory voting does not significantly increase active engagement and instead improves cognitive engagement, noting that political efficacy increases when people are forced to participate in elections. Hence, the existing research into democratic engagement after compulsory voting appears inconclusive in results and highly dependent on the methodology and indicators of participation. Election cycles on the European level are different since they are subjected to less prolonged media attention and have an overall lower salience to European citizens. Thus, the initial cognitive and active engagement is much lower in these second order elections than in the national studies performed by Birch (2009) and Carreras (2016), which could magnify the effects of compulsory voting on engagement, now considered as not significant in the national studies.

This thesis attempts to answer the question: Could compulsory voting in EU elections positively influence the democratic engagement between European citizens and the European Parliament in between election cycles? I argue that there is a substantial relevance to re-assessing the impact of compulsory voting on democratic engagement in second order elections, since there is a big difference in citizen interest and pre-existing engagement between national elections covered by previous study and the European elections of a second

order importance to voters. This study will look for indications that suggest or deny that there is a relationship between compulsory voting and an increased degree of democratic engagement amongst EU citizens in between election cycles.

Literature Review

There are two interesting strains of theory associated with differences between first, or general elections, and second order elections such as the European elections. The classic view on general elections is that they have far reaching and immediate consequences, such as the appointment of a new president or the installation of a new parliament (Reiff, 1997). The results and importance of these general elections are well established amongst voters and considered when they decide to head out to vote. The European elections are often considered ‘second order elections’, modelled after the theory of Reif and Schmitt (1980) since they appear to have less immediate consequences for the average voter and are hence considered less important. Nevertheless, there is also a well debated theory that suggests that some issues discussed at the European level are so relevant to domestic politics that based on these thematic subjects the European election are increasing in importance, this existing theory is known as the Europe matters or specific arena matters (Hobolt & Spoon, 2012). Scholars are increasingly debating if the European elections should be regarded as a second order election. However, they do conclude that based on election turnout and surveys conducted by the Eurobarometer, European citizens do still overwhelmingly perceive the EP elections as a second order election rather than a general election (Willermain, 2014). Hence, it could be argued that although the European elections no longer fit the characteristics of a second order election according to some scholars, the citizen perception still appears to support those who advocate the EP elections are of a second order.

Likewise, the discussion on the consequences of compulsory voting sees some scholars advocating the benefits and positive impact on political engagement whilst others are skeptical on the empirical effects and desirability (Carreras, 2016). There is little doubt that compulsory voting increases electoral participation, especially when there is a penalty involved for not voting (Carreras & Casteñeda-Angarita, 2013; Fornos et al., 2004; Panagopoulos, 2008). The effects of compulsory voting ‘beyond the ballot box’ however are still being debated by scholars. On the one hand there is literature arguing that compulsory voting increases the number of uninformed voters, increasing voter turnout at the expense of

the quality of political engagement (Brennan, 2014). This strain of the literature argues that by introducing compulsory voting, the election turnout might be more democratic but less ideal in terms of sophistication of outcome (Rosema, 2007). According to Brennan (2014), compulsory voting is at risk of forcefully mobilizing a large number of uninformed and uninterested voters who would stay at home if voting were not compulsory, he refers to their absence as “a blessing in disguise”. However, the political outcome or desirability of an election should not be a contributing factor in arguing against compulsory voting, since the political preferences of citizens are unrelated to the democratic role they fulfill when participating.

The other side of the debate argues that compelling citizens to participate in the electoral process improves political engagement amongst citizens and has an educational effect on people, by including them in the democratic process (Lijphart, 1997). Scholars in favor of compulsory voting argue that unengaged citizens forced to vote get more exposed to political news and discussions when they are made to decide who they will be voting for (Loewen et al., 2008, Milazzo, 2008). This educational effect is also known to increase political efficacy, something proven by Prats and Meunier (2021) to increase active political participation. It is also further argued that compulsory voting increases the democratic participation beyond the ballot box, since citizens have received political stimuli that endure even after the elections have concluded (Keany & Rogers, 2006; Lijphart, 1997). To summarize this side of the normative debate, Berelson and Steiner (1964) quote: “People who participate in politics in one way, are likely to do so in another”.

In summary, the debate on the effects of compulsory voting on democratic engagement are split in their opinion on its political desirability. However, both sides agree that the exposure of citizens to sources of political stimuli influences political education and the degree of political engagement. The academic debate on compulsory voting is now solely focused on general elections whilst literature on first and second order elections concludes that a lack of citizen interest and understanding distinguishes second order elections from general elections, not its political importance. It is feasible that second order elections would benefit from the incentive to inform and educate citizens about the political process, as is associated with compulsory voting (Lijphart, 1997). This thesis will investigate whether compulsory voting has a different effect on the European politics of a second order compared to national politics of a first order.

In addition to the debate over the effects of compulsory voting on citizens, there is a more fundamental discussion surrounding other factors within a society that can influence the degree of political interest and participation amongst citizens. The literature section below presents a collection of crucial academic studies and debates on the known predictors influencing the degree of political engagement.

Psychological predictors for political participation have been studied by scholars before and quite extensively. It is noted that the willingness to participate in democratic processes is heavily influenced by the sort of relationship citizens have with their government (Antonini et al., 2015). It is argued by Mannarini et al. (2009), that increased citizen influence in governmental policymaking resulting from their participation leads to maximal attainable community benefits, thus representing a clear return on investment for each voting citizen. The scholars Stürmer and Simon (2004) proposed the dual pathway theory which is most elaborate in describing what moves citizens to a higher level of participation, which is by both being highly aware of belonging to a politicized social group or minority, in addition to being aware that their smaller association is part of a larger national collective, in which they can make a difference by being democratically engaged (Stürmer & Simon, 2004; Simon & Grabow, 2010). These levels of group identity and awareness of being part of a collective democratic process are key indicators that should be held in regard when researching specific incentives, such as compulsory voting, that could positively influence the final decision of citizens to democratically engage themselves. According to the dual pathway theory, systematic predictors of increased political participation will target the notion of group cohesion as well as the quality of the relationship between citizens and the government (Stürmer & Simon, 2004; Simon & Grabow, 2010).

Further amplifying the importance of a high-quality relationship between people and government are Oscar and Hooghe (2018), who found that political trust in Germany affected political behavior, including the degree in which citizens are willing to participate and engage with political institutions. This level of trust also impacts the degree of political efficacy citizens experience, defined as the feeling that individual political action has, or can have, an impact on the larger political system (Craig and Maggionto, 1982). Political efficacy has been proven by Prats and Meunier (2021) to have a significant impact on democratic engagement,

with citizen efficacy proven to predict trust in government and democracy (Parent, Vandebeek and Gemino, 2005).

Another psychological predictor for political participation is the study and academic debate into the effects of religion. A study into the role of religious participation on political engagement in the United Kingdom concluded that being part of, and attending voluntary services to a religious community, increased the non-electoral political participation of ethnic and racial minorities (Sobolewska et al., 2015). In contrast, it is noted by later research that not all types of political engagement are positively influenced by modern religiosity (Omelicheva & Ahmed, 2017). It was concluded in a larger cross-national study that religiosity had a deterring effect on non-violent active political engagement when there is little to no variety in religion within a country, whereas associating with a religious community voluntarily was noted to increase political participation in secular countries (Omelicheva & Ahmed, 2017). Hence, whilst religiosity can be seen as a predictor of non-electoral political engagement, it needs to co-exist with a high degree of freedom of religion and religious diversity to have an effect on participation.

In addition to being part of a collective, it is also noted that some more indirect predictors have an influence on the political participation amongst citizens. It was explored by Mattila et al. (2017), that health might be a predictor that influences political and democratic engagement. Especially chronic medical conditions were suggested to have an impact on the way people interact and perceive politics and democratic institutions, since they are more personally affected by changes of policy within these fields. Similarly, Gidengil (2020) studied the impact of recorded interactions between citizens and government institutions, to measure the degree of political engagement after a good interaction, compared to bad interactions. It was noted that the health of citizens does not make a meaningful impact on the degree of political engagement in terms of knowledge and political actions, rather the political orientation was affected by how 'healthy' sample citizens were (Mattila et al., 2017). Amplifying the notion that sole exposure to democratic institutions does not meaningfully impact the degree of citizen participation were the results from Gidengil (2020), who noted that it was not the number of interactions, but the quality of interactions that impacted the knowledge and perception of politics and democratic institutions amongst people. Gidengil noted that both a very positive experience and a very negative experience

increased the respondent's willingness to learn and engage more with political processes, increasing the degree of political engagement.

A further large portion of academic research into the predictors of political participation includes education as a major contributor. Education forms the basis for public participation of all kinds, by providing literacy and an introduction to the democratic system, including the importance and methods of contributing (Brady et al., 1995). Moreover, education provides future voters with a basic level of understanding about the influence of political processes, referred to by Lijphart (1997) as an important cause of more advanced cognitive democratic engagement later on in life. In addition to providing a basic level of understanding, education provides future voters with the civic skills necessary to keep up and participate with political events (Brady et al., 1995). Even when education does not directly focus on politics, the 'hidden curriculum' emits signals to students, ranging from school statutes to teacher conduct, affecting moral views, sentiments, tastes, and habits (Gutmann, 1999, p. 53; Henderson & Chatfield, 2011). This political socialization theory is a long process, highly influenced by external factors such as civic norms, family norms and values, and prolonged exposure to education, which need to be conducive to the socialization incentives given at educational institutions (Klofstad, 2015; Willeck & Mendelberg, 2022). Nonetheless, it is argued by Campbell (2006) that education and its socializing effects should increase political engagement amongst citizens over time, the more people believe they understand and affect the political system, the more likely they are to interact with it (De Zúniga et al., 2017). However, whilst most European countries boast an increasingly educated public, many are seeing their voter turnout decrease or stagnate in recent decades, something described as the puzzle of political participation (Brody, 1978). In a recent study, the scholars Willeck and Mendelberg (2022) compare a number of empirical studies on the effects of different types of education on political participation and found very inconclusive results. The impact of education on political engagement is undoubtedly positive, However, it is still uncertain which aspects of education are most effective in motivating citizens to engage more in political matters (Campbell, 2008; Gainous & Martens 2011; Weinschenk & Dawes 2021).

Lastly, the social-economic status model (SES) proposes that access to money, time, and civic skills are essential for citizens to actively participate in political processes (Brady et al., 1995). This model proposes that political interest or efficacy is not enough to actively participate with it. According to Brady et al. (1995), a person is restricted by practical

limitations such as the free time left after attending a job, leisure activities and family obligations. Since free time is noted to only influence the amount of time a citizen can spend on political activities, and not influence the decision to participate at all, it is less interesting to this study, into the effects of participation of any kind. However, the civic skills required to participate in democratic activities are of big importance and are not only attained through education, but through an additional mix of social interaction and group identification such as religious institutions or other forms of (political) affiliation (Brady et al., 1995; Quintelier & Hooghe, 2012). In addition, economic status is shown to be of importance in the decision of citizens to become politically engaged, as proven by a significant increase in engagement as a result of family income, noting that an increase of 10,000 dollars annually can increase the political participation output by 50% (Brady et al., 1995).

In conclusion, the current literature on what predictors influence democratic engagement and broader political participation is quite extensive and identifies several contributors in addition to compulsory voting. To visualize, the table below is a summary of the different factors influencing political engagement, before the potential effects of compulsory voting.

Table 1, Participation predictors

Level of education
Group identity
Religious diversity
Political trust
Political efficacy
Social Economic Status
Quality of government services

Theoretical Argument

As previously discussed, compulsory voting has the evident result of increasing the voter turnout of an election, but the degree to which citizens stay involved with politics afterwards as a result of mandatory participation in the elections is still being debated. The main theoretical argument of this study is based on the notion by Lijphart (1997) that compulsory voting can have an educational effect on previously disengaged citizens. This could be much more evident in a second order election such as the European elections, known for their low level of basic general understanding amongst the people and inherently high percentage of disinterest by citizens (Hix & Høyland, 2022). Scholarly literature suggests that, over time, the educational role of compulsory voting might result in a more active participation by citizens in political events like discussing politics with peers or getting in contact with politicians. With the rise of social media as a political platform in the past decade or so, active political engagement is now more evident online than it was before (Ruess et al., 2021). In addition to prior empirical research, this thesis will look further into online active engagement and the role of social media in connecting politicians to citizens.

According to the scholarly approach, cognitive engagement is the result of political interest and efficacy, suggesting that people are more likely to affiliate themselves with political parties and politicians if they have a better understanding of the system (Schulz, 2005). The impact of compulsory voting here is argued to be that more people get enticed to develop an interest in politics when they are made to participate in the electoral process. Interest and engagement with political news and politicians is regarded as the basis of the gradual educational effects compulsory voting has on citizens over time, with Lijphart (1997) suggesting that the effect of this education should be most noticeable amongst the least engaged section of the population. Whilst this might be the case regarding general elections, I argue that due to its lesser-known nature and perceived salience, the effects of cognitive democratic engagement should be more evident and more important in second order elections like the EU political system.

Considering the gap in literature on the effects of compulsory voting on second order elections, the debate over its potential effects in EP elections remains relevant for finding means to improve democratic engagement and representation within the European Union. Hence, I advance with the following hypothesis, based on the theory and existing literature.

Hypothesis 1

Countries with enforced compulsory voting in the EP election, demonstrate a higher degree of engagement with EU politics compared to countries applying voluntary voting in the EP election.

This hypothesis will be tested by comparing citizen interest in European political matters and the voluntary affiliation of citizens to European political institutions or politicians. The comparison will be made between citizens from a country with enforced compulsory voting in the EP elections and citizens from a country with voluntary voting in the EP elections.

The second hypothesis is made to account for the difference between first and second order elections. Current academic literature is inconclusive about the effects of compulsory voting on cognitive and active democratic engagement in general elections. Therefore, in order to test the first hypothesis, the national effect of compulsory voting on democratic engagement will have to be established with the same methodology as the European effect, to form a point of reference.

Hypothesis 2

Countries with enforced compulsory voting in their national election, demonstrate a higher degree of engagement with national politics compared to countries with voluntary voting in their national election.

For the hypotheses to be tested correctly, the case countries need to correspond in terms of parameters that are known to stimulate political interest and engagement. The later case selection for this study has been based on the following predictors that are noted to increase the level of political engagement by scholars.

First, a citizen's degree of political efficacy, which is the belief that their participation can positively influence political outcomes, is a strong predictor of engagement (Stürmer & Simon; 2004, Simon & Grabow, 2010). Those who feel their voice matters are more likely to take part. Thus, the level of political trust and freedom radiated by national and EU government institutions and the political system, are of importance when attempting to isolate compulsory voting from these other predictors (Bäck and Kestilä, 2009). This study will

therefore first consider the degree of political freedom and civil trust of candidate sample countries to conclude there is a basis for comparison.

Furthermore, other important factors encouraging civil engagement with democratic processes are national context factors. These are predictors such as greater socioeconomic resources available to citizens, which is noted by Brady et al. (1995) to be of influence in the degree of democratic engagement. The sophistication of education and religious diversity will also be considered before making the final case selection, in accordance with the academic literature. These two factors are both related to the position and attitude citizens tend to have towards their government and political institutions, which is relevant in addition to trust (Quintelier & Hooghe, 2012).

Lastly, in order to account for a well-developed social and political identity it is important that citizens have had the time and access to get acquainted with the political systems that represent them. Hence, this study will only include cases of countries that have been a multiparty democracy since the end of the second world war, so we can control that several generations of citizens have been brought up with a system in which voluntary identification with political parties is normalized. Furthermore, the size of case countries will vary quite a lot, since Luxembourg is one of the smaller countries in the EU. Although survey data and the followership experiment will both account for population in the empirical results, it is noted by academic research that increasing the size of a community does usually result in a less engaged public, since the interests represented by the political system tend to be less applicable to individual citizens when population size increases (Van Houwelingen, 2017). However, since the empirical study focusses on the EU as a community, it is arguable that all sample countries will experience the effect described by Van Houwelingen (2017) in relation to their domestic political system. Nonetheless, the final discussion and conclusions will have to account for this size difference between case countries

These engagement predictors from academic literature such as high political trust, high income, civic skills and education, political freedom and religious diversity; will emulate the conditions required for an expectancy-value model used in social sciences. This model is used to assess the encouraging and discouraging factors related to political engagement (Levy & Akiva, 2019). By selecting case countries that are most similar in regard to these selected

predictors, this thesis will argue that a difference in democratic engagement amongst citizens can be more confidently attributed to the presence of enforced mandatory voting policies.

Research Design

The universe of cases for this thesis encompasses European Union member states implementing mandatory voting in both national and EP elections. The data used for this study will all be gathered from the period after the European elections of 2019 and before the elections of 2024. Hence, within the datasets and surveys there are five countries which have imposed mandatory voting policies in the latest EU election. These countries are Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, and Luxembourg. From these, Belgium and Luxembourg were selected for comparison due to the fact that they are the only countries that actively enforce their compulsory voting policy.

This thesis will make use of a Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD) by selecting Belgium, and Luxembourg in addition to two other EU countries employing voluntary voting for comparison. Since it is unfeasible to completely isolate compulsory voting in a comparison between four countries, this study argues that the case countries comply with an MSSD structure based on the engagement predictors noted by scholars in literature as critical factors in predicting political participation. Below is a compilation of the predictors considered in the research design.

The case countries must share engagement predictors such as high levels of political freedom, with all countries achieving scores of >95/100, which is classified as very high, identifying a good relation between citizens and the government, including choice in group identification (Freedom House, 2023). Since this study will focus on the engagement in European politics, civil trust will be measured by the political trust survey respondents from the Eurobarometer indicate to have in the European Union. This predictor will account for the pre-existing trust and efficacy citizens have with the EU, since these two predictors are closely related (Bäck and Kestiä, 2009).

It has also been noted by scholars that voluntary religiosity, not enforced by the state, encourages racial and ethnic minorities to become more engaged with politics and democracy (Sobolewska et al., 2015). Furthermore, case countries must all be secular and have a comparable degree of religious freedom, indicated by religious restriction index (Pew

Research Centre, 2022). The religious diversity index will be used to assess the degree of diversity of religious minorities that could potentially see increased engagement within a case country (Omelicheva & Ahmed, 2017).

All case countries must further have a multi-party-political system that has been consistently in place since the end of World War II. This should provide plenty of choices in social identity and democratic accessibility for citizens, noted to increase political participation (Stanford, 2004, Simon & Grabow, 2010). In Addition, the quality of government index (QGI) will be used to assess whether the case countries are comparable in terms of quality of institutions, as perceived by citizens, which is noted to be of importance in citizen incentive to engage with politics (Gidengil, 2020). Hence all case countries must display a QGI of 0.7 or better, which is classified as high (European Commission, 2017).

Economic resources in the form of income have been proven to significantly increase political participation (Brady et al., 1995). Hence, the case countries will have to possess a similar GDP per Capita to assess the degree to which citizens are generally represented financially. Since Belgium and Luxembourg are very high-income countries, all case countries must generate an income of >50.000 USD per citizen, with high-income countries normally expected to have an average income of between 20.000 and 50.000 USD (Trading Economics, 2024).

Lastly all case countries must have a sophisticated education system with a score of 80% or more, being classified as a high level of education by World Population Review (2021), which is a significant predictor of political engagement according to scholars in literature like Schulz (2005), who argues that exposure to politics in school highly influences political efficacy later on in life.

After much deliberation acknowledging differences, the case selection was found to be most similar selecting Ireland and the Netherlands to supplement Luxembourg and Belgium, which are compared in table 2 based on the literature predictors above. In bold are the parameters which elude the MSSD design.

Table 2 MSSD parameters

	Netherlands	Belgium	Ireland	Luxembourg
Democracy post-World War 2 (multigenerational)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Membership EU >40 years (multigenerational)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Multiparty Political System (choice in identity)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Political Freedom (choice in identity)	>95%	>95%	>95%	>95%
Civil Trust in EU (Efficacy)	<50%	<50%	>50%	<50%
Religious Diversity (choice in identity)	High	High	Low	High
Religious Restrictions	Moderate	Moderate	Low	Moderate
GDP per capita >50.000	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Quality of Education	>80%	>80%	>80%	>80%
Quality of Government	High	High	High	High
System of Government	Unitary	Federal	Unitary	Unitary
Size of Electorate (Age >15)	14.956.500	9.737.770	4.116.981	548.607
Enforced compulsory voting	No	Yes	No	Yes

Whilst Belgium exhibits a different government structure, the focus of this thesis is on civil response to compulsory voting implementation in their national and EU election. Hence, the civil response to mandatory voting policies, and the subsequent result on democratic engagement, is not expected to be reliant on the structure of the government who imposed the policy. It is noted by Wlezein and Soroka (2011) that federalism can influence the responsiveness of citizens to new policy to some extent, but it was not concluded to be significant.

Moreover, Ireland shows higher political trust towards the EU which must be considered in the analysis. Religious diversity in Ireland is also lower than that of the other three case countries. Nonetheless, its restrictions on religion are also lower, giving citizens ample choice of religion and carrying it out. In addition, Ireland complies with the secular requirement in the literature, this difference will be accounted for in the discussion and not exclude it from the research design.

It is important to note that there are some additional electoral differences between the selected case countries. Ireland applies a single transferable vote policy during its elections, which allows voters to select more than one candidate during an election. The point of this system is to transfer a vote to an alternative candidate once the first-choice politician has reached their voters quota. However, in a comprehensive analysis on the effects of STV in Ireland, Gallagher (2005) concludes that the STV mechanism influences the composition of the parliament and diversity of politicians but finds no evidence to suggest that it increases the number of people that chooses to participate, compared to preferential voting applied in other countries. Nonetheless, the difference in voting system will be acknowledged in the data analysis.

The decision to only include Belgium and Luxembourg as mandatory voting cases in the comparative analysis means the other EU states implementing mandatory voting will not be considered in the methodology and discussion of this thesis. Bulgaria will not be chosen specifically due to its former communist system, which has influenced the way people perceive elections and democratic processes (Hix & Høyland, 2022). In addition, unlike Belgium and Luxembourg, Bulgaria does not actively enforce its mandatory voting policy, which means that in reality the country more accurately reflects the voluntary participation system. Similarly, Greece and Cyprus will not be included in the research design due to not actively enforcing their mandatory voting policies.

Methodology

This study will employ a controlled comparison approach to examine the potential impact of compulsory voting policies on democratic engagement across the four case countries. This thesis will attempt to produce generalizable and repeatable findings based on the limited sample of four countries. I found controlled comparison to be the best method of including existing theory on both the difference between general and second order elections, including the impact of compulsory voting on democratic engagement. To control for other influencing factors, such as COVID-19 or the war in Ukraine between 2020-2022, this study will only use survey data, which was collected between 2019 and 2020, in between election cycles and mostly unaffected by the bulk of COVID-19 policies, so that any observed differences in democratic engagement can be more confidently attributed to the presence or absence of compulsory voting. The survey data will be collected through small-N surveys, approximately 500-1500 respondents per country, drawing from the reputable cross-national

Eurobarometer datasets. The analysis will follow a mixed approach using both qualitative and quantitative methods:

Survey data used to analyse cognitive engagement with European politics comes from the Eurobarometer 93, which is version of the survey collecting data between late 2019 and mid 2020. The survey questions differentiate between three types of cognitive engagement using seven measures to which respondents provided an answer. Additional survey data will be used to analyse active democratic engagement by comparing the willingness of respondents to discuss political matters in social settings, differentiating between national political matters and European political matters. An ANOVA significance test will be used to determine if the data provided by surveys poses significant differences in engagement between the countries that impose mandatory voting policies and those who do not. If compulsory voting does not seem to make a significant difference in the degree of cognitive democratic engagement, the discussion section will explore an alternative explanation based on the literature and theory.

In addition to existing survey data, this study will collect new data on active engagement with national and European politics, by conducting a followership experiment. In this experiment, the followership of MP's and MEPs will be collected and compared to assess the extent to which citizens from the four case countries are interested in voluntarily connecting themselves with politicians online. For the data collection, this experiment uses social media metrics from X (formerly Twitter) and Facebook. While it is true that social media followership can be influenced by factors beyond political engagement, such as the popularity of individual politicians or their party affiliations, it can still serve as an indicator of public interest in political figures and their political activities. High levels of social media engagement, including followership, suggest that individuals are actively seeking out and receiving information on political actions, indicating a level of engagement with the political process. To account for popularity bias, politicians which have had an elevated position in their political career are excluded from the experiment. In summary, while measuring social media followership may not provide a complete picture of democratic engagement, it can still offer valuable insights into public interest, political discourse, and the accessibility of political participation. When interpreted in conjunction with other indicators of engagement such as survey data, social media followership can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of citizen involvement in the political process.

Operationalization

The data collected from the Eurobarometer and other surveys will be from the period late 2019 to mid 2020, roughly one year after the last European elections had taken place, to assess the degree to which citizens stayed engaged with the political process after the elections have ended. The reason for not including too much data from late 2020 and onwards is to account for external factors such as the major geopolitical events of COVID-19 and the invasion of Ukraine, which could account for alternative reasons for engagement fluctuations. The data provided by the surveys will be referenced to the existing literature on compulsory voting and political participation to make a connection between the hypothesized effects of mandatory voting according to the literature, and the empirical data on engagement in second order elections. Additionally, the followership experiment will look into the active engagement between individual politicians and citizens on social media, with prolonged and voluntary exposure being the type of active engagement measured. These findings will then be collected per case country and compared using a variation-finding comparative analysis, based on whether or not compulsory voting was a contributing factor.

Getting the followership data will be done by using X and Facebook. The data will be separated into national findings and European findings. The national data will be gathered by collecting the number of X followers of five prominent members of parliament per political party per case country, these numbers will then be combined per country. The European data will be collected by combining the followers of five MEPs of political parties to the three major EP coalition parties, being the European Peoples Party (EPP), the Socialist and Democratic party (S&D), and the Renew Europe (RE) party. The reason for selecting these three coalitions is to account for the major influences in European decision making without cluttering the data too much, whilst still using enough individual MEPs to mitigate the effects of popularity of single politicians. Additionally, to account for some popularity control as a result of influential positionings, (former) leaders of political parties, delegation leaders, and ministers were excluded from the followership experiment, both nationally and in the EP. An exception for the popularity control is made if the position of extra influence was abandoned more than fifteen years ago, to include MEP's who have held influential positions domestically in their earlier careers, since the role of MEP is often obtained after a career in national politics. Furthermore, for the European experiment, delegation leaders will be included if the delegation consists of only one person. The decision to correct the total population per country to an electorate from age fifteen and up is to account only for the

people who are eligible to participate in democratic processes or will be able to do so within a parliamentary term (Eurostat, 2022).

Results

Cognitive democratic engagement in European politics (Raw data in Appendix B).

To test whether compulsory voting appears to impact cognitive engagement in EU politics, data from the Eurobarometer 93 was used to assess the extent to which citizens are interested and involved with the European political system and their (self-assessed) understanding. To account for the different types of cognitive engagement, three different categories are used to define cognitive participation. Trivia questions from the survey will be used to measure factual knowledge of citizens, familiarity questions will be used to measure interest, a self-assessed knowledge question will measure the degree to which citizens believe to understand the EU. The following survey questions were used:

Trivia: For each of the following statements about the EU could you please tell me whether you think it is true or false.

- SD201, the Euro area currently consists of 19 Member States.
- SD202, the members of the European Parliament are directly elected by the citizens of each Member State.
- SD203, Switzerland is a Member State of the EU.

Familiarity: Have you heard of:

- QA111, The European Central Bank?
- QA112, The European Commission?
- QA113, The European Central Bank?

Self-assessed knowledge: Please tell me to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statement:

- QA131, I understand how the EU works.

The results of all EU member states were used, including the EU average. The table below shows the results for Belgium and Luxembourg, applying enforced compulsory voting in EU elections. The results are displayed as the number of respondents giving the correct or

affirmative answer to the survey questions. In addition to the countries implementing mandatory voting policies, the results of the five best scoring countries using voluntary voting are included in the table below.

Table 1, Cognitive engagement EU

COUNTRY	N	SD201 (TRIVIA1)	SD202 (TRIVIA2)	SD203 (TRIVIA3)	QA111 (FAMILIARITY1)	QA112 (FAMILIARITY2)	QA113 (FAMILIARITY3)	QA131 (SELF- ASSESSED KNOWLEDGE)
EU27	26681	9775	22587	19634	24279	22587	22650	16087
BELGIUM	1008	360	936	821	967	936	878	619
LUXEMBOURG	550	251	538	506	544	538	537	429
FINLAND	1028	382	981	800	990	981	997	714
GERMANY	1514	602	1323	1325	1428	1323	1388	1039
IRELAND	1005	468	957	846	979	957	963	796
NETHERLANDS	1004	354	894	825	989	894	905	715
SWEDEN	1054	387	968	789	1042	968	985	862

To assess whether compulsory voting seems to make a difference in cognitive engagement, the tables below will show the comparison between Belgium (table 2) and Luxembourg (table 3) in which an ANOVA test is used to determine whether the answers given by Belgian and Luxembourgian citizens are significantly better than the answers given by high-scoring countries without mandatory voting policies, including Ireland and the Netherlands. To be considered significant, the P-value should be <0,05.

Table 2, significance test Belgium

COUNTRY	N	SD201	P- VALUE	SD202	P- VALUE	SD203	P- VALUE	QA111	P- VALUE	QA112	P- VALUE	QA113	P- VALUE	QA131	P- VALUE
EU27	26681	9775	<0,001	22587	<0,001	19634	<0,001	24279	<0,001	22587	<0,001	22650	<0,001	16087	<0,001
BELGIUM	<u>1008</u>	<u>360</u>		<u>936</u>		<u>821</u>		<u>967</u>		<u>936</u>		<u>878</u>		<u>619</u>	
LUXEMBOURG	550	251	<0,001	538	<0,001	506	<0,001	544	<0,001	538	<0,001	537	<0,001	429	<0,001
FINLAND	1028	382	0,3704	981	0,0494	800	<0,05	990	0,8224	981	0,0494	997	<0,001	714	<0,001
GERMANY	1514	602	<0,05	1323	<0,001	1325	<0,001	1428	<0,05	1323	<0,001	1388	<0,001	1039	<0,001
IRELAND	1005	468	<0,001	957	0,0494	846	0,0494	979	0,0494	957	0,0494	963	<0,001	796	<0,001
NETHERLANDS	1004	354	0,8224	894	<0,001	825	0,3704	989	<0,001	894	<0,001	905	<0,05	715	<0,001
SWEDEN	1054	387	0,3704	968	0,1496	789	<0,001	1042	<0,001	968	0,1496	985	<0,001	862	<0,001

Table 3, significance test Luxembourg.

COUNTRY	N	SD201	P-VALUE	SD202	P-VALUE	SD203	P-VALUE	QA111	P-VALUE	QA112	P-VALUE	QA113	P-VALUE	QA131	P-VALUE
EU27	26681	9775	<0,001	22587	<0,001	19634	<0,001	24279	<0,001	22587	<0,001	22650	<0,001	16087	<0,001
LUXEMBOURG	<u>550</u>	<u>251</u>		<u>538</u>		<u>506</u>		<u>544</u>		<u>538</u>		<u>537</u>		<u>429</u>	
BELGIUM	1008	360	<0,001	936	<0,001	821	<0,001	967	0,0494	936	<0,001	878	<0,001	619	<0,001
FINLAND	1028	382	<0,001	981	0,0494	800	<0,001	990	<0,05	981	0,0494	997	0,3704	714	<0,001
GERMANY	1514	602	<0,01	1323	<0,001	1325	<0,001	1428	<0,001	1323	<0,001	1388	<0,001	1039	<0,001
IRELAND	1005	468	0,3704	957	<0,05	846	<0,001	979	0,0494	957	<0,05	963	0,0494	796	0,8224
NETHERLANDS	1004	354	<0,001	894	<0,001	825	<0,001	989	0,3704	894	<0,001	905	<0,001	715	<0,001
SWEDEN	1054	387	<0,001	968	<0,001	789	<0,001	1042	0,8224	968	<0,001	985	<0,001	862	<0,05

What we can conclude from table 2 is that Belgium seems to be on par, or not significantly more cognitively engaged than the other EU countries in the trivia category, but scores significantly lower on cognitive engagement in almost all other sections. In table 3 on the other hand, we can see that Luxembourg shows an overall high level of cognitive engagement with EU politics, scoring significantly higher than the six other countries. Based on table 3, we might conclude that compulsory voting is the only engagement predictor suggested by academic literature that separates Luxembourg from the Netherlands and Ireland, which both show significantly lower based on most metrics of cognitive engagement, despite respondents from Ireland indicating a higher level of trust in EU politics. Table 2 however disputes the positive effect of compulsory voting, with Belgium showing lower political knowledge despite conforming with the same predictor parameters proposed by academic literature.

Active engagement Analysis. (full datasets available in Appendix C)

To test whether compulsory voting appears to impact active engagement, data from the Eurobarometer 93 was used to assess the extent to which citizens are discussing political matters in their personal and social circles. The two survey questions used were:

- When you get together with friends or relatives, would you say you discuss frequently, occasionally or never about European political matters (Eurobarometer, 2020)

- When you get together with friends or relatives, would you say you discuss frequently, occasionally or never about national political matters (Eurobarometer, 2020)

The results of all EU member states were used, including the EU average. The table below shows the results for Belgium and Luxembourg, applying enforced compulsory voting in both national and EU elections. In addition, the results of the five best scoring countries using voluntary voting are included in the table below.

Table 4, Active engagement National vs EU

Country:	N:	frequently discuss EU:	frequently discuss national	P-value	occasionnally discuss EU	occasionnally discuss national	P-value
EU27	26681	4130	6334	<0,001	14952	15068	<0,001
Belgium	1008	100	183	<0,001	522	574	<0,001
Luxembourg	550	165	197	0,0494	313	297	0,3704
Germany	1514	338	508	<0,001	907	878	<0,05
Ireland	1005	216	484	<0,001	641	466	<0,001
Netherlands	1004	228	413	<0,001	557	515	<0,01
Sweden	1054	233	417	<0,001	716	583	<0,001
Denmark	990	208	313	<0,05	556	528	<0,05

Table 5, In depth engagement Belgium vs EU27

Metric	Belgium	EU27	P-Value
Frequently discuss EU (%)	9,9%	15,5%	<0,001
Frequently discuss national (%)	18,2%	23,7%	<0,001
Occasionally discuss EU (%)	51,8%	56,0%	<0,001
Occasionally discuss national (%)	57,0%	56,5%	0,3134

In table 4 we see that Luxembourg is the most consistent country in terms of active engagement, with no significant difference in frequently discussing national politics versus European politics, and not significantly more often discussing EU politics occasionally than national political matters. Germany and the Netherlands are slightly more engaged with

European politics on an occasional basis but still significantly less than their national political affairs, with Denmark being more engaged on both measures of EU discussion but still significantly less than national. Belgium scores the worst in this comparison with table 5 showing how Belgium is significantly less engaged on both the national and European level compared to the lower EU27 average when it comes to frequently discussing politics. On an occasional level Belgium is also significantly less engaged with discussing European politics.

In addition to measuring the difference in active engagement between first and second order politics, table 6 measures the degree of engagement of Luxembourg compared to the other countries from table 4, with a P-value of <0,05 indicating a significant difference.

Table 6, Active engagement Luxembourg

COUNTRY:	N:	TOTAL DISCUSS EU %	P-VALUE	TOTAL DISCUSS NATIONAL %	P-VALUE
EU27	26681	71,5	<0,001	80,2	<0,001
BELGIUM	1008	61,7	<0,01	75,2	<0,01
LUXEMBOURG	550	86,9		90,0	
GERMANY	1514	82,2	0,0494	91,6	0,3704
IRELAND	1005	85,3	0,3704	94,6	<0,5
NETHERLANDS	1004	78,2	<0,01	92,8	0,1496
SWEDEN	1054	90,1	0,0494	94,6	<0,5
DENMARK	990	77,2	<0,01	85,0	<0,5

In table 6 we find that although Luxembourg scores better on EU engagement compared to the other MSSD countries, this difference cannot be classified as significant when compared to Ireland and is much more significant compared to Belgium, which is at odds with what the literature would suggest in terms of engagement predictors. Another notable finding from table 6 is that the voluntary voting countries from the MSSD comparison score higher on national active engagement, with Ireland scoring significantly higher based on the sample from Eurobarometer (2020). This difference between Luxembourg and Ireland on national engagement could be an indication that electoral policies such as the single transferable vote system in Ireland have a bigger impact than anticipated in the case selection, by moving citizens to consider support for multiple political figures per election.

Followership Analysis: Full datasets available in Appendix A

The results of the followership experiment, aimed at finding out how the comparison countries are engaged with politicians, are displayed below. In figure 1 we can observe what

section of the total electorate of the case countries follow a national politician (MP) online, with the results split between followership of the same politicians on X and Facebook (FB). In figure 2 we observe what section of the same electorate per case country follow a European politician (MEP) online, showing the followership of the same MEP's split over X and FB.

Figure 1, followership aged 15 and up, national parliament

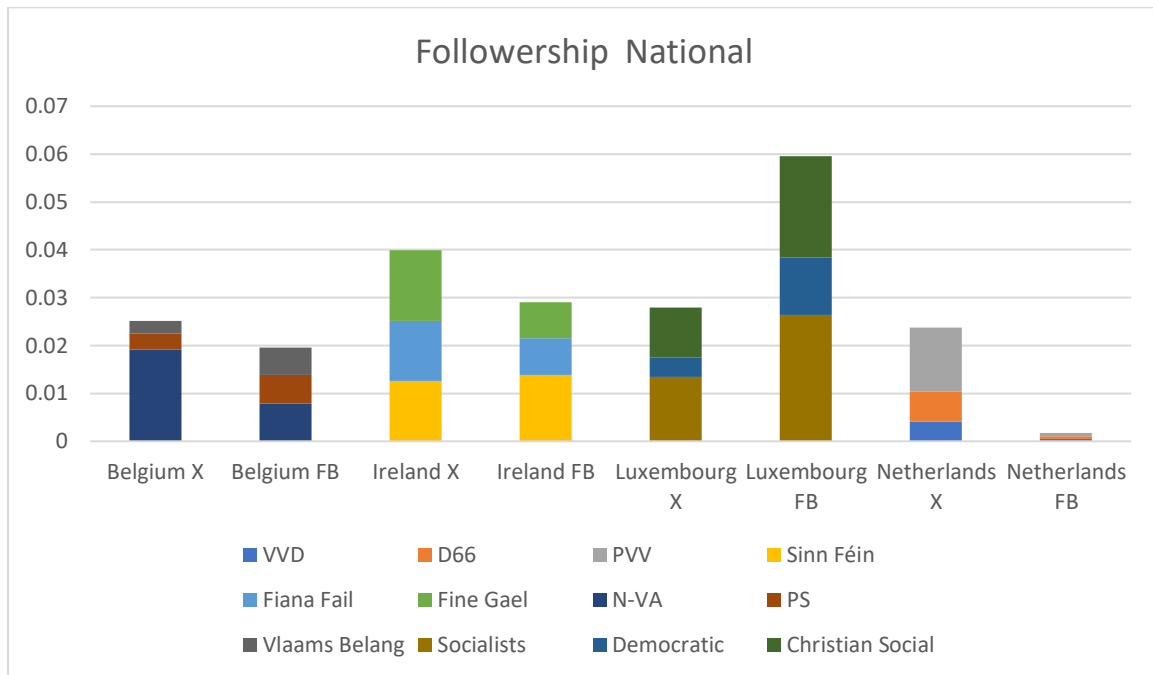
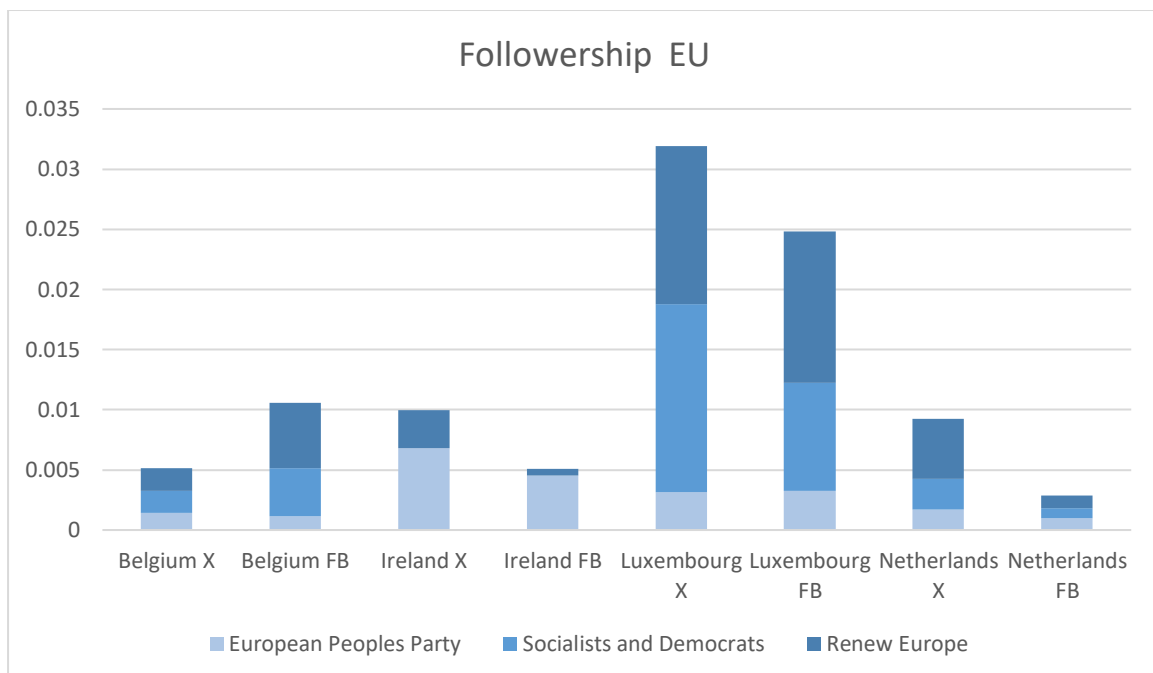


Figure 2, followers per MEP per citizen aged 15 and up on, European Parliament



What we find in both figure 1 and figure 2 is that the social media platform is highly influential in the number of people choosing to engage online between countries, with Facebook being highly unpopular in the Netherlands, to the extent that politicians are hardly, or not at all active on the platform nationally. Furthermore, on a European level, the number of politicians eligible for comparison within the parameters of this experiment varies. Hence, the data from table 7 shows the total followership per MP/MEP per country to compensate for the discrepancies between case countries, with N being the total electorate per country operationalised as all citizens aged 15 and older.

Table 7, followership per MP/MEP

COUNTRY	N	FOLLOWERSHIP X PER MP	FOLLOWERSHIP X PER MEP	DIFFERENCE X MP/MEP	P-VALUE	FOLLOWERSHIP FB PER MP	FOLLOWERSHIP FB PER MEP	DIFFERENCE FB MP/MEP	P-VALUE
BELGIUM	9737770	16356	7141	<u>9215</u>	<0,001	12747	14714	-1967	<0,001
IRELAND	4116981	10964	10268	<u>696</u>	<0,001	7960	5225	2735	<0,001
LUXEMBOURG	548607	1022	4379	<u>-3357</u>	<0,001	2181	3400	-1219	<0,001
NETHERLANDS	14956500	24924	9187	<u>15737</u>	<0,001	2001	2835	-834	<0,001

What we find in table 7 after conducting an ANOVA test is that all countries demonstrate statistically significant differences between the followership data nationally and on an EU level on both media platforms, with Luxembourg again scoring high on both platforms and on both national and EU engagement. However, based on this experiment, the high engagement score of Luxembourg cannot be confidently attributed to compulsory voting based on the MSSD design used in this study, due to better participation rates in voluntary voting country Ireland compared to Belgium.

Discussion and Conclusions

Compulsory voting has been suggested by scholars to increase political engagement beyond the act of voting for a long time, yet proving it has been difficult or inconclusive. This thesis assessed whether compulsory voting has a more notable effect when applied to a second order election, due to its lower initial salience to citizens. Based on the survey study into cognitive and active engagement at the EU level, this thesis has not been able to conclusively prove that compulsory voting makes a statistically significant difference in political engagement in between election cycles, affecting both hypotheses proposed by this paper.

With regard to cognitive engagement at the EU level, we see statistically significant differences between Luxembourg and the voluntary voting countries, which could suggest there is a positive relationship described in hypothesis 1. However, with Belgium scoring worse in all but the trivia category of cognitive engagement, the results of Luxembourg cannot be confidently attributed to compulsory voting based on the methodology used in this study. Due to its MSSD structure, this study was reliant on Belgium and Luxembourg showing similar results compared to the voluntary voting countries, which it has not. Further study into the effects of compulsory voting on political participation in Europe, based on the enticing results of Luxembourg, would benefit of using a different approach to isolate compulsory voting as a major contributing factor.

Measuring the active engagement in political discussion on the national and EU level, has concluded that countries applying compulsory voting demonstrate statistically significant lower political discussion on a national level, disproving hypothesis 2. The active engagement data did prove that countries applying voluntary voting are disengaged statistically significant with EU politics compared to their national politics, with Luxembourg being the only country showing statistically consistent engagement between first and second order elections. Unfortunately, this consistency cannot be confidently accredited to compulsory voting based on this study due to the significantly lower results produced by Belgium as a co-implementor of compulsory voting. Similar results are found in the followership experiment, where high engagement scores of Luxembourg fail to find confirmation in Belgium based on the MSSD approach of this study.

Two differences between Belgium and Luxembourg identified in the case selection were size and government structure. Although academic literature does not prominently advocate that these two factors are predictors for political engagement, they could have influenced the results beyond expectation. Alternatively, it is possible that unknown, or otherwise unincluded predictors for political participation are causing the significant difference in engagement results between Belgium and Luxembourg. Comparing Luxembourg and Belgium individually to other systems or including more participation predictors could provide results more confidently attributing political engagement to compulsory voting. In addition, the data providing measures of political engagement across European states is very scarce and usually a byproduct of studies into political satisfaction and public opinion. Thus, further study could benefit from conducting its own survey amongst a larger European sample to collect more measures of engagement for analysis.

In conclusion, this thesis was not able to attribute a positive result in cognitive or active engagement to the implementation of compulsory voting but finds results that could suggest such relationship exists. Therefore, this thesis ultimately advocates to conduct additional study into the effects of compulsory voting on second order elections, using a different methodology comparing systems to better isolate and measure the effects of compulsory voting on democratic engagement.

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Appendix A

Followership Data X National:

CURRENT	N-VA	Followership PS	Followership VB	Followership Total	Electoraat	After conversion
	Liesbeth Homans	31100 Patrick Prévot	4279 Annick Ponthier	1727	9737770	0
	Sander Loones	18600 Eliane Tillieux	7398 Barbara Pas	17500		
	Matthias Diependaele	11800 christophe Iacroix	3569 Wouter Vermeersch	2213		
	valerie van Peel	19900 Malik ben Achour	2840 Ortwin Depoortere	3475		
	Darya Safai	113500 André Flahaut	14700 Steven Creyelman	1321		
		194900	32786	26236		
				253922		
CURRENT	Fianna Fail	Followership Sinn Fein	Followership Fine Gael	Followership Total	Electoraat	After conversion
	Robert Troy	8626 Mark Ward	8378 Josepha Madigan	19700	4116981	0
	Barry Cowen	11300 Aengus O Snodaigh	9316 Alan Farrel	8172		
	James Lawless	7901 Louise O'Reilly	15500 Alan Dillon	15400		
	Eamon O Cuiv	12200 Donnchadh O Laoghain	11800 Michael Creed	8128		
	Jim O'Callaghan	11200 Paul Donnelly	7171 Martin Heydon	9616		
		51277	52165	61016		
				164458		
CURRENT	Christian Social	Followership Democratic	Followership Socialists	Followership Total	Electoraat	After conversion
	Diane Adehm	955 Guy Arendt	753 Biancalana Dan	725	548607	0
	Nancy Arendt ép Kemp	945 BEISSEL Simone	332 Francine Closener	3336		
	Maurice Bauer	545 carole Hartman	702 Yves Cruchten	2471		
	Alex Donnersbach	461 Patrick Goldschmidt	482 Claire Delcourt	13		
	Paul Galles	1617 Gusty Graas	485 Mars Di Bartolome	2575		
		4523	2754	9120		
				16397		
2021-2023	PVV	Followership VVD	Followership D66	Followership Total	Electoraat	After conversion
	Fleur Agema	138600 Bente Becker	12400 Wieke Paulusma	7069	14956500	0
	Gidi Markuszower	11600 Bas van 't Wout	6358 Vera Bergkamp	35800		
	Léon de Jong	24700 Mark Harbers	19200 Tsjerd de groot	16200		
	Alexander Kops	7216 Aukje de Vries	7969 Sjoerd Wiemer Sjoerd	33300		
	Vicky Maeijer	5689 Dennis Wiersma	15700 Steven van Weyenbe	12100		
		187805	61807	104469		
				354081		

Followership Data X Europe:

EPP MEP	Followership S&D MEP	Followership RE MEP	Followership Total	electorate	After conversion
Belgium					
Tom Vandenkendelaere	5562 Marie Arena	1678 Hilde Vautmans	6965	9737770	0
Cindy Franssen	3095 Kathleen Van Brempt	16200 Frédérique Ries	11300		
Benoît Lutgen	5190				
	13847	17878	18265	49990	
Ireland					
Mariah Walsh	17200 None.	0 Billy Kelleher	13100	4116981	0
Deirdre Clune	7855				
Colm Markey	2917				
	27972	0	13100	41072	
Luxembourg					
Isabel Wiseler-Lima	1710 Marc Angel	8590 Charles Goerens	5039	548607	0
		Monica Semendo	2176		
	1710	8590	7215	17515	
Neteherlands					
Annie schreijer-pierik	10900 Mohammed Chahim	7839 Samira Rafaela	9146	14956500	0
Henk Jan Ormel	4218 Lara Wolters	6337 Sophie in' Veld	44200		
Jeroen Lenaers	5256 Thijs Reuten	8771 Bart Groothuis	7251		
Toine Manders	1507 Paul Tang	12600 Jan Huitema	9803		
Anja Haga	3202 Vera Tax	3126 Caroline Nagtegaal	3646		
	25083	38673	74046		

Followership Data Facebook Europe:

	EPP MEP	Followership	S&D MEP	Followership	RE MEP	Followership	Total	electorate	After conversion
Belgium									
	Tom Vandenkendelaere	5700	Marie Arena	26000	Hilde Vautmans	12000			
	Cindy Franssen	3800	Kathleen Van Brempt	13000	Frédérique Ries	41000			
	Benoît Lutgen	1700							
		11200		39000		53000	103000	9737770	0
Ireland									
	Mariah Walsh	13000	None.		Billy Kelleher	0			
	Deirdre Clune	4600							
	Colm Markey	1000							
		18600		0		0	18600	4116981	0
Luxembourg									
	Isabel Wiseler-Lima	1800	Marc Angel	4900	Charles Goerens	3600			
					Monica Semendo	3300			
		1800		4900		6900	13600	548607	0
Netherlands									
	Annie schreijer-pierik	10000	Mohammed Chahim	2400	Samira Rafaela	1300			
	Henk Jan Ormel	907	Lara Wolters	647	Sophie in' Veld	6000			
	Jeroen Lenaers	2200	Thijs Reuten	644	Bart Groothuis	1000			
	Toine Manders	1200	Paul Tang	4000	Jan Huitema	5600			
	Anja Haga	326	Vera Tax	4400	Caroline Nagtegaal	1900			
		14633		12091		15800	42524	14956500	0

Followership Data Facebook National

Belgium		Followership		Followership	Followership	Total	Electoraat	After conversion	
CURRENT	N-VA		PS		VB				
	Liesbeth Homans	6800	Patrick Prévot	9300	Annick Ponthier	2100			
	Sander Loones	37000	Eliane Tillieux	24000	Barbara Pas	23000			
	Matthias Diependaele	56000	christophe lacroix	6500	Wouter Vermeersch	20000			
	valerie van Peet	18000	Malik ben Achour	10000	Ortwin Depoortere	5200			
	Darya Safai	10000	André Flahaut	9000	Steven Creyelman	5400			
		127800		58800		55700	242300	9737770	
								0	
Ireland									
CURRENT	Fianna Fail		Sinn Fein		Fine Gael				
	Robert Troy	7000	Mark Ward	18000	Josepha Madigan	8900			
	Barry Cowen	6300	Aengus O Snodaigh	9400	Alan Farrel	1900			
	James Lawless	7100	Louise O'Reilly	6600	Alan Dillon	7900			
	Eamon O Cuiv	8400	Donnchadh O Laoghaire	12000	Michael Creed	4700			
	Jim O'Callaghan	3000	Paul Donnelly	11000	Martin Heydon	7200			
		31800		57000		30600	119400	4116981	
								0	
Luxembourg									
CURRENT	Christian Social		Democratic		Socialists				
	Diane Adehm	16	Guy Arendt	147	Biancalana Dan	1500			
	Nancy Arendt ép Kemp	1400	BEISSEL Simone	1100	Francine Closener	4400			
	Maurice Bauer	542	carole Hartman	nvt	Yves Cruchten	nvt			
	Alex Donnersbach	nvt	Patrick Goldschmidt	1200	Claire Delcourt	1500			
	Paul Galles	3900	Gusty Graas	3500	Mars Di Bartolomeo	3800			
							548607	0	
Netherlands									
2021-2023	PVV		VVD		D66				
	Fleur Agema	4900	Bente Becker	1600	Wieke Paulusma	1000			
	Gidi Markuszower	0	Bas van 't Wout	926	Vera Bergkamp	6100			
	Léon de Jong	2500	Mark Harbers	1300	Tsjeerd de groot	0			
	Alexander Kops	0	Aukje de Vries	483	Sjoerd Wiemer Sjoerdsma	392			
	Vicky Maeijer	0	Dennis Wiersma	2600	Steven van Weyenberg	1500			
		7400		6909		8992	23301	14956500	
								0	

Followership Analysis:

Country	N	Total followership X National	Total MP's X	Followership X per MP	Total followership FB National	Total MP's FB	Followership FB per MP
Belgium	9737770	245343	15	16356	191200	15	12747
Ireland	4116981	164458	15	10964	119400	15	7960
Luxembourg	548607	15328	15	1022	32712	15	2181
Netherlands	14956500	355155	15	24924	26115	13	2001
Country	N	Total followership X Europe	Total MEP's X	Followership X per MEP	Total followership FB European	Total MEP's FB	Followership FB per MEP
Belgium	9737770	49990	7	7141	103000	7	14714
Ireland	4116981	41072	4	10268	20900	4	5225
Luxembourg	548607	17515	4	4379	13600	4	3400
Netherlands	14956500	137802	15	9187	42524	15	2835
Country	N	Followership X per MP	Followership X per MEP	Followership FB per MP	Followership FB per MEP		
Belgium	9737770	16356	7141	12747	14714		
Ireland	4116981	10964	10268	7960	5225		
Luxembourg	548607	1022	4379	2181	3400		
Netherlands	14956500	24924	9187	2001	2835		

Appendix B

Country:	N	SD201 (trivia 1)	SD202 (trivia 2)	SD203 (trivia 3)	QA111 (familiarity 1)	QA112 (familiarity 2)	QA113 (familiarity 3)	QA131 (self-assessed knowledge 1)
EU27	26681	9775	22587	19634	24279	22587	22650	16087
Belgium	1008	360	936	821	967	936	878	619
Bulgaria	1057	259	863	615	951	836	909	613
Czechia	1009	381	778	751	892	778	755	462
Denmark	990	208	933	704	972	933	891	694
Germany	1514	602	1323	1325	1428	1323	1388	1039
Estonia	1006	420	942	810	988	942	931	722
Ireland	1005	468	957	846	979	957	963	796
Greece	1016	236	935	614	979	935	949	638
Spain	1012	325	858	578	929	858	901	557
France	1006	409	873	772	916	873	828	535
Croatia	1030	558	872	838	967	872	879	651
Italy	1027	448	747	791	844	747	801	424
Cyprus	505	73	438	281	459	438	448	359
Latvia	996	276	842	552	910	842	818	683
Lithuania	1005	208	893	624	939	893	868	699
Luxembourg	550	251	538	506	544	538	537	429
Hungary	1059	376	935	792	980	935	804	613
Malta	502	158	447	345	474	447	435	204
Netherlands	1004	354	894	825	989	894	905	715
Austria	1010	465	819	907	890	819	880	635
Poland	1031	251	853	603	901	853	757	790
Portugal	1056	334	990	768	1016	990	986	634
Romania	1112	343	915	595	964	915	862	751
Slovenia	1012	340	935	839	966	935	926	685
Slovakia	1077	435	968	824	1034	968	968	696
Finland	1028	382	981	800	990	981	997	714
Sweden	1054	387	968	789	1042	968	985	862

country	N	SD201 (trivia 1)	SD202 (trivia 2)	SD203 (trivia 3)	QA111 (familiarity 1)	QA112 (familiarity 2)	QA113 (familiarity 3)	QA131 (self-assessed knowledge 1)
EU27	26681	36,60%	84,60%	73,60%	91%	84,60%	84,90%	60,30%
Belgium	1008	35,70%	92,90%	81,40%	96%	92,90%	87,10%	61,40%
Luxembourg	550	45,60%	97,80%	92%	98,90%	97,80%	97,60%	78%
Finland	1028	37,20%	95,40%	77,80%	96,30%	95,40%	97%	69,50%
Germany	1514	39,80%	87,40%	87,50%	94,30%	87,40%	91,70%	68,60%
Ireland	1005	46,60%	95,20%	84,20%	97,40%	95,20%	95,80%	79,10%
Netherlands	1004	35,30%	89%	82,20%	98,50%	89%	90,10%	71,10%
Sweden	1054	36,70%	91,80%	74,90%	98,90%	91,80%	93,50%	81,80%

ANOVA BELGIUM															
Country:	N	SD201 (trivia 1)	P-value	SD202 (trivia 2)	P-value	SD203 (trivia 3)	P-value	QA111 (familiarity 1)	P-value	QA112 (familiarity 2)	P-value	QA113 (familiarity 3)	P-value	QA131 (self-assessed knowledge 1)	P-value
EU27	26681		9775 <0,001		22587 <0,001		19634 <0,001		24279 <0,001		22587 <0,001		22650 <0,001		16087 <0,001
Belgium	1008		360		936		821		967		936		878		619
Luxembourg	550		251 <0,001		538 <0,001		506 <0,001		544 <0,001		538 <0,001		537 <0,001		429 <0,001
Finland	1028		382	0,3704	981	0,0494	800 <0,05		990	0,8224	981	0,0494	997 <0,001		714 <0,001
Germany	1514		602 <0,05		1323 <0,001		1325 <0,001		1428 <0,05		1323 <0,001		1388 <0,001		1039 <0,001
Ireland	1005		468 <0,001		957	0,0494	846	0,0494	979	0,0494	957	0,0494	963 <0,001		796 <0,001
Netherlands	1004		354	0,8224	894 <0,001		825	0,3704	989 <0,001		894 <0,001		905 <0,05		715 <0,001
Sweden	1054		387	0,3704	968	0,1496	789 <0,001		1042 <0,001		968	0,1496	985 <0,001		862 <0,001
ANOVA Luxembourg															
Country:	N	SD201 (trivia 1)	P-value	SD202 (trivia 2)	P-value	SD203 (trivia 3)	P-value	QA111 (familiarity 1)	P-value	QA112 (familiarity 2)	P-value	QA113 (familiarity 3)	P-value	QA131 (self-assessed knowledge 1)	P-value
EU27	26681		9775 <0,001		22587 <0,001		19634 <0,001		24279 <0,001		22587 <0,001		22650 <0,001		16087 <0,001
Luxembourg	550		251		538		506		544		538		537		429
Belgium	1008		360 <0,001		936 <0,001		821 <0,001		967	0,0494	936 <0,001		878 <0,001		619 <0,001
Finland	1028		382 <0,001		981	0,0494	800 <0,001		990 <0,05		981	0,0494	997 <0,001	0,3704	714 <0,001
Germany	1514		602 <0,01		1323 <0,001		1325 <0,001		1428 <0,001		1323 <0,001		1388 <0,001		1039 <0,001
Ireland	1005		468	0,3704	957 <0,05		846 <0,001		979	0,0494	957 <0,05		963 <0,001	0,0494	796 <0,001
Netherlands	1004		354 <0,001		894 <0,001		825 <0,001		989	0,3704	894 <0,001		905 <0,001		715 <0,001
Sweden	1054		387 <0,001		968 <0,001		789 <0,001		1042	0,8224	968 <0,001		985 <0,001		862 <0,05

Appendix C

Country:	N	Frequently discuss EU	Frequently discuss National	Occasionally discuss EU	Occasionally discuss National	Do not discuss EU	Do not discuss National
EU27	26681	4130	6334	14952	15068	7599	5279
Belgium	1008	100	183	522	574	386	251
Bulgaria	1057	193	364	612	559	252	134
Czechia	1009	83	210	569	616	357	183
Denmark	990	208	313	556	528	226	149
Germany	1514	338	508	907	878	269	128
Estonia	1006	177	329	672	593	157	84
Ireland	1005	216	484	641	466	148	55
Greece	1016	308	492	544	442	164	82
Spain	1012	98	184	397	456	517	372
France	1006	90	184	438	524	478	298
Croatia	1030	131	211	539	578	360	241
Italy	1027	132	252	488	539	407	236
Cyprus	505	71	116	225	231	209	158
Latvia	996	88	137	569	624	339	235
Lithuania	1005	132	157	602	640	271	208
Luxembourg	550	165	197	313	297	72	56
Hungary	1059	166	211	628	680	265	168
Malta	502	41	61	281	305	180	136
Netherlands	1004	228	413	557	515	219	76
Austria	1010	176	296	584	599	250	115
Poland	1031	171	232	539	610	321	189
Portugal	1056	66	127	532	588	458	341
Romania	1112	163	202	529	632	420	278
Slovenia	1012	93	125	584	646	335	241
Slovakia	1077	109	215	725	714	243	148
Finland	1028	154	261	683	651	191	116
Sweden	1054	233	417	716	583	105	54

Country:	N:	frequently discuss EU:	frequently discuss EU %	frequently discuss national	frequently c	occasionally discuss EU	occasionally discuss EU %	occasionally discuss national	occasionally discuss national %
EU27	26681	4130	15,50%	6334	23,70%	14952	56%	15068	56,50%
Belgium	1008	100	9,90%	183	18,20%	522	51,80%	574	57%
Luxembourg	550	165	30%	197	35,80%	313	56,90%	297	54%
Germany	1514	338	22,30%	508	33,60%	907	59,90%	878	58%
Ireland	1005	216	21,50%	484	48,20%	641	63,80%	466	46,40%
Netherlands	1004	228	22,70%	413	41,10%	557	55,50%	515	51,30%
Sweden	1054	233	22,10%	417	39,60%	716	68%	583	55,30%

Country:	N:	frequently discuss EU:	frequently discuss national	P-value	occasionally discuss EU	occasionally discuss national	P-value
EU27	26681	4130	6334	<0,001	14952	15068	<0,001
Belgium	1008	100	183	<0,001	522	574	<0,001
Luxembourg	550	165	197	<0,0494	313	297	0,3704
Germany	1514	338	508	<0,001	907	878	<0,05
Ireland	1005	216	484	<0,001	641	466	<0,001
Netherlands	1004	228	413	<0,001	557	515	<0,001
Sweden	1054	233	417	<0,001	716	583	<0,001