# Dataset of Electoral Volatility and its internal components in Western Europe (1945-2015)

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### Description

This dataset provides data on electoral volatility and its internal components in parliamentary elections (lower house) of 20 Western European countries for the 1945-2015 period. It covers the entire universe of Western European elections held after World War II under democratic regimes. Data for Greece, Portugal, and Spain have been collected after their democratizations in the 1970s. Altogether, a total of 347 elections (or, more precisely, electoral periods) are included. A separate excel file contains the update for the elections held since September 2015.

### Content

**Country**: country where the parliamentary election is held (in alphabetical order)

**Election Year**: year in which the election is held

**Election Date**: exact date of the election

**RegV**: electoral volatility caused by vote switching between parties that enter or exit from the party system. A party is considered as entering the party system where it receives at least 1% of the national share in election at time *t+1* (while it received less than 1% in election at time *t*). Conversely, a party is considered as exiting the part system where it receives less than 1% in election at time *t+1* (while it received at least 1% in election at time *t*).

**AltV**: electoral volatility caused by vote switching between existing parties, namely parties receiving at least 1% of the national share in both elections under scrutiny.

**OthV**: electoral volatility caused by vote switching between parties falling below 1% of the national share in both the elections at time *t* and *t+1*. It is important to clarify that this category is not computed by aggregating the scores of each party falling below 1% and then comparing the overall sum at time *t* and *t+1*. Conversely, each party's volatility is counted separately - up to a specification of 0.1% - and then added to the calculation of OthV. This choice has been made to avoid underestimation of Total Volatility but at the same time to maintain a distinction between parties above 1% and parties below 1% for the calculation of the two components of RegV and AltV.

**TotV**: total electoral volatility in the party system, given by the sum of the previous measures. RegV + AltV + OthV = TV.

## Sources

The main source for electoral data has been the work by Nohlen and Stöver (2010), for elections until 2008. For the elections held since 2009, I have relied on official data provided by the pertinent electoral authority for each country. For certain elections I have also relied on Bartolini and Mair (1990) and on Ersson (2012). Details about sources and other methodological choices are specified below in the notes on the individual countries. Nohlen and Stöver's work has the merit to provide, for a large number of elections, electoral results of parties down to 0.1%, disentangling the category of 'other parties'. The availability of data up to a specification of 0.1% has allowed for an accurate calculation of Total Volatility and its internal components.

## Methodological criteria

The index of electoral volatility has been originally developed by Pedersen (1979). Given the emphasis on the internal components of the index of electoral volatility, the most important question has been that of understanding when a party can be considered as 'new' and included in the calculation of RegV. On this point I have relied on the classic criteria set by Bartolini and Mair (1990: 311–312) regarding mergers and splits of existing parties: when two or more parties merge to form a new party, or when two or more parties merge with an existing party, electoral volatility is computed by subtracting the vote share of the new party from the combined vote share of the merging parties in the election immediately preceding the merger. When a party splits into two or more parties, electoral volatility is computed by subtracting the combined vote share of the new parties from that of the original party in the election immediately preceding the split. Following again Bartolini and Mair's choices, I have considered as splits all those separations that derive from official decisions of a minority within the structure of a given party. As a consequence, splits and mergers have been included in the calculation of AltV. On the contrary, when a party leader or deputy is expelled or simply exits from a party and then launches a new party, this latter has been included in the calculation of RegV. Moreover, 'genuinely new parties' – namely 'parties that are not successors to any previous parliamentary parties, have a novel name and structure, and do not have any important figures from past democratic politics among their major members' (Sikk 2005, 399) – clearly enter the calculation of RegV. These criteria are also used by Ersson (2012). As underlined by Sikk (2005, 393–394), this approach is conservative, in the sense that it underestimates voters' mobility but it 'seems to better balance shortcomings and merits' with respect to alternative approaches. Furthermore, according to Ersson (2012, 4), this approach 'is the least troublesome one'.

As regards thresholds, for the calculation of TotV and its internal components, parties' scores between elections have been confronted up to a specification of 0.1%. Parties below 0.1% have been grouped in a residual category and included in OthV. I have set a threshold of 1% of the national share for parties in order to be included in the calculation of either RegV or AltV. The rationale behind this logic is that when a party casts 1% or more, it is already considered as a relevant component of the party system while a vote shift from, say, 1.9% to 2.1% is only considered as an alteration in the strength of an established party, devoid of any regeneration for the party system. At any rate, any threshold could be considered arbitrary and has its own trade-offs: at the same time, to not set any threshold would be even more distorting for the purpose of calculating the extent to which a party system is undergoing a regeneration. For instance, take the case of the French National Front (FN): it contests legislative elections for the first time in 1973 (0.5%), then in 1978 (0.3%) and 1981 (0.2%), and eventually in 1986 elections it succeeds in gaining 9.8% of the national share. With the 1% threshold that I set, FN enters the calculation of RegV in 1986 with a contribution of 4.8 ($(9.8 – 0.2)/2 = 4.8$)). If we set no threshold, it would have entered the calculation of RegV (with a contribution of $0.5/2 = 0.25$) in 1973 and in 1986 it would have entered the calculation of AltV (with a contribution of 4.8, as seen before). Nevertheless, in my opinion, the real innovation within the French party system occurs in 1986 and not in 1973. For this reason, a threshold is necessary to set a qualitative distinction between parties that produce a significant change within the system and parties that simply enter the election game.

## Notes on individual countries

### Austria

Following Bartolini and Mair (1990, 315), the Democratic Progressive Party (DFP) splits from the Social Democrats (SPÖ) in 1966, thus entering the calculation of AltV. In 2024, Jetz-Pilz disappears while KPÖ Plus – an electoral alliance between the Communist Party of Austria and the Young Left – and Beer Party emerge (RegV);

### Belgium

For some elections (1958; 1995-2014) the residual category of 'other parties' is not disaggregated. Red Lions (RL) in 1971 have been considered as a split from the Socialist Party (PSB), thus entering the calculation of AltV). Following Bartolini and Mair (1990, 315), the Flemish and the Walloon wings of Christian-democrats, socialists and liberals have been put together until 1981. Since 1985, they have been considered separately. Due to this choice, TV is slightly underestimated between 1971 and 1981. In 2024, Party Blank emerges as a new party (RegV).

### Cyprus

After 1976, the Democratic National Party merges into the Democratic Rally (AltV). In 1996, United Democrats is considered new (RegV) instead as a split from AKEL. The party was founded in 1993 by Georgios Vassiliou, former President of Cyprus, elected as an independent with the support of AKEL. After the election of 1996, ADISOK, a split from AKEL, merged into the United Democrats (AltV). In 2021, Democratic Front splits from Democratic Party (DIKO). In 2026, Democratic Alignment is the continuation of Democratic Front (AltV); Generation Change merges into AKEL (AltV) and Solidarity Movement merges into DIKO (AltV).

**Denmark**

The Independent Party (DU) in 1953 has been treated as a new party (RegV). Following Bartolini and Mair (1990, Appendix II) but unlike Ersson (2012, 22), the Socialist People's Party (SF) in 1960 has been considered as a new party (RegV). Following Ersson (2012, 22), in 1998 the Danish People's Party (DF) splits from the Progress Party (FP) (AltV). In 2022, Denmark Democrats (DD) has been considered as a new party (RegV): the founder, Inger Støjberg, a former MP and minister for the Venstre, founded it after being expelled from the Folketing and without a split in her previous party. Later on, four other MPs, originally elected in the DF but later on sitting as independents in the Folketing, joined the new party. In 2026, Citizens' Party is considered new: the leader, Lars Boje Mathiesen, was expelled from New Right in March 2023 and continued to sit in the Folkeing as an independent. Later on, in August 2024, he founded the new party.

**Finland**

The Social Democratic Union of Workers and Smallholders (TPSL) splits from the Social Democratic Party (SDP) (Ersson 2012, 22). The Finnish Rural Party (SMP) in 1962 has been classified as a new party (entering the calculation of RegV). In 1975, the Constitutional Right Party (PO) has been considered as a new party (entering the calculation of RegV), while the Finnish People's Unity Party (SKYP) splits from the Rural Party (AltV) (Bartolini and Mair 1990, 316). In 2019, Movement Now, whose founder is a former member of the National Coalition Party (KOK), has been considered as a new party (RegV).

**France**

As recognized by Bartolini and Mair (1990, 316-317) and Ersson (2012, 21), estimating volatility scores for France is not easy due the extremely fluid nature of French parties. Moreover, electoral data are very often inconsistent given that different sources report different electoral results. In 1958, the Unified Socialist Party has been considered as new (entering the RegV calculation). In 1967, the conservative political scene in France is very confused: I have followed the choices made by Bartolini and Mair (1990, 317). Note that Ersson (2012, 21) disagree on how to treat the Center Democrats (CD). In 1973, the two

groups of Left Republicans (MR and RR) have been treated as new (entering the calculation of RegV). In 1981, the two Green lists have been considered as splits from the previous Green list running in 1978 (thus entering the calculation of AltV). In 1986 Rally for the Republic (RPR) and Union for French Democracy (UDF) ran with common lists in certain districts: my choice has been to consider them together for this election. In 1997, the residual category of 'other parties' is not disaggregated. Moreover, votes grouped in the categories of 'other left' and 'extreme left' have been considered in continuity with the same groups in 1993. The National Republican Movement (MNR) and the Republican Pole have been treated as new parties in 2002 (therefore entering the RegV calculation). In 2007, the Extreme Left includes Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) and Workers' Struggle (LO) that ran separately in 2002 (AltV). In 2017, the Union of Democrats and Independents is a merge the Radical Party and the New Centre (AltV). Debout la France is new (RegV). In 2022, the Ensemble and Nupes coalitions are not disaggregated. Reconquest is new (RegV); Sovereignist right is in continuity with Debout la France (AltV). In 2024, the coalitions of Ensemble and New Popular Front (NPF) are not disaggregated; The coalition of NFP is compared to NUPES (AltV); Union of the Far Right (Ciotti) splits from Union of the Right and Centre (AltV). Reconquest and Sovereignist Right disappear (RegV).

**Germany**

In 1953, electoral data are inconsistent: I have followed the Federal Returning Officer http://www.bundeswahlleiter.de/en/bundestagswahlen/fruehere_bundestagswahlen/btw1953.html.
In 1990, the electoral results in the reunified Germany have been put in comparison with the results in West Germany in 1987: the result is a higher level of electoral volatility with respect to Dassonneville (2015) who excludes the East Germany from the calculation in 1990. The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Christian Social Union (CSU) have been considered as a unique party: this leads to a slight underestimation of electoral volatility only in 1990, while in the other elections their swings go in the same direction. In 2025, Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW) splits from Linke (AltV), while Human Environment Animal Protection and Grassroots Democratic Party (*Die Basis*) fall below the 1% thresholds and therefore enter the calculation of RegV.

**Greece**

In 1977, the National Alignment (EP) has been considered as a split from New Democracy (entering the calculation of AltV). In 1993, Political Spring (POLAN) has been considered as a split from New Democracy (following Bolgherini 2002). In 1996, the Democratic Social Movement (DIKKI) splits from the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK). In May 2012, the Independents Greeks (ANEL) has been considered a new party (therefore entering the RegV calculation).

**Iceland**

In 1953, the Republican Party (Lý) is a splinter from the Independence Party (Sj) (entering the AltV calculation). In 1967, the Independent Democratic Party (Ól) has been treated as a new party (therefore entering the RegV calculation). In 1971, the Union of Liberals and Leftists (Sf) is a continuation of Ól under a different label (and it enters the AltV calculation.). In 1979, 'Independents from the South' have been treated as a new list (therefore considered in the calculation of RegV). In 1987, the Association for Justice and Equality (Suj) splits from the Progressive Party (Fr) (entering the calculation of AltV). Following Ersson (2012, 18), in 1995 the National Awakening (*Þj)* splits from the Social Democratic Party (Al) (and it enters the calculation of AtV). In 1999 there is a process of splits and mergers on the left wing scene: I have followed Ersson's conservative choices (2012, 18-19) as regards the two new parties, Social Democratic Alliance (Sa) and Left-Green Movement (Vi), both considered as an emanation from the four left parties that contested the 1995 election (entering the AltV calculation). The Liberal Party (Ff) is instead a new party (thus considered in the RegV calculation). In 2024, Democratic Party is considered a new party (RegV): the leader was a former deputy member of the Independence Party who left the Sj in January 2024 and later founded the new party in September 2024.

**Ireland**

Independents have been treated as a unique 'party' but always included in OthV, so as to not inflate either RegV or AltV. Ersson makes a different choice on this point, by treating them as a genuinely new party each time, thus overestimating its type 'A' volatility, which corresponds to my RegV. In 1992, Democratic Left (DL) splits from Workers Party (WP) (and it has been considered for the AltV calculation). In 2002, DL merges into the Labour Party. In 2024, Independent Ireland emerges (RegV).

**Italy**

In 1948, the Socialist Party of Italian Workers (PSLI) splits from the Italian Socialist Party (therefore, it has been considered for the calculation of AltV). In 1968, the Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity (PSIUP) splits from the Italian Socialist Party (PSI). In 1976, the Radical Party (PR) and Proletarian Democracy (DP) are new parties (and considered for the calculation of RegV). In 1979, National Democracy (DN) splits from the Italian Social Movement (MSI) (and enters the AtV calculation). In 1992, The Network (La Rete) has been considered a new party (entering the RegV calculation) and so does also Democratic Alliance (AD) in 1994 (RegV), while the Segni Pact (PS) has been treated as a split from Christian Democracy (DC) (and enters the AltV calculation). In 2001, the Sunflower is an electoral alliance composed by the Greens and the Italian Social-democrats (SDI). In 2006, the calculation of electoral volatility for Greens and SDI has been made by attributing the 50% of the list score in 2001 to each party (1.1% to each party). In 2006, European Democracy (DE) merges into Union of Christian and Center

Democrats (UDC). In 2008 The Right (La Destra) is considered a new party (therefore considered for the calculation of RegV), while the Pensioners' Party (PP) merge into the People of Freedom (PDL) (and it enters the calculation of AltV). In 2022, Action-Italy Alive emerges: it is a doubtful case a Italy Alive is a split from the Democratic Party (PD) but Action is a new party. The joint list has been considered new as the frontrunner is Carlo Calenda, leader of the new party Action, which was also unanimously predicted above Italy Alive in pre-electoral polls; Italexit and Sovereign and Popular Italy emerge (the latter is in comparison with the Communist Party in 2018) (RegV); Civic Engagement is a split from the Five Star Movement (M5S) (AltV).

**Luxembourg**

In 1968, the Popular Independent Movement (MIP) merges into the Democratic Party (DP) (entering the calculation of AltV). In 1999, Green and Liberal Alliance (GLA) is a new party (thus considered for the RegV calculation). In 2023, Fokus, founded by former MPs or councillors individually exiting from three different parties (Christian Social People's Party, DP, and the Greens) considered new (RegV); Liberty – Freedom, founded by Roy Reding after he resigned from the Alternative Democratic Reform Party (ADR), considered new (RegV).

**Malta**

As for Ireland, Independents in 1950 have been treated as a unique 'party' but included in the calculation of OthV. In 1962, both the Democratic Nationalist Party (DNP) and the Christian Workers Party (CWP) have been classified as splinter parties from, respectively, the Nationalist Party (PN) and the Labour Party (PL) (this choice is consistent with Ersson 2012, 19). In 2022, the Democratic Party splits from the Nationalist Party (with whom formed a joint list in 2017) and formed the joint list ADPD together with Democratic Alternative (AltV). In 2026, Ahwa Maltin is the continuation of People's Party.

**Netherlands**

Following Bartolini and Mair (1990), the Political Party of Radicals (PPR) splits from the Catholic People's Party (KVP) in 1971 (entering the AltV calculation). The Reformed Political League (GPV), a former split from the Anti-Revolutionary Party (ARP) in 1952, enters the calculation of RegV as it overcomes 1% in 1971. Following Bartolini and Mair (1990, 320), the Reformatory Political Federation (RPF) in 1981 has been considered a new political party (thus also considered for the calculation of RegV). In 1989, the GreenLeft (GL) is the result of the merge among four small left-wing parties, among which the Political Party of Radicals PPR) and the Pacifist Socialist Party (PSP) were above 1% in 1986 (entering the AltV calculation). For the 1994 election, I have consulted the European Electoral Database to find disaggregated data up to 0.1% http://eed.nsd.uib.no/webview. In 2006, the Party for Freedom

(PVV) has been considered a new party (and it is considered for the calculation of RegV): Gert Wilders, a former member of the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), left the party in 2004, and later in 2006 founded the Party for Freedom (PVV) but without any formal breakaway within the structure of the VVD. In 2021, JA21 ('Right Answer 2021') splits from Forum Democracy (FvD). In 2023, New Social Contract (NSC) has been considered new: the founder, Pieter Omtzigt, was a former CDA MP who left the party in June 2021 to become an independent MP before founding the new party (RegV). In 2025, New Social Contract falls below the 1% threshold, while JA21 and 50PLUS return above it, thus entering the calculation of RegV.

**Norway**

Following Ersson (2012, 22), the Socialist People's Party (SF) has been considered as a splinter from the Labour Party (A) in 1961. In 2025, Norway Democrats fall below the 1% threshold, therefore entering the calculation of RegV.

**Portugal**

Contrary to international practice, official electoral results include blank and invalid votes into valid votes. In order to provide more accurate volatility scores and following Nohlen and Stöver (2010), parties' vote share has been recalculated by subtracting blank and invalid votes from the total number of valid votes. In 1983, the People's Democratic Union (UDP) and the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR) ran in a joint list in some constituencies: in order to compare their scores with the two separate lists running in 1985, they have been considered together for the period 1983-1985. In 2024, PSD-CDS/PP coalition compared with the separate lists in 2022 (including the already existing coalitions in Madeira and Azores) (AltV). National Democratic Alternative emerges as new (RegV).

**Spain**

Similarly to Portugal, in Spain official electoral results include blank votes into valid votes. In order to provide more accurate volatility scores, parties' vote share has been recalculated by subtracting blank votes from the total number of valid votes. In 1982, the Democratic and Socialist Center (CDS) is a doubtful case, given that is has been launched by Adolfo Suárez, the former leader of the Union of the Democratic Center (UCD). However, there has not been a formal split in UCD and CDS can be therefore considered a new party (entering the calculation of RegV). In 1986, the Communists' Unity Board (MUC) and the Democratic Reformist Party (PRD) are new parties (thus considered for the calculation of RegV). In 1989, the Basque Solidarity (EA) splits from the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV).

**Sweden**

Feminist Initiative (F!), exceeding 1% of the national share for the first time in 2014, is a genuinely new party (and it enters the calculation of RegV).

**Switzerland**

Following Bartolini and Mair (1990), the Republican Movement (RB) has been considered a new party in 1971 (thus entering the calculation of RegV). For the 2007 federal election, electoral data have been gathered from the Swiss Federal Administration website http://www.politik-stat.ch/nrw2007CH_it.html. The Green Liberal Party (GLP) has been considered a new party (and it enters the RegV calculation). In 2023, The Centre is the merge of Christian Democratic People's Party and Conservative Democratic Party (AltV).

**United Kingdom**

Independents (2% in 2024) treated as other parties and compared with Independents in 2019 (OthV).

## How to cite this dataset?

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## Publications based on this dataset

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