

BELGIUM

Date of Elections: March 31, 1968

Characteristics of Parliament:

Voters were required to renew the bicameral Parliament which had been dissolved a year before the normal expiry of its four-year mandate.

The 212 deputies in the Chamber of Representatives are all elected by universal vote. In the Senate, on the other hand, where a seat is reserved *ipso jure* for Prince Albert, the King's brother, the 178 other members are divided into three categories: those who are elected by universal suffrage (106); those who are elected by Provincial Councils (48) on the basis of one per 200,000 inhabitants and one per remaining fraction of over 125,000 inhabitants — each Council nominating at least three senators; and, finally, those who are co-opted, of which there are half as many as the number of senators nominated by the Provincial Councils.

Electoral System:

Voting in Belgium takes place on the party-list system in a single round with proportional representation. Candidates are also allowed to combine within provinces on a single list, provided prior notice is given. The country is divided into thirty constituencies for the Chamber of Representatives and twenty for the Senate.

All Belgian citizens of both sexes aged at least 21 have the right to vote provided they are on the electoral register (revised every two years), have been resident in the same commune for six months and have not been barred by law. Voting is obligatory; non-motivated abstention is forbidden and is a punishable offence.

With regard to eligibility, the system in the Chamber of Representatives is different from that of the Senate.

While in both cases candidates must be Belgian by birth or by "full naturalization", enjoy full civil and political rights, and be domiciled in Belgium, the minimum age is 25 for the Chamber of Representatives and 40 for the Senate. To be elected senator by universal suffrage, candidates must also fulfil requirements as regards experience, ability or repute and belong, *inter alia*, to one of the following categories: former Minister, University graduate, Burgomaster or former Burgomaster, etc.

Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections:

A few weeks before an important step was taken towards European integration with the entry into force of the Customs Union, friction between the different Belgian communities resulted in the breakdown of the Vanden Boeynants Government. On February 7, 1968, the Flemish Christian Social Ministers dissociated themselves from the Government coalition of Liberal Christian Socialists on the question of the transfer to Walloon territory or to the Brussels area of the French section of Louvain University.

The legislative power, that is, the two Chambers and the Head of State jointly, adopted a declaration revising the Constitution which led to the official dissolution on March 1, 1968, by Royal Order, of the Parliament which had been elected on May 23, 1965.

The election campaign was based essentially on problems of language and relations between the communities. The results were moreover characterized by the considerable success of those parties which had chosen a hard line on the language issue.

The *Volksunie*, which had candidates in 17 constituencies of the Chamber, now has 20 deputies instead of 12, the French-speaking Democratic Front in Brussels has doubled the number of its seats to 6 and the Walloon Front has 6 deputies instead of the 2 it had in the previous Parliament. The last two groups submitted lists in 15 constituencies of the Chamber.

On the other hand, the three large "national" parties which were represented throughout the country suffered a considerable setback.

This was particularly true of the Christian Social Party, which saw its seats drop from 77 to 69. The phenomenon was probably the effect of the split between Flemings and Walloons, since the Christian Socialists of Brussels who had remained united on the list of the outgoing Prime Minister, Mr. Vanden Boeynants, maintained their positions.

A similar defeat was suffered by the Socialist Party, which now has 59 instead of 64 deputies.

The third national party, the Party for Liberty and Progress, which campaigned on the platform of national unity, was not as successful as had been expected and lost one seat in the Chamber of Deputies and three in the Senate.

Although the three large parties have fewer seats, they nevertheless have a strong united majority, with 175 deputies out of 212.

Details of the elections are given below.

Statistics:

1. *Results of the Elections to the Chamber of Representatives*

Number of registered voters	6,170,167
Voters	5,556,520
Blank or void ballot papers	378,517
Valid votes	5,178,003

Belgium

Political Group	v , obtam'ed obtained	%	Number of Seats in the Chamber
<i>Christian Social Party</i>			
CVP (Flemish List)	1,037,106	20.03	45
PSC (Walloon List)	369,393	7.13	15
Cartel (Vanden Boeynants List).	236,405	4.57	9
	1,642,904	31.73	69 (—8)
<i>Belgian Socialist Party*</i>			
PSB.	1,403,445	27.10	57
Belgian Socialist Party (Brussels).	45,870	0.89	2
	1,449,315	27.99	59 (—5)
<i>Party for Liberty and Progress</i>	1,088,873	20.87	47 (—1)
<i>Vlaamse Volksunie.</i>	506,724	9.79	20 (+8)
<i>French-Speaking Democratic Front — Walloon Front</i>			
<i>Cartel.</i>	305,452	5.90	12 (+7)
<i>Belgian Communist Party</i> ..	170,686	3.30	5 (—1)
<i>Others.</i>	23,049	0.42	—

* A split occurred in the Brussels Federation of the PSB between French-speaking and Flemish-speaking candidates.

2. Results of the Elections to the Senate

Number of registered voters.	6,170,167
Voters.	5,555,511
Blank or void ballot papers.	442,036
Valid votes.	5,113,475

Political Group	Votes obtained		Number of Members elected by Universal Suffrage	Number of Members elected by Provincial Councils
<i>Christian Social Party</i>				
CVP (Flemish List) . . .	1,026,515	20.07	24	
PSC (Walloon List) . . .	371,883	7.27	7	
Cartel (Vanden Boeynants List)	183,171	3.58	4	
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	1,557,569	30.92	35 (-9)	20 (-1)
<i>Belgian Socialist Party</i>				
PSB	1,411,090	27.60	32	
Belgian Socialist Party (Brussels)	45,097	0.88	1	
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	1,456,187	28.48	33 (+ 2)	13 (-1)
<i>Party for Liberty and Progress</i>	1,024,128	21.01	22 (-1)	9 (-2)
<i>Belgian Communist Party.</i>	180,156	3.52	2 (-1)	- (-1)
<i>Vlaamse Volkspartij.</i>	513,602	10.04	9 (+ 5)	3 (+ 2)
<i>French - Speaking Democratic Front — Walloon</i>				
<i>Front Cartel.</i>	293,731	5.74	5 (+ 4)	3 (+ 3)
<i>Others</i>	88,102	0.29		

One seat is reserved for the Prince of Liege, the King's brother; the total number