

## BELGIUM

Date of Elections: November 7, 1971

### Reason for Elections

Elections were held to renew all the member of Parliament on the early dissolution thereof by the King on September 24, 1971. Normal expiration would have occurred in June 1972.

### Characteristics of Parliament

The Parliament of Belgium is bicameral, consisting of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Members thereof simultaneously represent the Belgian people and the Flemish and Walloon Communities \*.

The House of Representatives consists of 212 members elected for 4 years.

The Senate has 178 members, who all have 4-year terms; of these 106 are elected directly by the electorate, 48 by the provincial councils and 24 are co-opted. Moreover, one seat is reserved for Prince Albert, brother of the King, who is Senator *ex-officio*.

### Electoral System

All citizens of either sex at least 18 years of age, who have resided for at least 6 months in the same municipality and who possess full civil rights have the right to vote. They must be registered on the electoral rolls, which are updated every 2 years.

Voting is compulsory. Any unjustified abstention is punishable, ranging from a fine to taking the elector off the electoral rolls.

A candidate to the House of Representatives must be Belgian by birth or have obtained a " full naturalisation ", be in full possession of his civil and political rights, at least 25 years of age and reside in Belgium.

A candidate to the Senate must fulfill the same aforementioned requirements ; moreover, he must be at least 40 years of age and belong to one of the following categories: a former Minister, a holder of a university diploma, an executive director of an industrial enterprise employing more than 100 persons, a high-ranking civil servant, a Burgomaster or a former Burgomaster.

There is incompatibility of office as regards Representatives and Senators. Candidatures which are presented by 200 to 500 electors (depending on the

\* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections V* (1970-1971), p. 11.

size of the constituency) must be submitted to the president of the central voting office no later than 21 days before the election. Parties wishing to group together must make a declaration to that effect no later than 10 days before the election.

Belgium is divided into 30 constituencies for election to the House of Representatives and into 20 for election to the Senate. Voting takes place on the party-list system, in a single round, with proportional representation in accordance with the Hondt method; remainders are distributed within each of the 9 provinces. Vote-splitting is not provided for but preferential voting is possible, as the elector may cast a specific vote for the main candidate and for the substitute candidate of the list for which he is voting. Each individual candidate is regarded as constituting a separate list. Moreover, with the consent of the electors who sponsored them, candidates of a particular list may join with candidates specifically chosen from lists submitted in other constituencies of the same province. (Article 132 of the Electoral Law.)

The " next-in-line " of the list from which the holder had been elected fills any seat which has become vacant between general elections.

### **General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections**

Opened in late September, the electoral campaign was quiet throughout most of Belgium save the Brussels region. In accordance with the electoral reforms of June 1969, members of the military and youths between 18 and 21 years of age were allowed to vote for the first time.

The outgoing coalition, made up of the Christian Social and the Belgian Socialist parties, was challenged by 4 parties. During the course of the campaign this coalition emphasized the Government's achievements, the former emphasizing party cohesion and unity and the latter proposing a new military policy which would progressively reduce service, from one year to first 10 months, and then 6 months.

Among the opposition, the Party for Liberty and Progress (PLP), which had split into 3 factions in Brussels, demanded a reduction in unproductive State expenditure whereas the Communists rallied around the issues of employment, living standards, the introduction of a democratic system, worker-control, and federalism.

The linguistic opposition parties, namely the French-speaking Democratic Front (FDF) and the Walloon Front Cartel (RW) for the Walloons, and the *Volkaunie* for the Flemish, based their campaign on offering solutions to the linguistic problems. The French-speaking parties proposed a tripartite federalism (Flanders, Walloon, Brussels). As it feared that in a tripartite federalist

systems Brussels would align with the other French-speaking regions, the *Volksunie* was in favour of a 2-community federalism which would exclude Brussels.

On election day the 2 parties of the outgoing coalition maintained their position, but the Liberals suffered a setback, losing 13 seats in the House of Representatives as well as their lead over the Walloon Federahst Parties (FDF and Cartel), which doubled their number of Representatives.

On February 20, 1972, the new Cabinet was formed on the same coalition basis as heretofore.

## Statistics

### 1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the House of Representatives

Number of registered voters. . . . .	6,271,240
Voters. . . . .	5,741,268 (91.5 %)
Blank or void ballot papers. . . . .	459,637
Valid votes. . . . .	5,281,631

Political Group	Votes obtained	"	Number of Seats to the House of Representatives
Christian Social Party. . . . .	1,594,996	30,3	67 (— 2)
Belgian Socialist Party . . . . .	1,439,770	27,2	61 (+ 2)
Party for Liberty and Progress (PLP). . . . .	868,395	16,4	34 (—13)
French-Speaking Democratic Front (FDF) - Walloon Front Cartel. . . . .	593,245	11,2	24 (+12)
<i>Vlaamse Volksunie</i> . . . . .	586,917	11,1	21 (+ 1)
Belgian Communist Party . . . . .	163,051	3,1	5 (= )
Others. . . . .	35,257	0,7	—
			111'

### 2. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the Senate

Number of registered voters. . . . .	6,271,240
Voters. . . . .	5,741,266 (91.5 %)
Blank or void ballot papers. . . . .	529,863
Valid votes. . . . .	5,211,403

Political Group	Votes obtained	%	Number of Senators elected by Universal Suffrage	Number of Senators elected by Provincial Councils or co-opted	Numbers of Seats in the Senate
Christian Social Party . . . . .	1,547,851	29.74	34	27	61 (-3)
Belgian Socialist Party (PLP) . . . . .	1,382,028	26.53	30	19	49 (-4)
Party for Liberty and Progress . . . . .	857,647	16.45	17	12	29 (-8)
<i>Vlaamse Volksunie</i> . . . . .	634,094	12.15	12	7	19 (+15)
French-Speaking Democratic Front (FDF)					
Walloon Front . . . . .	598,763	11.48	12	7	19 (+15)
Belgian Communist Party	164,454	3.15	1	0	1 (- 1)
	26,571	0.50	—	—	—
			106	<b>72</b>	178

### 3. Distribution of Parliamentarians according to Professional Category

	House of Representatives	Senate
Lawyers . . . . .	52	38
Salaried clerks . . . . .	31	19
Teachers . . . . .	27	27
Industrialists . . . . .	15	29
Trade unionists . . . . .	15	7
Journalists . . . . .	12	4
Doctors . . . . .	8	7
Social workers . . . . .	7	7
Tradesmen . . . . .	7	2
Workers . . . . .	5	4
Farmers . . . . .	5	8
Party officials . . . . .	4	2
Civil servants . . . . .	3	6
Engineers, architects . . . . .	3	4
International civil servants	2	—
Economists . . . . .	2	—
Others . . . . .	14	14
	212	178

4. *Distribution of Parliamentarians according to Sex*

Men . . . . .	206	172
Women . . . . .	6	6
	212	178

5. *Distribution of Parliamentarians according to Age Group*

20-30. . . . .	3	—
30-40. . . . .	33	—
40-50. . . . .	87	56
50-60. . . . .	68	78
60-70. . . . .	19	38
Over 70. . . . .	2	6
	212	178