

# 10

## Types of Non-Electoral Political Participation in Europe

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## 10.1 Introduction

Is a high rate of political participation by the public good or bad for democracy? This question has consistently been a topic of interest in political sociology, and political sociologists have developed three key theories of political participation: the theory of democratic elitism, the rational choice theory, and the theory of participatory democracy (*cf.* Faulks 1999). The theory of democratic elitism and rational choice theory are instrumentalist theories of participation, interpreting political participation as a means of attaining political aims. Supporters of the theory of democratic elitism, such as Schumpeter (2004), accord greater importance to the maintenance of political stability than upholding democracy and find the enlightened leadership of elites preferable to broad political participation by the masses, due to the apathy and lack of education among the latter. Rational choice theory takes a similarly minimalist view of political participation (Downs 1957, Olson 2000) and regards a low level of political participation as a sign of rationality on the part of citizens, since an individual has little more to gain from participating in politics than from not participating. If citizens are to be encouraged to participate, they must be convinced that the benefits of participating outweigh the efforts of doing so.

Conversely, the theory of participative democracy considers the public's political participation as crucial to democracy. Political activity is not just a means of attaining certain ends, as it actually helps strengthen civil society and teaches citizens about the art of governance. According to this theory, democracy flourishes only when citizens are interested in politics, informed, and politically active. A lack of interest and political apathy can lead to a decline in the quality of democratic governance and make it easier to usurp power.

But in modern democracies, far from the majority of citizens are interested in politics, and not all of them participate. Many authors (*e.g.* Almond and Verba 1963, Milbrath 1965) agree that a high rate of political participation and interest in politics is not necessarily good for democracy. According to Almond and Verba's "myth of civic competence" (1963), participation should be moderate in form and frequency. In their view, what is important in modern democracies is not politically active citizens but politically competent citizens who believe that if they wish, they can have an impact on the political process. Too much or too little participation pose equal threats to the system's delicate balance.

However, the fact is that there are no firm criteria with which to evaluate levels of political participation (McDonough, Shin and Moises 1998). Western democracies have shown that they are much stronger than many

analyses have indicated. In their early stages, the fragile post-war democracies managed to survive low rates of political participation, and later on, all Western democracies survived the wave of protest movements at the end of the 1960s, which also posed a threat to their existence.

Some authors are currently drawing attention to the decline in the level of election participation and the limited public involvement in political parties and politically oriented groups, and they see this as the malady of modern democracies. Others, such as Dalton and Kuechler (1990), Topf (1995), Kaase and Newton (1995), McAdam, McCarthy and Zaid (1996), Smith (1997), Beck (1997), and Norris (1999), believe that these conventional forms of political participation are indeed on the wane, but as they recede, new and previously unconventional forms of civic activities that focus more on post-material values, such as peace, the environment, and animal rights, will rise.

### **Western versus Central and Eastern Europe**

Many scientists studying the transformation in Central and Eastern Europe were concerned that the new, post-communist democracies would face political apathy and a low level of political participation, which, in the long term, would be detrimental to their development as democracies. While the first elections in the post-communist societies saw participation rates of 80-90% and a dramatic increase in the number of political parties, researchers soon identified something they began referring to as the “post-honeymoon effect” – a subsequent decline in election participation, in membership in political parties and civic associations, and in the public’s interest in politics (Dalton 2000, Inglehart and Catterberg 2002). The low level of political participation and interest in politics in post-communist societies are considered to be a result of the public’s experience with communist politics, a weakened civil society, and a low level of interpersonal trust (Putnam 1993). The totalitarian repression by the communist regimes had a much more devastating effect on civil society than did the repression experienced under authoritarian regimes. Up until 1989, most citizens in communist countries had experience with involuntary politics and civic participation in interest groups, communist parties, or participation in public demonstrations. A smaller number had participated in protest events (rallies, strikes, petitions) against the government or the system of government. But in these countries few had experience of voluntary, conventional political participation. While the compulsory political participation found in the totalitarian regimes may be a source of people’s aversion to conventional participation in the new democracies, mass membership in communist parties and interest groups may equally have

served as a form of socialization in political participation that could have positive repercussions in the democratic system of governance (Bahry and Silver 1990, Letki 2004).

### Forms of Political Participation in Democratic Countries

It is not possible to lay down a complete list of all forms of political participation. In the 1960s, Milbrath (1965) put together a relatively exhaustive hierarchy of forms of conventional political participation (Table 1), which encompasses most political activities that are typically observed in a normal democratic process. In this hierarchy, activities differ in terms of the amount of time and energy they require. The higher up the hierarchy an activity is located, the more time and energy it requires. And the higher up the hierarchy an activity is located, the fewer the number of people who participate in it. Whoever takes part in activities listed at the top of the hierarchy also tends to participate in activities at lower levels.

TABLE 1 **A Hierarchy of Forms of Participation (Milbrath 1956)**

Holding public and party office Being a candidate for office Soliciting political funds Attending a caucus or a strategy meeting Becoming an active member in a political party Contributing time in a political campaign	Gladiatorial Activities
Attending a political meeting or rally Making a monetary contribution to a party or candidate Contacting a public official or a political leader Wearing a button or putting a sticker on the car Attempting to talk another into voting a certain way Initiating a political discussion Voting Exposing oneself to political stimuli	Transitional Activities     Spectator Activities

In the 1970s, Marsh (1977) drew up a scale of unconventional forms of political participation, which encompasses activities ranging from signing petitions to participating in demonstrations, occupying buildings, destroying of property, and personal violence. Marsh set these activities in the context of “pressures for change” and used them to measure protest potential.

Political participation is a function of stimuli, personal factors, the political environment, and social position (Milbrath 1965), and the level of political participation in a state is affected by both social factors on the micro-level (political attitudes – interest, trust, internal and external political efficacy, and personal characteristics – age, sex, education, social status, religiosity), and macro-level (the duration of democracy in a country and its type, how economically advanced a state is, its political system, how easy or difficult it is to participate).

At present, the most common form of political activity in democratic states is voting. This is a specific form of political behavior in that it only takes place occasionally and it is strongly affected by the mechanisms of social and legal control (Marsh and Kaase 1979). For this reason, it is no longer ranked with conventional forms of political participation. Other non-electoral forms of political engagement, especially ones connected with political parties, are fewer in number.

It is these less common forms of political participation, their types and incidence that we are interested in here. But some caution is necessary when comparing non-electoral participation in different countries, cultures, and sub-cultures, as the different forms of political participation are not always rooted in the same way in each place. What appears to be a natural form of political activity for the middle class need not be natural for the working class. A regular form of political activity in Protestant countries may not be as common in Catholic countries. Moreover, dramatic changes are currently occurring in the patterns of political activity. Political activities that were formerly regarded as unconventional are now often mainstream – for example, signing petitions (Norris 1999) – while, conversely, what older studies indicated as conventional forms of participation may now be unconventional (our analyses indicate an example of this to be the practice of wearing or displaying campaign badges or stickers).

In this study we will attempt to show whether any specific types of non-electoral political behavior can be observed in European democracies, how the level of different non-electoral political activities varies between European countries, and how political participation differs on the basis of some selected micro- and macro-factors.

## 10.2 Data

We used data from the first wave of the European Social Survey for our analysis. The first wave of the ESS involves twenty-two countries, but given that the analysis is intended to focus solely on European countries, Israel has been excluded from the sample.

The ESS looked at ten forms of non-electoral political activities. The survey question read as follows:

There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following?<sup>1</sup>

Firstly ... READ OUT

Contacted a politician, government or local government official.

Worked in a political party or action group.

Worked in another organization or association.

Worn or displayed a campaign badge/sticker.

Signed a petition.

Taken part in a lawful public demonstration.

Boycotted certain products.

Deliberately bought certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons.

Donated money to a political organization or group.

Participated in illegal protest activities.

## 10.3 Results

The average level of overall non-electoral political participation (all forms studied) varies considerably across Europe. Table 2 and Figure 1 show how the countries in the study differ from or resemble one another on the basis of the ten non-electoral political activities listed above. Similarities can be found in the average levels of overall (non-electoral) political participation in four geographic regions of Europe – Northern Europe or Scandinavia (Sweden, Norway, Finland), Western European states (Germany, Denmark,<sup>2</sup> France,

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1 Response categories: Yes, No, Don't know

2 Denmark tends to be geographically ranked with the Scandinavian countries. However, the political activity of the Danes corresponds more with the average participation observed in Western European countries. Its “continental” position goes hand in hand with a similar level and structure of political participation to that in Western European countries.

Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, the UK, Ireland, Switzerland, and Austria), the Mediterranean region or Southern Europe (Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece), and the post-communist countries of Central Europe (Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia).

The countries with a higher level of overall non-electoral participation are primarily northern countries, especially Norway and Sweden, and even Finland. A high level of participation is also typical of Switzerland. The other Western European countries are very similar, and, with the exception of the Netherlands, the level of participation is above average. Conversely, the lowest average level of overall participation is found in the post-communist countries of Central Europe – in Poland, Hungary, and Slovenia – and in the post-authoritarian countries in the southern Mediterranean – Greece, Portugal, and Italy.

The Netherlands, the Czech Republic, and Spain form a curious trio – three countries with a very similar level of participation, but in each case, a level unlike that of the rest of their regions. Compared to the other Western European countries, participation in the Netherlands is lower and overall, below average. The Czechs and the Spanish, on the other hand, participate substantially more than the other post-communist and southern European countries respectively. However, when we look at individual activities (Table 2) we find that the structure of participation in Spain differs considerably from the structure in the Czech Republic and the Netherlands. In Spain, participation in public demonstrations is strong and substantially contributes to its above-average level of participation compared to other Mediterranean countries. On the other hand, the structure of activities that Czechs participate in is much more like the participation structure observed in Western Europe than that in other post-communist countries.

Figure 1 vividly indicates the size of the differences in the average level of overall non-electoral participation. The highest participation level in Norway is four times the lowest level of participation, which was observed in Hungary. Overall non-electoral participation is much lower in the post-communist and Mediterranean areas than in the Western European and particularly the Scandinavian countries (*cf.* Barnes and Simon 1998, Letki 2004).

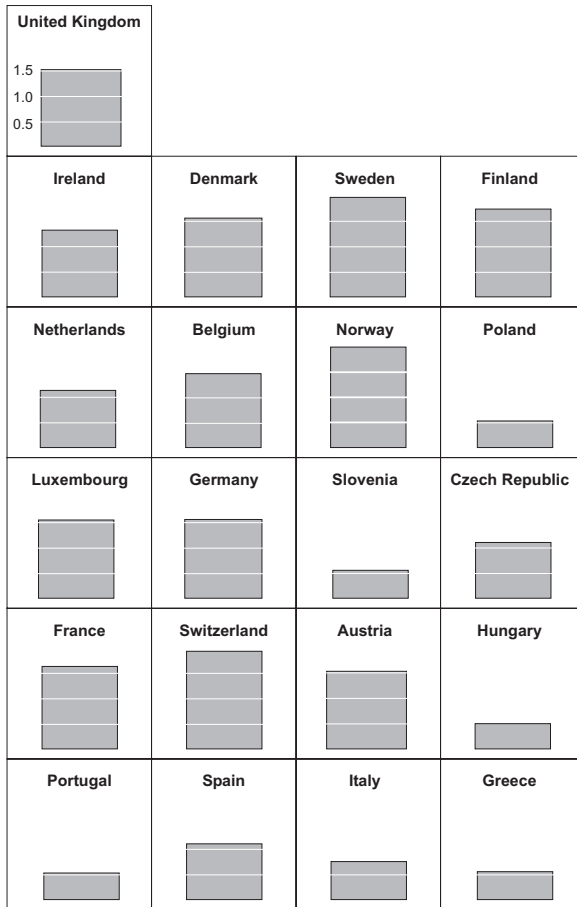
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The structure of participation in Denmark is closer, for example, to the structure of the participation in neighbouring Germany than to that in Norway or Sweden.





FIGURE 1 **A Comparison of Average Levels of Overall Non-Electoral Participation in the Analyzed Countries**



Note: Percentage of people who indicated that they have done the given activity in the 12 months prior to the survey.

The percentage of wholly apathetic citizens tends to outweigh the percentage of active citizens in the Mediterranean and post-communist regions, with one exception – the Czech Republic. The proportion of people in a society that are wholly apathetic compared to the proportion that participate to at least some degree has a much stronger effect on the average level of overall participation than the level of participation among active people does. The aim of our analysis is not just to compare the average level of overall participation in the countries surveyed, but also to determine whether it is

possible to find latent types of non-electoral political participation that match the types described in the literature. We used exploratory factor analysis on the sample to analyze the ten items listed above and extracted three factors (Table 3). The first factor is strongly correlated with the items “contacted a politician/official”, “worked in a political party or action group”, “worked in another organization or association”, “donated money to a political organization or group”, and “wore or displayed a campaign badge/sticker”. The second factor strongly correlates with the items “signed a petition”, “boycotted certain products for political reasons”, and “bought certain products for political reasons”. The third factor strongly correlates with the items “took part in a lawful public demonstration”, “participated in illegal protest activities”, and also with the item “wore or displayed a campaign badge or sticker”. This item correlates with the third factor even more strongly than with the first factor. The items that correlate with the first factor (1 to 4) and with the third factor (5 to 7) can be described as active displays of participation. A citizen must make a decision beforehand to engage in these forms of participation and expend a certain amount of energy when participating. While the first factor encompasses items that represent conventional forms of participation, which can be undertaken in a relatively private, discreet manner, the third factor involves activities that are clearly public and manifest in character, requiring a person to stick out their neck and publicly declare their position on a matter. Conversely, the second factor (items 8 to 10) represents activities that are of a more passive nature. They do not usually require that a person invest much energy in doing them and they often arise out of circumstances conducive to participation (*e.g.* we came upon a place where people were signing a petition; we were able to choose from a number of types of goods and to boycott some of them and/or for political, ethical, or environmental reasons to buy a particular item). The second and third factors, for the most part, comprise items that represent more or less unconventional forms of political activities. In addition, the item “wore or displayed a campaign badge/sticker” comes across as ambivalent – as both conventional and unconventional.

For the purpose of further analysis, we built sum scales out of the items that correlate with these factors. They were created by adding together the activities that fall under each of the given types of participation for each respondent. In accordance with previous research, the first of them was defined as the active conventional type of participation (items 1 to 4), but neither of the two other scales matched the original definition of unconventional participation. Therefore, we defined the second scale as the active demonstrative type (items 5 to 7) and the third as the passive type (items 8 to 10).

TABLE 3 **Types of Participation**

		Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1	Contacting politicians/officials	0.663	0.145	-0.050
2	Work for a political party/ activist group	0.692	-0.078	0.241
3	Work in another organisation or association	0.572	0.204	0.161
4	Donating money	0.593	0.104	0.023
5	Displaying of badge/sticker	0.417	0.138	0.495
6	Taking part in a lawful demonstration	0.189	0.181	0.696
7	Participation in illegal protest	-0.063	0.004	0.758
8	Signing of a petition	0.224	0.556	0.319
9	Boycott of products	0.060	0.812	0.096
10	Purchase of a product	0.119	0.823	-0.010
	% explained variance	18.8	17.8	15.0

Note: Factor analysis, varimax rotation

The reliability of these scales is below the recommended value of 0.75. For the scale of conventional participation, Cronbach's alpha is equal to 0.54; for the scale of passive participation it is 0.64; and for the scale of demonstrative participation it is 0.47. Clearly the items corresponding to non-electoral political participation that were used in the research are unable to provide fully reliable measurements for the patterns of political participation for such a large number of European countries. Factor analyses conducted in individual countries in particular show that in five of the countries studied, *i.e.* Portugal, Sweden, the UK, Greece, and Spain, there are two latent factors of political participation, and in the other countries there are three. Yet, not in every country do the latent types of participation observed correspond to the types found at the European level. Nevertheless, we have decided to use the types of participation we devised as variables in the analyses, since at this point we have no better tool at our disposal for comparing political participation in European countries.

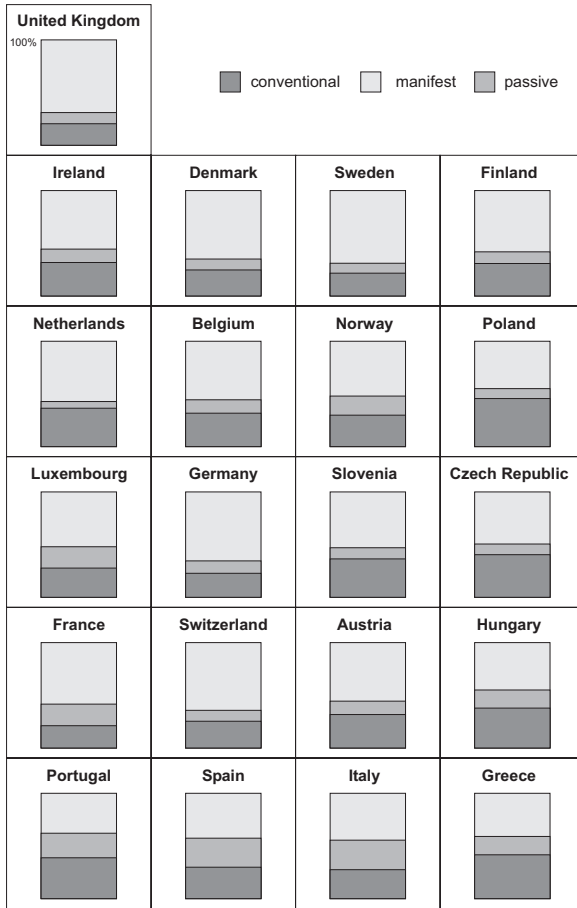
Analysis of variance confirms that the average level of conventional, manifest, and passive participation varies between countries with greater statistical significance than it does within the individual countries.<sup>3</sup> But there

3 Conventional participation:  $F=63.6$ , manifest participation:  $F=60.0$ , passive participation:  $F=283.7$ , all are statistically significant at 0.001.

are no areas in Europe that can be identified as homogenous regions in terms of overall participation and types of participation, or that, as such, can be distinguished as differing from one another. The three types of non-electoral political participation identified in the countries surveyed are present in varying proportions (see Figure 2). In Western European and Scandinavian countries, the passive type of participation clearly predominates over the other two forms. The strongest predominance is in Sweden, followed by the UK, Germany, Denmark, and Switzerland. The passive type of participation is less prevalent in the post-communist countries and even less so in the Mediterranean countries. In Greece, Portugal, and Poland, the passive type of participation is so weakly represented that even the conventional type is more dominant. The Mediterranean area is also interesting for the higher than average proportion of demonstrative type of participation. A similar trend, in a more moderate form, can also be documented in France, which is renowned for its protest activities. The manifest type is also strongly represented in Luxembourg and Norway.

What affects the level and types of participation in a given society? As noted above, on the one hand, it is the social micro factors (political attitudes and personal characteristics) and on the other hand, the social macro factors (economic, socio-demographic, socio-cultural, and political characteristics of the given society). In the following section, we will look at some of the micro and macro factors that have a significant effect on overall political participation and individual types of participation.

FIGURE 2 **Types of Participation in the Analyzed Countries<sup>4</sup>**



4 In its initial form, the scale of conventional participation is a four-point scale, while the manifest and passive scales are only three-point scales. For the purpose of this comparison they were transformed into scales with the same number of points. The average values for individual states were comparatively expressed in percentages, which are presented in Graph 4.

## 10.4 A Micro Analysis of Political Participation

The first important factor that significantly affects all types of participation is interest in politics. This factor is measured by two variables: 1) a subjectively declared interest in politics,<sup>5</sup> and 2) how often the respondent discusses politics and current events. A subjectively declared interest in politics is the strongest variable to correlate with the overall level of political participation (see Table 4). In all the countries studied, we find very strong and statistically significant correlations. The highest correlation is recorded for the UK ( $r_s = 0,391^{**}$ ),<sup>6</sup> France, Portugal, Italy, and Austria. In two-thirds of the countries, this factor is more significant than the variable of discussing politics. This second variable is also very significant, but the strength of the correlation shows greater variation between countries. The factor of how often respondents discuss politics shows the strongest effect in Spain ( $r_s = 0,449^{**}$ ), the UK, Switzerland, Italy, and France. Both a subjective interest in politics and how often a person discusses politics has a strong effect on the passive and the conventional types of participation; even their effect on the manifest type is of some significance. Also of significance for the overall level of political participation is where respondents identify themselves on a left-right political scale. Participation, especially the manifest and passive types, increases as respondents place themselves further left on the scale. Activities like demonstrations, boycotting goods, or signing petitions are ones that, in Western democracies, left-wing citizens tend to engage in more often and do so in support of issues promoted in the programs of left-wing parties and movements. A left-wing political orientation is strongly connected with the increase of passive participation in advanced Western European countries: in Switzerland, ( $r_s = -0,209^{**}$ ), Germany, Denmark, and Austria. The case of manifest participation is similar, with the strongest correlations recorded for France ( $r_s = -0,248^{**}$ ), Austria, Germany, Luxembourg, Denmark, and Spain. This kind of correlation is not, however, found in the post-communist countries. In Hungary, the Czech Republic, and also Poland, but to a lesser degree, the overall level of participation, especially the manifest (Hungary  $r_s = 0,159^{**}$ ) and passive types of participation,

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5 Large differences can be found between European countries regarding the question of interest in politics. The biggest interest in politics is expressed by the Dutch (66%), followed by Germans, Danes (63%), and the Swiss (61%), while the lowest interest in politics was declared by Czechs, Greeks, and Italians (32%), and Portuguese (36%).

6 The Spearman coefficient is used throughout the micro analysis to measure correlations, which are marked as  $r_s$ . When talking about a group of countries among which a correlation is detected, then the value of the correlation coefficient is only indicated for the strongest or, conversely, the weakest.

correlates with a declared right-wing political orientation, or, as in the case of Slovenia, there are no correlations. This kind of phenomenon cannot be found in almost any other country. In Hungary, after the parliamentary elections in 2002, it was mainly citizens with a right-wing orientation that took part in manifest political activities – they took part in demonstrations to demand a vote re-count, as the defeated right-wing coalition was unwilling to accept the outcome of the elections. In Central and Eastern Europe, less experience with democracy combined with a system that does not always work satisfactorily leads many citizens with a right-wing orientation to engage in manifest and passive political activities. In addition, there is no ruling out the possibility that in this region there is a persistent aversion to left-wing political views, as the term “left-wing” is tainted with notions of the undemocratic method of governance associated with the previous, communist regimes.

The level of religiosity, whether subjectively declared or measured on the basis of how often a person attends church, is often connected with the level of political participation. The exact nature of this correlation depends, however, on the type of society. In predominantly Protestant societies, the correlation with political participation is positive (the UK, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Switzerland). Conversely, in countries with a higher proportion of Catholics, people who are very religious and attend church often participate less than others politically (Spain, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Poland). This is most pronounced in the case of the manifest and passive types. In other countries, religiosity does not play a role in the level of political participation, or the correlations with individual types of participation are variable. Religious affiliation proves to be more revealing. It has an effect not just on the level of participation but also on activity within each of the three types. Catholics, on the whole, participate less than Protestants and people with no religious affiliation. Catholics are the least active with regard to the passive type of participation. This is most pronounced in predominantly Catholic countries: in Portugal ( $r_s = -0.167^{**}$ ), Spain, Ireland, Italy, and elsewhere. The correlation between the demonstrative type of participation and Catholicism is also negative: in France ( $r_s = -0,153^{**}$ ), Italy, Austria, and Portugal. On the other hand, Protestantism has a positive effect on the overall level of participation and it correlates most with the passive and manifest types. What is at the root of this observation? Protestant churches are evidently more effective at socializing their members to engage in political and civic participation outside the church (Jones-Correa and Leal 2001). However, this is just a hypothesis that requires more study, since in Denmark, for example, Protestantism has a slightly negative effect on these two types of participation.



The strongest socio-demographic factor across Europe is the highest completed level of education. In every country, without exception, higher levels of education coincide with higher overall participation, though understandably to varying degrees – from France ( $r_s = 0,370^{**}$ ), Poland, the Netherlands, and Belgium through to the Czech Republic and Greece ( $r_s = 0,195^{**}$ ). The strongest correlation between the level of education and participation occurs with the passive type, followed by the conventional type. The most significant exception, where the level of education has a much stronger correlation with manifest participation ( $r_s = 0,255^{**}$ ) than with conventional participation ( $r_s = 0,181^{**}$ ), is in France. But even there the correlation with passive participation remains strongest ( $r_s = 0,364^{**}$ ). The only other similar case is in Greece. It has long been known that higher levels of education correspond with higher levels of political participation. More educated people are more responsive to political stimuli, are more interested in politics, understand political information better, and tend to have more of a desire to influence the political process, as they have more information, time, and energy at their disposal to do so. In contemporary democracies, the education process is, moreover, regarded as a ritual through which an adult becomes a member of the political community. The age at which citizens obtain their political rights usually coincides in these societies with the age at which a person completes the attested level of education regarded as the relatively most important (*e.g.* secondary school diploma) (Kamens 1988).

Another variable with a significant effect is the level of household income. In every country, without exception, people with higher household income participate in politics more often. This association is strongest in Portugal ( $r_s = 0,263^{**}$ ), France, Spain, Luxembourg, the UK, and Ireland. The level of household income is positively connected with the passive type of participation and conversely has the weakest or even no connection with the protest type. More educated people tend to have higher incomes and are also the group that are politically more active. But a higher income is also an important resource that makes it easier to engage in one of the forms of passive participation – the purchase of goods for political, environmental, or humanitarian reasons.

Age is a variable that has a significant effect mainly on the manifest and passive types of participation. There are, however, exceptions. The manifest type of participation is dominated by young people. Examples are Luxembourg ( $r_s = -0,292^{**}$ ), Spain, Denmark, the Czech Republic, France, and Italy. The passive type of participation also typically involves the younger generation the most, which is especially evident in Spain ( $r_s = -0,292^{**}$ ), Finland, the Czech Republic, Norway, and Sweden. This is not surprising given that it is a modern

form of participation and one that the younger generation is more familiar with. On the other hand, the conventional type is usually independent of any age connection, or it increases slightly with age.

The size of the community in which a person lives has a slight effect on the passive type of participation in the majority of the countries surveyed. This is most notable in Finland ( $r_s = 0,199^{**}$ ), France, Switzerland, and Spain. The urban population is more active in the passive type of participation than the rural population, largely because it is easier to engage in passive forms of participation in cities (there is a broader range of products to purchase or boycott, people are more likely to come across petitions, *e.g.* in public areas). The same is true of manifest participation – it is easier to organize demonstrations in cities than in the countryside.

Minor differences can also be found between men and women. If there are any statistically significant relationships, then it is usually that men tend traditionally to be more active than women. This predominance is most pronounced in the case of conventional participation and most notably so in the Czech Republic ( $r_s = -0,170^{**}$ ), Italy, and Austria. Activities ranked as conventional types of participation are the ones that demand the most time and energy. That is why they tend to be dominated by men, who, in many European countries, still devote much less time and energy to looking after the family. On the other hand, the only type of participation in which women dominate in some European countries is the passive type. This can be explained by the fact that women tend to do more of the shopping, allowing them more of an opportunity to purchase or boycott goods for political, environmental, and other similar reasons. It is with reference to the purchase of goods that the difference between men and women is strongest. Examples are found in Scandinavia, for instance, in Finland ( $r_s = 0,178^{**}$ ) or Sweden.

Some of the correlations indicated above may be strong in some countries, while in others they might not appear at all. When examining the “European” population of all twenty-one countries as a whole, some correlations may appear weaker. Conversely, others are much stronger from a European-wide perspective than they are in individual countries, because they derive from the differences between individual societies. Table 4 contains a summary of the correlations for the population of all European countries combined.

TABLE 4 **Factors Affecting Political Participation in Europe**

	<b>Political participation</b>			
	overall	conventional	manifest	passive
interest in politics	0.389**	0.294**	0.188**	0.335**
how often discusses politics	0.377**	0.267**	0.212**	0.328**
left-right political scale	-0.122**	-0.052**	-0.155**	-0.122**
level of religiosity	-0.118**	-0.008**	-0.089**	-0.125**
how often a attends church	-0.096**	-0.008	-0.063**	-0.116**
Catholic (Roman or Greek)	-0.191**	-0.067**	-0.061**	-0.223**
Protestant	0.111**	0.063**	-0.031**	0.132**
without religious affiliation	0.111**	0.024**	0.079**	0.125**
sex	-0.042**	-0.098**	-0.036**	0.022**
age	-0.085**	0.008	-0.123**	-0.090**
size of the community	-0.074**	-0.014*	-0.086**	-0.084**
education	0.363**	0.235**	0.160**	0.345**
income	0.262**	0.153**	0.072**	0.264**

\*\* The correlation is significant 0.01 level.

The Spearman coefficient was used.

N = 39 860, weighted by population size

The questions used can be viewed in the ESS questionnaire, which is available for downloading at: <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.com> in the section Questionnaire – Main questionnaire – Round 1.

## 10.5 A Macro Analysis of Political Participation

We used aggregate data to map the key factors affecting the variance in the level of political participation between individual countries. Individual countries were entered into the analysis as separate cases. The average values of overall participation and the average values of all three types of participation were the explained variables. As explanatory variables we selected objectively measurable indicators drawn from international comparative statistics (see Table 5 for the sources). These include macro-economic, socio-demographic, socio-cultural, and political indicators. We managed to identify six factors that affect the variance in the level of political participation between countries. These cannot be observed separately because they are strongly intertwined. The most important factor connected with the level of participation in individual countries is the length of democratic experience. We measured this using two constructed variables: 1) the duration of an uninterrupted democratic system in the country, and 2) the duration of overall democratic experience in a country;

the latter adds to the first the duration of democratic systems in the country from earlier periods, which were interrupted by various undemocratic periods.

TABLE 5 **Factors Affecting the Level of Non-Electoral Political Participation in Individual Countries**

	Political participation				N	Data source
	overall	convencional	manifest	passive		
Duration of uninterrupted democracy	0.826**	0.709**	0.529*	0.810**	21	5
Total democratic experience	0.857**	0.762**	0.534*	0.834**	21	5
Per capita GDP (PPP)	0.694**	0.622**	0.693**	0.602**	20	2
Human Development Index - HDI	0.787**	0.668**	0.632**	0.742**	21	3
Number of household members	-0.716**	-0.511	0.062	-0.792**	15	2
Percentage of employees in the agricultural sector	-0.653**	-0.495*	-0.517*	-0.633**	20	1
Percentage of employees in the services sector	0.679**	0.568**	0.517*	0.636**	20	1
Spread of the Internet	0.666**	0.592**	0.137	0.715**	21	1
Percentage of Catholics	-0.541*	-0.595**	-0.066	-0.551*	20	1
Percentage of Protestants	0.655**	0.586*	0.394	0.652**	17	1
Interest-group pluralism	-0.718**	-0.801**	-0.127	-0.655**	17	4

Individual countries were entered as cases into the analysis.

The Person correlation coefficient was used

\*\* The correlation is significant at 0.01 level.

\* The correlation is significant at 0.05 level.

1 – CIA, World Factbook, 2002 <http://www.cia.gov/cia/download2002.htm>

2 – Eurostat, <http://epp.eurostat.ec.eu.int>

3 – United Nations Development Program, Human Development Report, <http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data>

4 – Lijphart (1999) p. 177, p. 80-81.

5 – Variables were constructed from: Dahl (1995) p. 211-219 and Huntington (1991) p. 13-26.

The strongest correlations for both variables are with overall participation, and they also show exceptionally strong correlations with the passive and conventional types of participation. Countries that are part of the third wave of democratization – the post-communist and Mediterranean countries, with the exception of Italy – show the lowest values in relation to overall and passive participation. Conversely, the highest values are recorded for countries with a long democratic tradition. The strongest correlation is found for total democratic experience, which suggests that a certain intergenerational “social

memory” is at work here. This would explain, for example, the higher level of participation in the Czech Republic compared to other post-communist countries.

Another significant factor is the economic development of a country, which was measured using per capita GDP at purchasing power parity. The populations of wealthy and economically advanced countries show a higher level of participation both overall and in the individual types of participation. The strongest correlation is between a country’s economic development and the manifest type of participation, but the correlation with the other two types of participation is also very strong.

Economic development is linked to another factor – the social development of a country. The human development index is used as the variable for this factor in the analysis.<sup>7</sup> Here again, the populations of more developed countries participate more often, and the range of forms of participation is wider.

The fourth factor is the traditional or, conversely, the modern character of society. We attempt to identify the signs of a more traditional society on the basis of a higher proportion of the population employed in agriculture and a higher number of members living within a single household.<sup>8</sup> More traditional societies on the whole participate less, especially in connection with the passive type of participation. Conversely, modern societies, which have the opposite features, as well as more widely spread Internet access and a higher proportion of employees in the services sector, exhibit a high level of participation, especially the modern form of participation, *i.e.* the passive type.

An important factor that we have identified at the micro level in individual form is the religious composition of society. The higher the percentage of the population that is Catholic, the lower the level of overall participation. But even stronger than this factor’s correlation with overall participation is its correlation with the conventional type of participation, though there is no correlation at all evident with the manifest type of participation. Conversely, the higher the percentage of Protestants in the population,<sup>9</sup> the higher the level of passive, overall, and, though less significantly, even conventional participation. Again, only in the case of manifest participation is there no discernible effect of

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7 The HDI measures the average levels of three basic dimensions of human development: life expectancy, education, and the standard of living (for details, see the Web site of the United Nations Development Programme: [http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/indic/indic\\_8\\_1\\_1.html](http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/indic/indic_8_1_1.html)).

8 Values for the average number of members sharing a single household were only available for 15 of the 21 countries.

9 Figures for the percentage of Protestants in the population were not available for the post-communist countries.

Protestantism. Manifest participation is, thus, the only type that is unaffected by religious affiliation.

The last factor is the predominant form of interest mediation in society. This factor was measured using the degree of interest-group pluralism (see Lijphart 1999: 177).<sup>10</sup> This variable is defined along a continuum running between the neo-corporatist and pluralist models of interest mediation. The greater the pluralism of interest groups, the greater the degree of pluralist interest mediation in society. Conversely, low levels of interest-group pluralism are associated with a neo-corporatist model of interest mediation. Participation is strongest in systems with neo-corporatist mechanisms. As the pluralism of interest groups increases, participation declines. The correlation is strongest for the conventional type of participation. We believe that interest groups may assume the function of individual political participation in systems with greater interest-group pluralism.

The competing interest groups, organizations, and lobbies that are typical for the pluralist model thus take over the function of articulating interests or even the role political participation itself. This may reduce the need for isolated citizens to engage in individual activities. Our conclusion is also supported by the fact that this connection is most pronounced for the conventional type of participation, which has the closest ties to the decision-making process. This connection is also strong and significant in the case of the passive type. But there is no correlation in the case of the manifest type. Highly organized and monopolized interest groups (especially unions and employer and professional associations), which in neo-corporatist systems often co-participate in the process of developing government policy, ensure that their broad membership bases respect the agreed compromises and do not actively oppose them. That is why there is no correlation between neo-corporatism and the manifest type of participation.

## 10.6 Conclusion

In contemporary democratic Europe, we can identify active and passive types of non-electoral political participation, while the active form can be further broken down into the conventional and the unconventional/manifest subtypes. Conventional participation signifies traditional, peaceful forms of political activity, from contacting politicians to working for a political party or

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<sup>10</sup> Lijphart's values for this factor do not include post-communist countries. Therefore, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, and Slovenia were not included in this analysis.

some other politically active group, to financially supporting such activities. This type of activity requires an active and targeted approach, but it need not be manifested publicly. On the other hand, the second type of active participation – the manifest type – involves a form of participation that is expressed publicly and openly, from the wearing or displaying campaign badges or stickers, to legal demonstrations, to even illegal protest activities. The manifest type of participation is the weakest type across Europe, and it is not a regularly practiced type of political participation.

A new form of political participation that we can identify in contrast with earlier studies is the unconventional, passive type. This covers activities such as boycotting or purchasing goods for political, ethnical, or environmental reasons. According to our analyses, signing petitions can also be identified as a form of this activity. The targeted boycotting or purchasing of goods is a new form of participation that is becoming more widespread in economically advanced societies, and it allows people to respond to political issues in a globalized world (*e.g.* the boycotting of American goods in Europe after the start of the military campaign in Afghanistan and Iraq,<sup>11</sup> or the boycotting of French goods in the United States after France criticized these military campaigns). Signing petitions has long been a marginal and unconventional form of political activity, but today it is a frequently employed form of political participation.

The comparative level of political participation in individual societies is uneven. Those who participate more are people who have better resources for engaging in such activity – a greater interest, more information, higher education, higher income, and more time. Political participation is skewed towards individuals who are privileged in these areas.

Overall political participation varies considerably between European countries. In the Scandinavian countries, participation is the highest, and it is also high in Western Europe. Lower participation levels are observed in the Mediterranean and in the post-communist countries. A high level of political participation is observed in modern, rich, economically advanced countries with a long democratic tradition and a firmly established democratic system. But in these advanced societies, it is the unconventional, passive type of participation that predominates. The question is whether a deeply embedded democratic system is the outcome of a high level of systematic participation among citizens, or whether, on the contrary, a democracy that functions long and well is what leads citizens to engage more in political activity.

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11 In Germany, for example, signs could be seen in restaurants informing customers that under the current political situation they would not be offering Coca-Cola.

