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## Regional elections in Poland and in France – a comparative perspective

**Abstract:** The article presents the crisis of voter turnout in regional elections in France and the low level of interest among citizens in this particular level of government in Poland. It also presents the election system in both countries. The article analyzes other factors that may affect voter turnout. It illustrates how governments of both countries tried to deal with the challenge.

**Key words:** local government, election, France

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### Introduction

In Poland, the elections to the regional government have been held since 1998, whereas in France since 1986 (Wojtowicz, 2012, p. 313; *Ustawa o samorządzie województwa*). In both cases, however, the process of designating regions was centrally controlled and frequently had not much to do with the sense of identity among residents and history of a given territory (obviously, there are exceptions, e.g. Brittany, France. However, even in this case, controversies appear, since the region to fully over the area historically perceived as Brittany, it should also include the Loire-Atlantique Department and the city of Nantes, a former capital which is currently a part of Pays de la Loire (Brakoniecki, 2006, pp. 151–152). This translates into the attitude of people to the authorities at regional level and therefore the perception of regional elections. When examining, a comparative method has been primarily used to find the common elements and differences between the two systems and check whether the implementation of certain French solutions in Poland could bring some benefits. For this purpose, the analysis covered the legal basis of the elections, turnout in particular years in all elections in which citizens could participate (in Poland since 1990 and in France since 1958), attitude of citizens to elections and results themselves. It was necessary to obtain

data from the French Ministry of Home Affairs and the State Election Commission, as well as data from the Opinion Polls Research Center.

The aim of the paper is to demonstrate that in France we deal with the turnout crisis in regional elections, while in Poland with little interest among citizens in this level of government, but the latter does not necessarily affect the turnout in the elections themselves.

## Election Rules

In France, elections to regional councils are held every six years (Code électoral, article L336). So far, the election has taken place six times. Until recently, it was held independently from elections to other bodies.<sup>1</sup> Currently, the Law provides, however, that elections to the regional council should coincide with elections to department councils (Code électoral, article L 336).<sup>2</sup> Over the years, the legal basis and rules have undergone changes. With each reform, the system was becoming increasingly complicated.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In 1998, an attempt was made to combine regional elections with those in cantons in order to increase turnout but the idea was finally abandoned (Wojtowicz, 2012, p. 264).

<sup>2</sup> In 2015, elections to department councils were held (1<sup>st</sup> round on 22 March, 2<sup>nd</sup> round on 29 March) and regional councils (1<sup>st</sup> round on 6 December, 2<sup>nd</sup> round on 13 December), but their dates differed (Résultats des élections départementales 2015, Résultats des élections régionales 2015). It was related to the large reform at the regional level, a reform which reduced the number of regions. The participation was to show the support of the society to the reform (La réforme territoriale).

<sup>3</sup> Initially, the term of office was 6 years. Councilors were elected through proportional elections, and the election threshold was 5%. Citizens could vote beginning with the age of 18, and stand for a position from the age of 21. The function of the Electoral District was performed by the department. (Loi n° 85-692 du 10 juillet 1985 modifiant le code électoral et relative à l'élection des conseillers régionaux). In 1999, in the framework of the Jospin's reform, a number of changes have been made to the election law. Several new rules were introduced. The Electoral District was the region. Since that moment, the elections were to consist of two rounds, while respecting the principle of *prime majorate*. Although the principle of proportional elections remained, the law imposed thresholds to ensure that the Council included a grouping that would have the majority necessary to govern. In the second round, a group which received the largest number of votes in the first round should automatically receive 25% of mandates. Additionally, the participation was restricted to those groupings only which in the first round got at least 5% of votes. The threshold was set at the level of 3%. The term of office of the council was shortened to 5 years (Pjl relatif au mode

Now, in case in the 1<sup>st</sup> round none of the lists gains absolute majority, the 2<sup>nd</sup> round is held. At the same time, however, a grouping which in the 1st round won the largest number of votes automatically gets 25% of mandates. The 2nd round involves groupings which in the 1st round had at least 10% of votes. It is possible, however, to lock lists before the 2nd round for groupings which had at least 5% of the votes. To take part in the division of mandates a party need to get at least 5% of votes in the 2nd round (Code électoral, article L338). Additionally, the division of mandates was substantially modified in 2003 which influenced its transparency. The election district is the region. The number of seats per individual groupings is calculated at the level of the region, but they are divided between departments depending on the number of votes cast for specific groupings in the department (Code électoral, articles L 338-1).<sup>4</sup> It is an attempt to reconcile interests at regional (especially for groupings which did not like that departments were electoral districts), central (concern that position of council chairman significantly increases when region is election district) and departmental (loss of constituency significantly reduces their influence). We can clearly see that the clash of interests of various levels does not favorably affect the election system. On the contrary, it becomes more complicated. As we can see, this reflects a political struggle rather than citizens' interests. It should be noted that the transition from the proportional system without thresholds that ensure broad representation of voters' views to the proportional system with

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d'élection des conseillers régionaux et des conseillers à l'Assemblée de Corse et au fonctionnement des conseils régionaux). Further changes were introduced with the Raffarin's reform. It restored the 6-year term of office. Although the region remained the election district, modifications were made regarding the division of mandates – the number of seats in the council for individual groupings was calculated at the level of the region, and then split between departments depending on the number of votes cast for the grouping in the department. Additionally, it introduced the possibility of blocking lists between the first and the second rounds. At the same time, the threshold to participate in the second round was increased from 5% to 10% and 5% in the second round (Loi n° 2003-327 du 11 avril 2003 relative à l'élection des conseillers régionaux et des représentants au Parlement européen ainsi qu'à l'aide publique aux partis politiques).

<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the revision of 2015 yet more complicated the system by introducing special provisions for departments with population less than 100 000 citizens (Loi n° 2015-29 du 16 janvier 2015 relative à la délimitation des régions, aux élections régionales et départementales et modifiant le calendrier électoral (1), art. 6).

its limitations resulted from technical reasons (before reform governing often became paralyzed). Changes, however, caused the transfer, so characteristic for France, a dual-block system of political parties to the regional level (Wojtowicz, 2012, pp. 317–318).

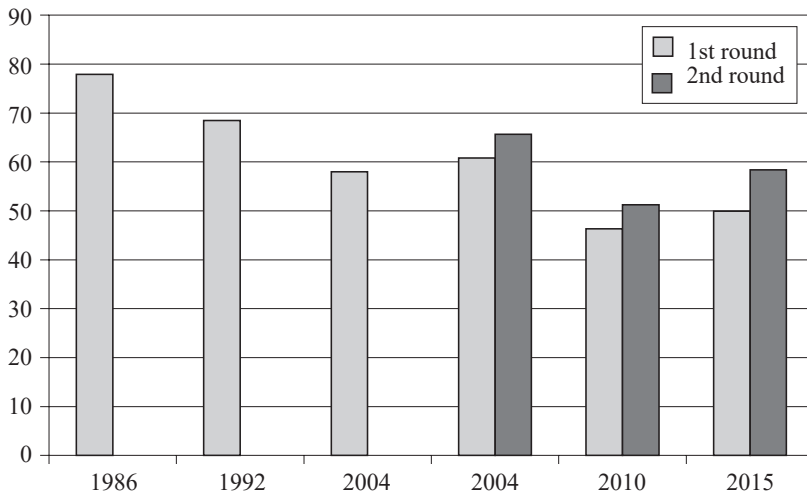
In Poland, the council elections to the provincial parliaments are held on the same day as elections to municipal and county councils, as well as elections of mayors/presidents of the city (since 2002), (Chmaj, Wing, 2011, p. 177). The constituency covers the county or its part (when more than 15 mandates are to be distributed in constituency). However, it is possible to combine counties into a constituency in exceptional cases (when number of mandates per county is less than 5; however, aggregation may not affect social ties of ethnic and national minorities) (Kodeks wyborczy, art. 462). This shows that a solution applied in Poland is the one abandoned by France due to the pressure of regional parties. These are proportional elections, and the division of mandates follows d'Hondt method which favors larger parties (Kodeks wyborczy, art. 444). The election threshold is 5% (Kodeks wyborczy, art. 416). In Poland, an attempted was made to block lists, but due to the numerous controversies it was opted out (d'Hondt method was used, with Saint-Leguë method applied to internal division of blocks; smaller parties benefited more in block, and parties were accused of consolidation of powers at regional level). The threshold for a block was 15% (Szcudlińska-Kanoś, 2013, p. 149). This shows that certain solutions were tested, which in France are still valid today. However, due to excessive number of controversies, those solutions failed in Poland.

## **Turnout**

What is voter turnout in both countries? In Poland, in recent years, we have witnessed increased turnout at the regional level, whereas in France the turnout decreased. Figures are presented in charts below.

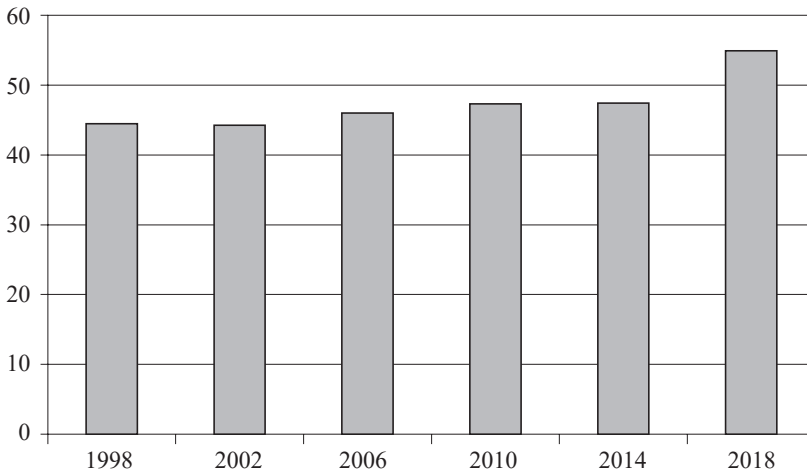
Additionally, in the case of France, while examining the turnout in regional elections against other elections, we can clearly see differences unfavorable for this level. A lower turnout has been noted solely in the case of elections to the European Parliament, e.g. the difference between presidential and regional elections is significant. In the case of Poland, these differences are negligible. Turnouts in elections are presented in tables below.

**Chart 1. Turnout during election to regional councils**



**Source:** Author's material based on data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and [www.France-politique.of.fr](http://www.France-politique.of.fr)

**Chart 2. Turnout during local election in Poland**



**Source:** Author's material based on data from the State Election Commission.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> It includes the turnout since 1998; that year, elections were held for the first time.

Table 1

## Turnout in 1958 elections in France

1958 election turnout [%]											
	Presidential elections		National Assembly		EP	Municipal		Departmental		Regional	
	I	II	I	II		I	II	I	II	I	II
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
2015								49.83	49.98	49.91	58.41
2014					42.43	63.55	62.13				
2013											
2012	79.48	80.35	57.22	55.40							
2011								44.32	44.77		
2010										46.33	51.21
2009					40.63						
2008						66.54	65.20	64.88	55.47		
2007	83.77	83.97	60.42	59.98							
2006											
2005											
2004					42.76			63.91	66.49	60.84	65.66
2003											
2002	71.60	79.71	64.42	60.31							
2001						67.38	66.05	65.48	56.25		
2000											
1999					46.76						
1998								60.32	54.89	57.70	
1997			67.92	70.97							
1996											
1995	78.38	79.66				69.42	67.98				
1994					52.71			60.35	58.73		
1993			68.93	67.51							
1992								69.95	61.69	68.60	
1991											
1990											
1989					48.80	72.90	73.09				
1988	81.35	84.06	65.74	69.89				49.00	47.00		
1987											
1986			78.00							77.93	
1985								66.70	66.20		
1984					56.72						
1983						78.42	79.68				
1982								68.40	70.30		
1981	81.09	85.85	70.32	75.04							
1980											
1979					60.71			65.40	65.40		

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1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1978			83.25	84.86							
1977						78.90	77.60				
1976								65.30	67.70		
1975											
1974	84.23	87.33									
1973			81.31	81.77				53.40	54.20		
1972											
1971						75.20	73.60				
1970								61.80	61.00		
1969	77.59	68.85									
1968			79.96	77.81							
1967			81.12	79.80				57.30	57.40		
1966											
1965	84.75	84.32				78.20	70.80				
1964								56.70	58.30		
1963											
1962			68.69	72.01							
1961								56.50	54.00		
1960											
1959			77.81	76.32		74.80	73.90				
1958											

**Source:** Author's material based on data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and [www.France-politique.of.fr](http://www.France-politique.of.fr)

Table 2

**Turnout in Poland in 1990**

Turnout since 1958 %							
1	Presidential elections		Parliamentary elections		To EP	Local elections	
	I	II	Parliament	Senate		I	II
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
2018						54.90	48.83
2015	48.96	55.34	50.92	50.91			
2014					23.83	47.21	39.97
2013							
2012							
2011			48.92				
2010	54.94	55.31				47.32	35.31
2009					24.53		
2008							
2007			53.88				
2006						45.99	39.56

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2005	49.74	50.99	40.57	40.56			
2004					20.87		
2003							
2002						44.23	35.02
2001			46.29	46.28			
2000	61.12	-					
1999							
1998						45.45	
1997			47.90				
1996							
1995	64.70	68.23					
1994						33.78	
1993			52.13				
1992							
1991			43.20				
1990	60.60	53.40				42.27	

**Source:** Author's material based on data from the State Election Commission and [www.infor.pl](http://www.infor.pl).<sup>6</sup>

Initially, the turnout in French regional elections remained at a high level. Only in 1998, a serious decline of interest was recorded and the turnout fell by more than 10 percentage points compared to the previous election. In subsequent elections, the two rounds principle was in place – in both elections the turnout exceeded 60%. However, one can notice that in the case of each election since 2002 the turnout has been significantly higher in the second round. At the same time, both in 2010 and 2015, the 1st round attracted less than 50% of people entitled to vote.<sup>7</sup> The drop in the turnout has fitted into a general trend of the democracy crisis in Europe.<sup>8</sup> It is worth highlighting that the 1986 election to regional

<sup>6</sup> In the case of certain parliamentary elections there was a minor difference between turnout in the elections to the Senate and turnout in elections to the Sejm despite the fact that representatives to these bodies are elected on the same day. To illustrate the difference in each of year, the table includes a breakdown by turnout in elections to the *Sejm* and the Senate.

<sup>7</sup> In 1986, the turnout was 77.93%, 68.60% in 1992; 57.70% in 1998; in 2004 – 1<sup>st</sup> round 60.84%, 2<sup>nd</sup> round 65.66%; in 2010 – 1<sup>st</sup> round 46.33%, 2<sup>nd</sup> round 51.21%; in 2015 – 1<sup>st</sup> round 49.91%, 2<sup>nd</sup> round 58.41% (*Élections régionales 1986; Élections régionales 1992; Élections régionales 1998; Résultats des élections régionales 2004; Résultats des élections régionales 2010; Résultats des élections régionales 2015*).

<sup>8</sup> See more: Pawłowska, 1995, pp. 99–103; Sztompka, 2007, pp. 377–390; Krastew, 2013, pp. 13–62; Rogowski, 2014, pp. 57–73).



councils coincided with the parliamentary elections. In 2015, the French had to vote twice – elections to regional councils took place in December and elections to departments in March.

In contrast to the French elections, the turnout in Poland was low at the beginning and it increased to exceeded 50% in 2018.<sup>9</sup> Over the years, it slightly increased, but these were negligible differences in percentage points (less than 3 percentage points difference between 1998 and 2014). The literature lists such reasons for the situation as a complex and very diverse election law; the election campaign held in autumn, media focus mainly on fight between candidates from metropolises (diverts attention from elections on other levels of local government); excessive partisan focus at the regional level, which in extreme cases may lead to the lack of alternatives; low political culture; unclear political scene (election committees changing their names, application of political camouflage); lack of efficiency in the mobilization of the electorate and citizens discouraged by the political situation (Kolczyński, 2006, p. 290; Chmielewski, 2008, p. 14 ; Piasecki, 2009, pp. 80–82; Pokładecki, 2010, p. 65).<sup>10</sup>

One of the reasons for the declining turnout in France is probably the number of elections in which citizens need to participate. As shown in the table, people vote almost every year. While in Poland, although breaks are not too long, but the time of free elections is only 1/3 of that in France.

The major difference, however, which significantly affects the turnout, is the fact that in Poland elections to all of local governments are held on the same day. According to opinion polls, the Poles are not interested in regional authorities. The survey by the Public Opinion Research Center shows that local government elections are treated as the most important among all election procedures (66%) (Cybulska, 2014, p. 1), and only 6% of the surveyed pointed to the provincial elections to regional parliaments (Gendźwił, 2014, p. 3). Additionally, the interest in the regional

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<sup>9</sup> In 1998, the turnout was 44.45%, 44.23% in 2002, 45.99% in 2006, 47.32% in 2010, and 47.40% in 2014.

<sup>10</sup> There are of course also ideas to increase the turnout, including simplification of the election law, setting a date for the elections in spring, legislation taking into account specific nature of local committees, introduction of majority elections in place of proportional ones, extension of single-mandate constituencies, improved quality of adult education (Piasecki, 2009, pp. 80–82; Cysewska-Kubała, 2014, p. 128). The specific nature of local elections in Poland was expressed in the literature by a separate classification of individuals participating in the local social life. These categories include: absentee, observer, consumer, lobbyist, activist and officer (Legiędź-Gałuszka, 2009, pp. 119–120).

level is negligible (only 27% of respondents declared their interest – the lowest result) (Gendźwił, 2014, p. 7). At the same time, only 13% of the surveyed were able to give a name of the current marshal, the head of the regional executive body, (80% could provide names of mayor/president) (Badora, 2014, p. 10). The largest concern, however, has been raised by findings of the survey by the Institute of Public Affairs. Before the European elections in 2010, the institute asked Poles whether they knew which voting exactly they were to participate. Only 7% of them knew that the elections are held to the provincial parliament. An incorrect answer that the elections are to the Sejm and the Senate was given by 5% of respondents (Gałązka, Sawicki, 2013, p. 5). Additionally, every fourth respondent assessed the electoral system as complicated, of which 6% as very complicated and 19% as rather complicated (Badora, 2014, pp. 10–11).<sup>11</sup> Among local elections, the most popular elections are those for the mayor/president (Gendźwił, 2014, p. 3).

In the case of Polish regional elections, mainly the percentage of invalid votes was a cause for concern. In 2014 elections, it was 17.47% (Frekwencja, samorzad2014.pkw.gov.pl, 03.04.2016), of which, according to the survey after the elections, only 2% of them were cast deliberately (Badora, 2014, p. 11). This triggered a heated discussion. Various proposals started to appear to reduce the number of constituencies, or even abandon direct elections at this level of the local government. (Ptak, 2012, p. 68). However, it is difficult to determine what was the actual cause of this result. In theory, the complexity of the election system, or no direct link with the representatives at the local level (candidates not always come from the region), or the lack of interest in the activity of the authorities, or too much politics in elections.<sup>12</sup> The problem, however, is that each of the cases above were present in France as well, where there were no distinct differences in the number of votes considered invalid.

## **Election results**

As previously mentioned, elections at this level are the most party-oriented. Already in the case of the first elections in Poland in 1998, respon-

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<sup>11</sup> Additionally, as many as 7% respondents indicated that „their vote might have been for some reasons of invalid” (Badora, 2014, pp. 10–11).

<sup>12</sup> The Stefan Batory Foundation planned a detailed survey on invalid votes in elections to provincial parliaments in 2014 (See: Co się stało 16 listopada?, 2015).

dents in the CBOS opinion poll indicated that they were guided by the party affiliation of candidates. This, in principle, has not changed until today (Pankowski, 1998, wstęp; Badora, 2014, p. 3). Additionally, each successive legal solution only aggravated this phenomenon.

Findings of the 1998 survey were confirmed by the final outcomes. A significant role in the first regional elections was played by six election committees: Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), “Solidarity” Election Action (AWS), Freedom Union (UW), Social Covenant (PS) (which included Polish Peasant Party [PSL], Labor Union [UP], National Party of Pensioners [KPER]), “Ojczyzna” Patriotic Movement, and Polish Family (RP). The winner was the “Solidarity” Election Action [AWS] (342 mandates) and Democratic Left Alliance [SLD] (329 mandates). At the same time, however, despite the largest number of seats in the country, the “Solidarity” Election Action won in only six provinces (Pomorskie, Podlaskie, Lubelskie, Podkarpackie, Mazowieckie and Małopolskie). Therefore, the winner actually was the Democratic Left Alliance that won the majority in 9 provinces (with draw in Silesia). Of course, already after the first election, it was necessary to create a coalition to be able to govern efficiently in the region. The SLD made an arrangement with the Social Covenant which got the total of 89 mandates. In the Warminsko-Mazurskie Province, an alliance was made between the SLD and AWS and UW. Despite 89 mandates, the biggest loser was the UW (Szczudlińska-Kanoś, 2013, pp. 144–145).

Elections which followed again were dominated by nation-wide political parties (only Election Committee for German minority succeeded, but in this case no threshold applied). The power in provincial parliaments was divided between coalitions, which consisted of representatives of parties which that ruled at the central level (13 provinces – SLD-UP, Małopolskie Province and Pomorskie Province – coalition PO-PiS and in Podkarpackie Province, LPR was big winner) (Pokładecki, 2010, p. 61; Dane Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej, wybory2002.pkw.gov.pl, 09.12.2017). After blocking of election lists, in subsequent elections, the largest benefits went to the Samoobrona LPR and PSL, whereas the largest loser was the Left and Democrats. The PiS, a party which initiated the reform, also suffered (Szczudlińska-Kanoś, 2013, pp. 149–150). However, still regional elections and their results were dominated by nation-wide political parties (distribution of mandates – 186, PiS – 170, PSL – 83). In any of the provinces but none of the lot has not needed to rule the most necessary was therefore conclude coalition (Data State

Electoral Commission for individual provinces, Wybory2006.pkw.gov.pl, 09.12.2017).

The year 2010 also belonged to political parties. This time, the big winner was the PO with 13 provinces, whereas the PiS only in 2, and the PSL in 1 (Świętokrzyskie Province). The PO practically doubled the number of seats in the scale of the country in respect to the previous year, with 222 places in provincial parliaments (Dane Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej dla poszczególnych województw, wybory2010.pkw.gov.pl, 09.12.2017). Finally, the PO co-governed in all provinces, and in 12 of them had its own Marshal (Szczudlińska-Kanoś, 2013, pp. 151–152). During the elections, for the first time, regional leaders had their partial success – in the Dolnośląskie Province, 9 mandates went to the Rafal Dutkiewicz Election Committee, in the Silesia Province, 3 mandates went to KW Silesia Autonomy Movement, in the Pomorskie Province, 1 mandate went to the Election Committee of the National Community, and in the Świętokrzyskie Province, one mandate went to the Election Committee of the Local Government Agreement (Dane Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej dla poszczególnych województw, wybory2010.pkw.gov.pl, 09.12.2017).

The 2014 elections were dominated by the PO (victory in 8 provinces), PiS (6 provinces) and PSL (2 provinces) (Dane Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej dla poszczególnych województw, *Obwieszczenia komisarzy wyborczych o wynikach wyborów na terenie województw*, pkw.gov.pl, 12.12.2017). Of course, a coalition had to be formed to govern. In 15 provinces, the PO-PSL coalition took the power, whereas in the Silesia Province, the coalition also included the SLD and in the Opolskie Province, the German Minority (*PO i PSL podzieliły władzę w sejmikach. Kim są marszałkowie?*, www.tvn24., 09.12.2017). In 2018, the largest number of mandates went to the PiS – 254, second was the Komitet Obywatelski, or the Civic Committee (coalition of PO and Nowoczesna) – 194 mandates, and third was the PSL with 70 mandates. However, still coalitions were necessary in the majority of provinces (*Wybory samorządowe 2018*, wybory2018.pkw.gov.pl, 23.11.2018).

This shows that elections at the local government level were dominated by political parties; since 2006 the struggle for mandates involved PO and PiS. While taking into account these results, it was not a surprise that regional elections attract major interest of the media, and for political parties, the elections are the test and the best predictor of their popularity in upcoming parliamentary elections. Similarly, in the case of France, where at the regional level we can see a bipolar system of political parties

that has been in operation for many years at the central level. Such a state of affairs is supported by the law – election thresholds, blocking of election lists, and majority bonus system (*prime majoritaire*).

In the first two elections (1986 and 1992), groupings linked to the right block won (respectively in 20 and 19) (*Élections régionales 1986*, [www.france-politique.fr](http://www.france-politique.fr), 09.12.2017, *Élections régionales 1992*, [www.france-politique.fr](http://www.france-politique.fr), 09.12.2017). When the popularity of national governments started to decline, it was also reflected in the results of regional elections. The 1998 victory was shared more evenly – in groupings linked to the right block won in 14 regions, leftist parties in 8 regions (*Élections régionales 1998*, [www.france-politique.fr](http://www.france-politique.fr), 09.12.2017).

The year 2004 was a breakthrough for left wing groups that were successful in 20 regions. The following elections brought even larger victory, since those groupings took over power in 21 regions (*Élections régionales 2004*, [www.france-politique.fr](http://www.france-politique.fr), 09.12.2017, *Élections régionales 2010*, [www.france-politique.fr](http://www.france-politique.fr), 09.12.2017). Due to the large reform at all levels of the local government, the 2015 elections followed new rules and new boundaries. This time, people voted to elect only 13 representatives to regional councils, instead of previous 22. The right (Republican Party) won in 7 regions, the Left (Socialist Party) in 5, and a regional party in Corsica. However, it is worth adding that the party that had the highest score in the first round was the National Front (27.73%) (*Élections régionales 2015*, [www.france-politique.fr](http://www.france-politique.fr), 09.12.2017). In fear of the right grouping victory, in two regions socialists withdrew their candidates before the second round (Arlak, [www.polskatimes.pl](http://www.polskatimes.pl)). Again, regional elections reflected moods prevailing in the society and predicted results to be obtained by representatives of particular parties in the presidential election.

In both countries, there are regulations determining the allocation of positions in election lists between women and men (Code électoral, art. L 364; Kodeks wyborczy, art. 211 § 3 pkt 1). Those changes significantly affected the number of women in French regional councils (after previous elections 47.8% councilors) (*Les femmes et la vie politique locale – Bien représentées dans les assemblées locales minoritaires aux postes clés*, [www.insee.fr](http://www.insee.fr), 11.12.2017, *La parité politique*, [www.vie-publique.fr](http://www.vie-publique.fr), 11.12.2017), whereas in Poland, new regulations increased the number of women in election lists (45% of candidates), but it did not translate into the composition of provincial parliaments (*W sejmikach województw bez zmian – kobiety w mniejszości*, [feminoteka.pl](http://feminoteka.pl), 11.12.2017; *W sejmikach*

*nadal tyle samo kobiet – monitoring wyborów samorządowych, rownosc-plci.pl, 11.12.2017).*

However, the attitude of regional elites to posts at this level of government makes a significant difference between the countries. In Poland, the posts are often considered satisfactory, whereas in France they are nothing but stops on the path to the further political career. Interesting is also the fact that in recent years in French regions with strong regional communities (Brittany, Alsace and Corsica<sup>13</sup>), regional parties have been strengthening their position (Parti Breton, Alsace d'Abord, Corsican Nation Party<sup>14</sup>), which, however, do not score high in elections. In Poland, at this level, except the Silesia Province, we do not have autonomy seeking movements.

## Summary

Summarizing, it can be concluded that France indeed faces a turnout crisis at its regional level, while Poland encounters a poor interest in the operation of this level of the local government. Therefore, any attempts to hold elections to regional parliaments on a different date than those to other local governments could adversely affect the turnout. Additionally, it can be noted that in Poland attempts were made to introduce solutions typical for France, e.g. blocking of lists, but it gave rise to more controversies than positive effects. Other attempting to transfer legal solutions pertaining to the election procedure (split into constituencies, calculation of votes, 2nd round) would lead only to yet more complexity of the whole process, a process which already is considered as such by citizens. Certainly, a common feature of the two countries is excessive political presence on this level of the local government which quite often becomes an area of political struggles (recurring discussion on reducing of number of

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<sup>13</sup> Corsica is a specific example of a region in which the sense of distinctness is exceptionally strong, and the same applies to their will to gain autonomy. At a certain point, a draft law was tabled on 2 March 1991 on Corsican nation existing within the framework of the French nation (*peuple corse composante du peuple français*) was considered unconstitutional (Żelazny, 2000, pp. 214–215). Sometimes, independence/autonomy tendencies take their brutal form. In February 1998, Claude Erignac, the Prefect of Corsica, was murdered (Żelazny, 2000, p. 216).

<sup>14</sup> *The parties run their own websites which contain their political agendas*, <http://partibreton.bzh/index.php>, 23.02.2016, <http://www.alsacedabord.org/23.03.2016>.

provinces, or changes in French law). This does not affect favorably the identification of voters with the local government. At the moment, the observation of the reform process in France, which generates so many controversies, can be interesting for Polish authorities due to numerous similarities.

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## **Regionalne wybory samorządowe w Polsce i we Francji – perspektywa porównawcza**

### **Streszczenie**

Artykuł obrazuje kryzys frekwencji w wyborach regionalnych we Francji oraz niski poziom zainteresowania wśród obywateli tym szczeblem samorządu w Polsce. Przedstawia również system wyborczy w obu krajach. W artykule przeanalizowano również inne czynniki, które mogą mieć wpływ na frekwencje. Obrazuje on także w jaki sposób władze obu krajów próbowały sobie poradzić z tym problemem.

**Słowa kluczowe:** samorząd terytorialny, wybory, Francja

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