

## **Immigrants' citizenship status in Europe: the role of national policies**

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### **Introduction**

The importance of citizenship status for immigrants' process of incorporation into the hosting society has been largely demonstrated (e.g. Bauböck, 2006; Castles, 1995; Guiraudon, 2014; Joppke, 1999; Koopmans and Statham, 1999; Portes and Curtis, 1987; Yang, 1994). Citizenship is, in fact, an indicator of integration since it is a legal status, which implies political, civic and social rights (as well as duties) in the new country of residence. As stressed by Ersanilli and Koopmans (2010), two positions exist on the public debate on the issue of the acquisition of citizenship status to immigrants residing in European countries. The first position argues that the acquisition of citizenship stimulates integration. Since the acquisition of citizenship facilitates the integration process, the access to citizenship should be easy. From this point of view, the acquisition of citizenship is not the end of the integration process, but rather a piece of the puzzle that completes the picture of the entire immigrants' integration process. On the contrary, the second position argues that the acquisition of citizenship should be the final step of the integration process and only granted to those who can demonstrate to have completed this process, fulfilling high integration requirements. However, even though almost all European countries have shifted from a 'nationalist citizenship' to a more 'multiculturalist citizenship', thus formally liberalizing the access to citizenship rights (Joppke, 1999; 2007; 2008), the chances to obtain the citizenship status of the new country of residence are still quite limited for many immigrants and their descendants living in Europe (Howard, 2009). Moreover, several differences in citizenship rights policies exist in terms of residence requirements for naturalization, citizenship by birth, dual citizenship toleration and language and integration requirements (e.g. Donkers and Vink, 2010). These differences can mainly depend on countries' immigration experience and on the degree of institutionalization of immigration (Freeman, 1995). Both these conditions resulted in different national citizenship rights policies, which can be ascribable to different integration regimes, which have been developed over the years, and which have led to the development of the so-called 'traditional national models of integration'. The academic literature generally distinguishes among four 'traditional national models of integration': the exclusionist model, the French assimilationist model, the multiculturalist or pluralist model and the 'new' immigration countries model (e.g. Castles 1995; Favell 1998; Freeman 1995; Koopmans and Statham 1999). Despite the ongoing convergence of European countries towards a common model of migrant integration based on the evaluation of immigrants' knowledge of the language and values of the country of residence (Joppke, 2007a; 2007b; 2012), the 'traditional national models of integration'

still represent a useful tool to frame the issue of the citizenship status among immigrants. The acquisition of citizenship rights of the new country of residence may depend on individual factors, such as the demographic characteristics of immigrants, human capital factors and the so-called ‘immigration variables’ (Amit, 2010), but also on contextual factors in the country of residence. Among the latter, we find the national citizenship rights policies precisely, which establish who is eligible for naturalization (Peters *et al.*, 2015). Within these considerations, the aim of this work is to examine the effect of individual and policy factors in the country of residence on the probability to have citizenship status among first-generation immigrants living in European countries, using a multilevel analysis. In particular, our research questions are the following: Which factors influence immigrants’ citizenship status? Do national citizenship policies affect citizenship status of immigrants living in European countries? Do the ‘traditional national models of integration’ can help us in interpreting this outcome?

### **Data, methods and measures**

This study uses individual level data from the Immigrant Citizens Survey (ICS), conducted by the King Baudouin Foundation and the Migration Policy Group, from October 2011 to January 2012. 7,473 immigrants were surveyed in seven European countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary<sup>1</sup>, Italy, Portugal and Spain. The ICS survey aims to reach those: not born in the residence country (first-generation immigrants); who are or were non-EU citizens or stateless persons (born as citizen of country other than EU/EEA countries or Switzerland); residing in the country for more than one year; holding or renewing a legal immigration status and being 15 years or older. The survey addresses the following topics: employment; languages; civic and political participation; family reunion; long-term residence and citizenship.

In order to answer to our research questions, we performed a multilevel logistic model, using R, to analyze differences in the probability to have citizenship status of the country of residence among first-generation immigrants as an outcome of variations in two different levels of independent variables. Level-1 variables are the individual characteristics of immigrants and level-2 variables are the country characteristics. As well acknowledged, multilevel models allow the “interaction between variables characterizing individuals and variables characterizing groups” (Hox, 1995: 1). In other words, they allow the estimation of how covariates at different levels affect the outcome variable and how the interactions among these covariates affect the outcome variable (Guo and Zhao, 2000). Moreover, as elucidated by Bonini (2008), multilevel models have the advantage, compared to other

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<sup>1</sup> Hungary has been dropped out from the sample because it does not have adequate country-level data coverage and because it cannot be easily framed in one of the four ‘traditional national models of integration’.

linear and nonlinear models, to return the unexplained variation in the outcome variable in two separate components, one for the individual level variables and one for the group level variables. Therefore, multilevel models enable to determine what proportion of the variation in the probability to have the citizenship status of the country of residence depends on differences in individual characteristics and what proportion of the variation depends on differences in country characteristics. Finally, multilevel models allow determining whether group characteristics influence the strength of the effects of individual characteristics on the outcome variable.

The dependent variable is the dichotomous variable 'nationality', indicating whether the respondent has the citizenship status of the country of residence or not. We operationalized several independent variables. Among the individual factors, we selected a number of demographic variables. Respondents' *gender*, represented by the dummy variable male and female; *age*, measured in years; *marital status*, distinguishing between 'legally married or civil union', 'legally separated/divorced/civil union dissolved', 'living with my partner', 'widowed/civil partner died' and 'single' and *area of origin*, distinguishing between 'Asia', 'Eastern Europe', 'Latin America', 'Middle East', 'North Africa' and 'Sub-Saharan Africa'. For what concerns the human capital factors, we selected the *current economic situation*, distinguishing between 'in paid work', 'in education', 'unemployed', 'retired/sick/disabled', 'doing housework or other' and the *educational attainment*, which refers to the number of years spent in education. For the so-called 'immigration' factors, we selected three variables. First, respondents' *age at immigration*, which refers to the age at which one entered the new country of residence. Second, *years since migration*, which refers to the number of years one lives in the new country of residence, measured by the difference between the year of the interview and the year of arrival. Third, *reason of entry*, distinguishing between 'work or study', 'family reunification', 'permanent residence', 'humanitarian', 'other legal status' and 'other illegal status'.

In order to determine whether national citizenship policies influence the probability that immigrants have citizenship status of the country of residence, we operationalized several country-level independent variables from a variety of sources. First, the *residence requirement for naturalization*, which refers to the number of years needed to foreign-born citizens to naturalize. Second, the *citizenship by birth* represented by the dummy variable 0 and 1, where 0 means that children born to foreign-born parents do not automatically receive the citizenship rights of the country of birth and 1 means that they automatically receive it. Third, the *dual citizenship toleration*, represented by the dummy variable 0 and 1, where 0 means that foreign-born citizens acquiring the citizenship rights of the new country of residence have to renounce to their previous citizenship and 1 means that they have not necessarily to renounce to it. I deduced this data from a systematic review of the national

citizenship rights policies and academic literature. Then, the *civic integration requirement index* (CIVIX)<sup>2</sup>. Finally, the *proportion of foreign-born citizens* over the total resident population and the *naturalization rate*, which refers to the number of foreign-born citizens who have acquired the citizenship rights of the country of residence as a percentage of the total foreign population, provided by the Eurostat database. A description of the country-level variables is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Description of the country-level independent variables

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>Residence requirement for naturalization</i>	A continuous variable measuring the number of years needed to foreign-born citizens to naturalize in the new country of residence
<i>Citizenship by birth</i>	A dichotomous variable measuring whether or not children born to foreign-born parents automatically receive the citizenship rights of the country of birth
<i>Dual citizenship toleration</i>	A dichotomous variable measuring whether or not foreign-born citizens acquiring the citizenship rights of the new country of residence have to renounce to their previous citizenship
<i>Civic integration requirement index (CIVIX)</i>	A continuous variable summarizing civic integration requirements along three civic knowledge areas (country knowledge, language and values) of the country of residence
<i>Proportion of foreign-born citizens</i>	A continuous variable measuring the number of foreign-born citizens as a percentage of the total resident population
<i>Naturalization rate</i>	A continuous variable measuring the number of foreign-born citizens who have acquired the citizenship rights of the country of residence as a percentage of the total foreign population

Source: Own elaboration

## **Preliminary results**

For the purpose of our analysis, the dataset is reduced to N = 6,255 individuals from six European countries, namely Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain. We started by presenting the descriptive statistics of the dependent and independent individual-level variables, as shown in Table

<sup>2</sup> The Civic Integration Index (CIVIX) is constructed and illustrated by Sara Wallace Goodman (2010) in her article: Integration requirements for integration's sake? Identifying, categorizing and comparing civic integration policies, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 36: 5, 753-772. The CIVIX examines the variations in civic integration requirements along three civic knowledge areas (country knowledge, language and values) in the EU-15. The scale of the CIVIX is 0 to 6, with 0 meaning weak civic integration requirements and 6 meaning stringent civic integration requirements.

2. This contributes to shed light on the individual characteristics of immigrants. The descriptive statistics point out that less than 30% of our respondents hold the citizenship status of the country of residence. As expected, this proportion largely varies across countries. Belgium and France appear to be the most favorable to grant the citizenship status to immigrants, while Italy is the least favorable. Females are slightly more than males. The mean age is 38.2 years. Immigrants are mainly married. Their economic situation is quite good with more than half of respondents holding a paid work. Educational attainment is rather high and it is on average equal to 10.6 years of education. The mean age at arrival is 24.3 and the length of stay in the country of residence is 13.8. Finally, most of our immigrants entered Europe for work or study. The effect of the individual characteristics of immigrants, as well as the effect of countries' citizenship rights policies on the probability to have the nationality of the country of residence will be highlighted by the multilevel analysis.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the dependent and independent individual-level variables (N = 6,255)

	%	Mean	SD
Nationality	28.9		
<i>Belgium</i>	47.4		
<i>France</i>	42		
<i>Germany</i>	15.1		
<i>Italy</i>	6.6		
<i>Portugal</i>	23.4		
<i>Spain</i>	33		
Man	48.8		
Age		38.2	12.5
Marital status			
<i>Legally married or civil union</i>	52		
<i>Legally separated, divorced, civil union dissolved</i>	7.9		
<i>Living with my partner</i>	6.8		
<i>Widowed, civil partner died</i>	2.7		
<i>Single</i>	29.7		
Area of origin			
<i>Asia</i>	13		
<i>Eastern Europe</i>	16.6		
<i>Latin America</i>	22.6		
<i>Middle East</i>	11.6		
<i>North Africa</i>	16.6		
<i>Sub-Saharan Africa</i>	18.6		
Current economic situation			
<i>In paid work</i>	57.9		
<i>In education</i>	9.8		
<i>Unemployed</i>	19.1		
<i>Retired, sick, disabled</i>	5.3		
<i>Doing housework or other</i>	7.2		

Educational attainment		10.6	4.3
Age at immigration		24.3	11.7
Years since migration		13.8	10.6
Reason of entry			
<i>Work or study</i>	32.5		
<i>Family reunification</i>	27.8		
<i>Permanent residence</i>	4.2		
<i>Humanitarian</i>	8.3		
<i>Other legal status</i>	12		
<i>Other illegal status</i>	11.6		

Source: Own elaboration on ICS data

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