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Legitimacy of European Citizenship

Do Europeans believe that all EU Citizens should have the Right to Vote in another EU Country?

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Abstract

EU citizens living in an EU member state of which they are not nationals may participate in local elections. Based on a survey conducted in three member states of the EU we analyze the legitimacy of this core element of European citizenship. Firstly, we examine the extent to which European citizens support the Europeanisation of local voting rights. The results show that about two-thirds of citizens accept these rights. Secondly, we analyze whether those who reject the idea of equality for all Europeans can be determined by social characteristics. Our analyses show that opponents are not at all determined by socio-structural factors and are barely determined by cultural factors and hence do not form the basis for a politically mobilized cleavage. All in all, the results indicate that citizens believe in the legitimacy of this important component of European citizenship.

Keywords

European citizenship – attitudes towards political equality – political rights – local voting rights – legitimacy

When travelling from a non-European country to one of the member states of the European Union, the passengers approaching the passport control are divided into two groups. Those with a European passport and those with non-European passports queue in separate lines. The passports of those in the "EU Citizens" line all have the same design, size and color. This categorization procedure signifies a levelling of the former cleavages separating members of different (European) nation-states with different passports. Instead, a new cleavage now separates Europeans from non-Europeans. The burgundy colored passports are a symbolic expression of European citizenship defining all citizens of the EU as equals. However, they are not only equally mobile; they also share some political rights which non-EU citizens are not entitled to (Maas 2008).

In the following we concentrate on privileges that form core elements of the rights that come with European citizenship, including universal and equal suffrage, and the possibility for EU migrants to participate or run in local elections in *every* EU country. This right extends the idea of political equality from national institutions to one supranational institution. The principle of equality for all citizens of a nation-state is replaced by the notion of equality for all Europeans.

The institutionalization of political rights by the EU is, however, only one side of the coin in the process of European integration. The other we argue, following Max Weber's seminal work, is citizens' beliefs in the legitimacy of this institutionalization. When applied to the case of voting rights, the key question is whether citizens support the idea of Europeanized political equality, or whether they favor granting nationals more political rights than EU foreigners. While other scholars have analyzed the institutionalization of political rights for EU foreigners at the local level (e.g. Muxel 2009) and whether EU foreigners make use of these rights (e.g. Ciornei 2013), we know little about citizens' attitudes towards equal rights for all Europeans. Based on a representative survey conducted in three EU member states (Spain, Poland, and Germany), we examine the extent to which European citizens accept the Europeanisation of local voting rights.

In the first section we explain the theoretical framework of our analysis. For the idea of political equality to be legitimate, we argue that a majority of citizens should support it. In addition, we distinguish between legitimacy on one hand and its social basis on the other. The latter refers to the condition that any minorities rejecting the idea of equality for all Europeans are not clearly determined with respect to socio-structural and cultural factors, such that no strong social cleavages can emerge which might lead to political contestation of the

ideas of European political equality and citizenship. If such social cleavages are not detectable, we consider citizens' beliefs in the legitimacy of European political equality as steadfast and will thus speak of "stability of legitimacy". In the second section we will explain how the data was collected and define the key variables of our analysis. The third section is devoted to the presentation of the results of our empirical analyses examining legitimacy and its stability using the aforementioned representative surveys. The descriptive analyses will show that the idea of Europeanized political equality concerning local suffrage was largely supported in the countries investigated. Furthermore, our multivariate analyses lead to the conclusion that opponents of the idea of equal treatment for EU foreigners and nationals were not determined by socio-structural factors, and barely so with respect to cultural factors. In other words, the likelihood of the formation of cleavages is small. We summarize the results of our study in section four. All in all, our analysis indicates that citizens believe in the legitimacy of one important component of European citizenship and that this belief is rather stable and unlikely to be undermined by social cleavages.

The Legitimacy of European Citizenship

European Integration from above: Civic Identity and European Citizenship

Even though the EU is not a nation-state, it is nevertheless useful from an analytical perspective to compare the process of European integration with the process of the formation of nation-states. The emergence of nation-states was accompanied by a new type of social integration. The nation became the object of identification for citizens and came to supersede alternative objects of identification such as family, region, ethnicity, status or class (Anderson 1983). The characteristics seen as crucial for the collective identity of a nation vary considerably between nation-states (Weber 1985:242–243, 528–529; Hobsbawm 1990). Some nation-states place common ancestry, religion, cultural values or a common language at the core of their national identities, an identity which Michael Bruter (2005) terms "cultural nationalism". This type of social integration must be distinguished from the concept of "civic nationalism", whereby nationhood is defined by equal rights for all citizens.

In his essay "Citizenship and Social Class", Thomas H. Marshall shows that the granting of fundamental civic rights was a central mechanism of social integration in societies of the nineteenth and twentieth Centuries

(Marshall [1949] 1983; see also Crowley 1997; Münch 2008a).¹ All civic rights are connected to a specific *coding of equality* according to which all those who live within a particular state are defined and treated as equals, while those who do not belong to a particular state are excluded from equal rights. Prior to supranational integration, foreigners mostly did not have the right to settle in a country, work, obtain an education, participate in elections or take advantage of the welfare state.

Much like the nation-state itself, the EU could theoretically be integrated in two respects: integration through a common culture or through the granting of equal rights to all Europeans. As other scholars have argued, the opportunities to establish a European cultural unity are very limited since Europe is highly heterogeneous in all respects related to cultural characteristics (Münch 2008a:19). This applies as much to the diversity of ethnic groups as it does to the constellation of languages, with 24 different official languages and a multitude of religions. Finally, Europe as a whole has little in the way of a common history, which could serve as a reference point for the formation of a common identity. Hence, the option of social integration by means of “presumed commonalities of descent, language, and history” is apparently unfeasible (Habermas 2001:64).²

The situation is different, however, for a civic form of social integration (Risse 2010:28). The central mechanism of European social integration is the idea of a civic identity centered on *granting equal rights to all European citizens*. Seyla Benhabib (2004) demonstrates how the implementation of a European citizenship status, especially the introduction of active and passive voting rights for all EU citizens, led to a decoupling of nation statehood and citizenship.³ European citizenship is the means by which citizens are included

1 Although Marshall’s concept of citizenship has been criticized for being too narrowly focused on rights only, it can be used as an analytical tool as it describes how European citizenship is conceived by the EU: mainly as the granting of particular rights to all European citizens. Furthermore, rights constitute a core component of a broader conception of citizenship; see e.g. the three-dimensional definition by Christian Joppke (2007:38) who distinguishes between “status, rights, and identity.”

2 These limits to a cultural social integration are underlined by the official EU motto “United in Diversity” which accentuates the fact that Europe is culturally plural and not characterised by a single cultural identity.

3 At the same time, Benhabib goes on to criticize the exclusion of all non-EU citizens. In her opinion, these people are deprived of the right to participate in political discourse, which she finds ethically and morally unacceptable. On the whole, she interprets the institutionalisation of European rights as a first step on the path to overcoming nation state boundaries in favour of global citizenship, i.e. global equality.

in the European project (Closa 1997; Maas 2007; Meehan 1993; Münch 2008b). The key aspect of this citizenship status is the guarantee given to any EU citizen that they can enjoy the same rights, regardless of which EU country they come from or which EU country they happen to be in. All citizens of the member states have access to all European labor markets, to the respective national welfare systems, and to political participation at the local and European level, irrespective of the EU country they currently reside in. With these rights, the notion of Europeanized equality is now a legal right, although perfect equality still faces some barriers.⁴

In this paper, we focus solely on *political* rights and do not consider civic and social rights. The EU guarantees transnationally mobile citizens a number of EU-wide political rights which were brought together and unified under the umbrella of citizenship of the Union by the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 (European Union 2004). In addition to other rights, Union citizens have local electoral rights: Even if they are not of the nationality of the EU country they reside in, they may participate in municipal elections. To be able to vote, one must be registered on the electoral roll of the respective local authority and issue a declaration of intention. The member states must, in accordance with Article 8, paragraph 1 of the directive, take the necessary measures to ensure that eligible voters are included on the electoral roll, although the right of EU foreigners to vote may be restricted under Article 5 of the directive if the proportion of EU foreigners of voting age is higher than 20 per cent.⁵ Thus, the notion of political equality for all EU citizens in terms of the *right to vote* has largely been institutionalized. In terms of the *right to stand*, this is also true in principle. With the right to stand for office in municipal elections, EU foreigners are entitled to actively shape the politics of the country in which they reside

4 Some scholars have criticized the EU's concept of citizenship as too narrow and argue that the question of what European citizenship could and should be remains open (Delanty 2007:66,69). In this article, we will not contribute to this *normative* debate. Instead, and precisely because it has been claimed that "an exclusively rights-based model of political community will not be enough to command widespread support unless it is embedded in deeper forms of solidarity" (Delanty 2007:70), we are interested in an *empirical* investigation of citizen support of local voting rights as one aspect of institutionalized European citizenship.

5 So far only Luxembourg has made use of this clause. They decreed that an individual has to have lived in Luxembourg for five years before they may participate in local elections (see European Commission 2012:14). The equality of rights of national citizens and EU foreigners is somewhat more limited in terms of the right to stand for office. This applies to some executive functions whose importance extends beyond the local level. These may be reserved for nationals of the given country (see von Wersebe 2000). However, this instrument has not been utilised by 13 of the 27 EU states (see European Commission 2012:12–13).

once they are elected. The potential influence of EU foreigners on the political agenda thus increases, since it can be assumed that some of the national parties attempt to gain their support by responding to their demands.⁶

European Integration from below: Legitimacy and European Citizenship

The *institutionalization* of political rights by the EU is only one side of the coin in the process of European integration. The other half of successful social integration is the extent to which *citizens support the idea of political equality for all EU citizens*. The idea that social integration ultimately rests upon recognition of those rights by citizens refers to Max Weber's (1985) concept of legitimacy. Weber determined that the legitimacy of a political regime must be empirically coupled with popular citizen support. Legitimacy is produced ultimately by citizens' *beliefs* in the legitimacy of their political institutions. In this case, if a *majority support all EU foreigners having the same political rights to vote and to stand as a candidate in local elections as nation-state citizens within each EU country*, then we would conclude that political equality is legitimate. This means that EU foreigners should not be discriminated against in favor of nationals. However, as the European Union is both a federation and a federal state at the same time, it is not sufficient that a European(-wide) majority supports the idea of Europeanized equality. In addition, each member state should have its own majority in favor of such an idea of European equality.⁷

6 EU citizens make use of their local voting rights in small numbers. The proportion of EU citizens in 2010 who were aware that they could participate in local elections if they lived in other EU countries was 69 per cent across the 27 EU countries (European Commission 2012:4). At that time, around 8 million EU citizens of voting age resided in other EU countries. It is estimated that on average only 10 per cent of EU foreigners are registered on an electoral roll. In the European Parliament elections of 2009, only 81 EU foreigners across the EU stood for election in their country of residence (European Commission 2012:7–8).

7 An absolute majority is gained when more than 50 per cent vote for an idea. However, one could argue that the principle of equality is such a fundamental principle of European integration that a small majority of 51 per cent does not constitute a sufficient condition for successful legitimation. In Germany, for instance, constitutional amendments are only possible with a supermajority (two-thirds) because such changes are regarded as an intervention in the constitutional order. Regarding the approval of the idea of equality of all European citizens, one could argue in a similar way and define the supermajority as the necessary threshold. However, such a definition of a threshold remains arbitrary in the end, and we will not try to define one here. We speak of legitimacy when at least a simple majority of half of all citizens (50 per cent) support the idea of equality for all EU citizens.

Furthermore, we distinguish between the legitimacy of a principle or law on the one hand, and the social anchoring of this legitimacy belief on the other. Even if a majority supports the idea of European equality, stability of support is not necessarily valid. Minorities who reject the idea of equality for all Europeans could mobilize to shift public opinion in their favor, or constitute a large enough minority to block legislation. Although a lack of anchoring can apply to both opponents and supporters, it is harder for opponents to mobilize because the law is on the side of the supporters. Opponents are more likely to mobilize politically when all those who oppose the idea of European equality share similar characteristics. This idea comes from the political cleavage theory of Stein Rokkan (1999; Lipset and Rokkan 1967). If specific socio-structural and cultural characteristics uniquely define dissenting opinions, then the likelihood increases of the minority opposition gathering coherent political power.

Thus, in addition to levels of agreement with the idea of political equality, we analyze whether those who speak out against the opening up of their nation-state are predictable based on socio-structurally or culturally determined characteristics. To this end, we draw a set of relevant potential characteristics to analyze from the state of the art literature which are meant to guide our empirical analyses. To make it more reader-friendly, we will address those assumptions directly together with the empirical findings in the results section of this article.

Data, Variables and Methods

Data

Data are based on a survey carried out in 2009 in EU member states Germany, Spain, and Poland. The survey was conducted by the opinion research network “TNS Infratest” and funded by the German Research Foundation. For financial reasons, the investigation could not be carried out in all EU countries. Thus, theoretical considerations were employed to maximize our financial resources. The three countries therefore represent different levels of modernization. Germany is one of the strongest economies in the EU, followed by Spain and then Poland at some distance. Furthermore, the countries differ in terms of the duration of their memberships: Germany was a founding member of the European Community, while Spain joined the EU in 1986 and Poland in 2004. Finally, the three countries differ in the historical introduction of suffrage, which might impact people’s attitudes towards equal political rights for all Europeans (for details see Gerhards and Lengfeld 2015).

The populations in the three surveyed countries are citizens of voting age living in private households (only those with citizenship status in the country where they reside). In Germany and Spain data were gathered by means of computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI). The necessary precondition for telephone interviewing is a sufficient coverage of households with landline connections. Because in Poland this precondition was not met (68 per cent coverage of households with landline numbers), computer-assisted telephone interviews were carried out.

For the *German* survey, a multi-stage household sample based on official area units (federal states, Nielsen areas, administrative regions, districts) and on BIK-indicators (10-point scale) was used. The telephone numbers were randomly drawn from each municipality, and the person surveyed from a household was chosen by means of the Kish grid on the basis of a random number generator. The survey was conducted between May 14th and May 31st, 2009. In *Spain*, the sample was drawn in a similar manner to Germany (clusters according to regional levels, "Random Digit Dialing" method). The random sampling of target persons within the household was chosen with the "Last Birthday" question. Data was collected between May 25th and June 3rd, 2009. In *Poland*, a multistage-sampling procedure was used based on first stage sampling units ("census clusters" in cities, and "enumeration districts" in rural areas that are comprised of at least five buildings). Country-wide samples were drawn on the basis of the latest available official statistical districts. The sample points were chosen according to the 16 regions (NUTS2) as well as local size. For a sample of 1,000 interviews, about 200 sample points were drawn. Based on the starting address, in rural areas every third and in urban areas every fifth address was contacted. The target person was selected by Kish grid method. The survey was conducted between May 20th and June 3rd, 2009.⁸

8 In order to ensure intercultural comparability and equivalence of our closed-ended questions in the different countries, the survey tool was developed in a two-stage process. The final version of the German questionnaire was translated into an English master questionnaire in a first step, so that a bilingual master questionnaire was at hand. On the basis of this German-English master questionnaire, a translation into Spanish and Polish followed. In March 2009, the survey instrument was tested using 105 pre-test interviews with persons eligible to vote from 18 years onwards, and then revised. In all countries, average interview length was 28 minutes. Finally, data have been weighted according to age groups, sex, region, urbanisation and educational degree to match national census estimates.

Variables

1) We ascertained the *extent of the legitimacy for equal treatment* of EU nationals and EU foreigners in terms of political voting rights at the municipal level by asking the following question:

Let us now talk about the right to vote for foreigners.

Regardless of the current national voting system, what is your opinion about the following statement? Please tell me whether you totally agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree or totally disagree.

Foreign citizens from other European Union member states living in my municipality should be allowed to vote in local elections, even if their votes are decisive for the outcome of the elections.

We appended the phrase “even if their votes are decisive for the outcome of the elections” to this question in order to assess the respondents’ commitments to the statement. Other studies have shown that people often diverge in practice from their values when they anticipate costs or undesirable consequences (e.g. Diekmann and Preisendörfer 2003). Since we address the possible consequences of the idea of pan-European political equality, we try to determine how much “value” this attitude has for people.

The degree of acceptance of being governed by someone coming from another EU country was operationalized through the following question:

A person cannot only vote, but can also run for office in an election. What is your opinion about the following statement?

It would be alright if someone from another EU member state were elected mayor in my municipality (response options as above).

2) The criterion of stability of support is fulfilled if those groups who oppose the idea of political equality are not empirically determined by certain characteristics. We distinguish between potential socio-economic and cultural cleavages (Bartolini 2005; Ferrera 2005; Fligstein 2008; Kriesi et al. 2008). For both types we formulate assumptions to test empirically using regression analysis. In order to operationalise the potential socio-economic cleavages in line with the literature mentioned above, we use employment status, occupation, educational attainment, migration background and a respondent’s transnational experiences. To operationalise the cultural cleavages, we use the basic political orientation of the respondents in terms of the left-right self-placement, materialist or post-materialist values, nationalistic attitudes and European identity. Additionally, we also use age and gender as control variables. The theoretical

assumptions underlying the different independent variables are explained in the next section. All dependent variables are described in more detail in Table A2 (see appendix).

Methodology

To examine the first legitimacy criterion “legitimacy beliefs” we use descriptive frequency counts for both types of electoral rights. The second legitimacy criterion “existence of cleavages” is investigated using multivariate OLS regressions. To this end, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis on the two dependent variables (eigenvalue = 1.61; $N = 2,104$; both variables are correlated by $r = .61$; Cronbach’s $\alpha = .76$) to generate a new scale which we used as the dependent variable in the regression analysis. To identify cleavages on the European level, we carried out OLS regressions across all respondents and controlled for country membership (regression with robust standard errors). We additionally carried out separate regressions using the two original variables. The results are almost identical with those based on the scored factor as the dependent variable (tables available on request). Secondly, we ran separate OLS regressions for each country. This allows us to consider whether cleavages are unique to a given national society (Bartolini 2004:41).

Results

The Acceptance of the Political Equality of all EU Citizens

Do respondents support or oppose the opening up of local electoral rights to EU foreigners in their own countries? Historically speaking, political rights are strongly linked with the emergence of nation-states. The opening of these rights to foreigners draws the principle of national self-determination at least partly into question. However, the granting of the *right to vote* is associated with particularly low risks for the citizens, since a single vote counts for relatively little, and is therefore only indirectly influencing political decisions.

In contrast, EU foreigners making use of their *right to stand for mayor* might exert direct influence on political decisions once elected, which may be interpreted by the public as cultural heteronomy. Equality of the right to stand for office thus has greater potential consequences than equality of voting rights. We therefore expect that citizens will accept the idea of being governed by a mayor from another European country less than the right to vote for EU foreigners. This should particularly apply in countries where the right to vote is or was an important part of national identity. In such a country, the granting of electoral rights to EU foreigners is more likely to be perceived as an attack on national self-determination. Among the countries we examined, it is possible

to identify different historical paths along which suffrage was introduced (for details see Gerhards and Lengfeld 2015). In Germany and Spain, the introduction of universal and equal suffrage was part of a socio-economic process of modernization, which was driven by the bourgeoisie and the working class. In Poland, the idea of political equality was less democratically motivated, but was part of the formation of the nation-state. The intention was to involve all citizens in the national community. We therefore expect that Polish respondents will support Europeanized voting rights to a lesser extent than Germans and Spaniards.

As shown by the results in Table 1, approval for the *right to vote* for EU foreigners was relatively high: Nearly two-thirds of respondents willingly granted equal local voting rights to nationals and EU foreigners. Specifically, we found 68.5 per cent support in Spain with the highest approval rating, followed by Germany with 66.4 per cent, and 59.5 per cent in Poland, where there was a clear majority as well.

Table 1 also shows that the structure of the results concerning being governed by an elected EU foreigner is identical to that for the right to vote. However, approval rates are 7–12 per cent lower. A total of 57 per cent of citizens in the three countries supported the idea that EU nationals and EU foreigners should be treated equally in electoral law. At 61.2 per cent, Spaniards once again showed the highest support, followed by the Germans at 58.3 per cent. In Poland, the approval rate is below the 50 per cent mark where the idea of being governed by an EU foreigner does not have a supporting majority. Overall, citizens supported the idea of being governed by an EU foreigner to a much lesser extent than the right to vote. This was expected, since the political influence of EU foreigners becomes significantly larger through the right to stand for election.

TABLE 1 *Attitudes towards equal political rights (in per cent)*

| Country | Right to vote | Right to stand as a candidate | N |
|----------------|---------------|----------------------------------|-------|
| All countries* | 65.6 | 57.0 | 2,733 |
| Germany | 66.4 | 58.3 | 966 |
| Spain | 68.5 | 61.2 | 948 |
| Poland | 59.5 | 47.9 | 819 |

Source: European Equality Survey 2009; own calculations; cumulated agreement in per cent = “tend to agree” and “totally agree”; rounded, weighted. * Additionally weighted for population size.

Overall, the results show that institutionalized European citizenship was largely supported by the legitimacy beliefs of EU citizens. Residence, not citizenship, is the criterion that the majority of respondents use to decide who should be allowed to participate in local political life.

Social Cleavages and the Idea of Political Equality

To what extent is the acceptance of voting rights for EU foreigners influenced by a respondent's socio-structural and cultural position in society?

1) *Socio-structural factors*: The exercise of voting rights requires that an EU foreigner spends some time in the country in which they wish to vote. A period of several months or years of continuous residence is often a consequence of employment in a country. The more that foreign workers are seen by the citizens of a nation-state to be a threat to their own status, the more likely they are to advocate for the closure of the nation-state. This basic hypothesis was formulated and empirically tested very early in social psychological research on prejudice and in "Realistic Group Conflict Theory" (Campbell 1965; Sherif 1966; Haslam et al. 1992; Olzak 1992; Quillian 1995). We suspect that those individuals and population groups that anticipate immigration to disadvantage their economic positions will be more likely to speak out against the idea of political equality. As EU internal migration is a proportionally small phenomenon, we expect that the impact of socio-structural factors on people's attitudes will be rather weak.

To test this general relationship, we analyze the influence of five socio-structural features on citizens' attitudes: a) *Employment status*: We suspect that the unemployed will be more likely to reject the principle of equality than workers, students and retirees, since they may see EU foreigners as competitors in the national labor market. b) *Occupational status*: Like the unemployed, those with low status occupations, such as unskilled and routine service workers, may regard EU foreigners as unwelcome competition for scarce jobs. In contrast, civil servants and higher-skilled employees who are exposed to little or no risk of unemployment might perceive little threat to their status and speak more in favor of equal voting rights. c) *Level of education*: Ronald Inglehart (1990) argues that higher education leads to greater cognitive mobilization, which leads in turn to a greater tendency to question or reject old-fashioned practices and traditional world views. As shown in other studies, higher educated people more often favor equal rights for foreign workers and reject the closure of their society on ethnic grounds (Semyonov et al. 2006). We suspect that this correlation also applies in the area of political rights. It follows that

support for political equality should increase with increasing levels of education. d) *Transnational experiences*: Contact with foreigners, longer stays abroad, and a migration background should loosen the bonds of individuals to a particular nation-state. Other studies have shown that transnational experiences have a positive effect on the development of cosmopolitan attitudes and identification with Europe (Mau 2010; Kuhn 2011; Mau et al. 2012). We believe that transnational experiences will also have a positive effect on the acceptance of equal voting rights.

2) Cultural factors: People not only follow their interests but also their ideas and ideological orientations. We identify four factors that can influence attitudes towards political rights: a) *(Post-)materialist beliefs*: Following Ronald Inglehart (1990:197), those with post-materialistic attitudes strive towards self-expression and participation, but also favor the opening up of national borders and argue for more internationality. Therefore, we assume that post-materialistically minded citizens will be more in favor of local voting rights for EU foreigners. b) Prejudice research has shown that *nationalistic* people tend to reject equal rights for foreigners (Pettigrew 1998; Scheepers et al. 2002; Semyonov et al. 2006). In democracies, the right to vote is at the core of national self-determination. Therefore, the more nationalistic a respondent's attitudes are, the more that approval for Europeanized voting rights will decrease. c) *Left-right self-placement*: Previous studies have shown that the more politically conservative or right-orientated a person's attitude, the less their willingness to grant foreigners equal rights (McLaren 2001; Raijman et al. 2003). We assume that people to the left of the political spectrum tend to reject the restriction of voting rights to national citizens, since the universalist call for a repeal of migration limits forms part of the world view of most politically left-wing groupings. In contrast, right-wing citizens will want to restrict the right to vote, because the maintenance of nation-state order and the exclusion of foreigners is a part of the conservative orientation. d) *European identity*: People who strongly identify with Europe tend to support all areas of the expansion of European social integration and therefore are also likely to support the extension of local voting rights (Hooghe and Marks 2004; Fligstein 2008; Immerfall et al. 2010). Conversely, people with strong national identification are likely to want voting rights reserved for citizens of their own nations.⁹

9 Some more specific factors that might also influence people's attitudes towards local voting rights such as different local election systems or citizens' experience with non-nationals participating in local elections are not included in our analysis.

TABLE 2 *Explaining attitudes towards equal voting rights in municipal elections for EU foreigners (all countries)*

| | M1 | | M2 | | M3 | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| Age (in years) | .00 | (.00) | -.00 | (.00) | .00 | (.00) |
| Sex (1=male) | -.11* | (.05) | -.11* | (.05) | -.13** | (.05) |
| Employment status (ref.: unemployed) | | | | | | |
| Not in labour force | .04 | (.10) | | | .10 | (.10) |
| Student/apprentice | .27* | (.14) | | | .24 | (.13) |
| Employed | .15 | (.09) | | | .15 | (.08) |
| Occupational status (ref.: service class) | | | | | | |
| Routine non-manuals | -.11 | (.07) | | | -.05 | (.06) |
| Petty bourgeoisie/farmers | -.01 | (.09) | | | .00 | (.09) |
| Skilled workers | -.00 | (.08) | | | .04 | (.07) |
| Semi-/unskilled workers | -.03 | (.11) | | | -.04 | (.10) |
| Not reported | -.08 | (.13) | | | -.04 | (.12) |
| Education (ref.: university degree) | | | | | | |
| Without graduation | -.08 | (.11) | | | .04 | (.11) |
| Less than secondary school | -.28** | (.08) | | | -.15 | (.08) |
| Secondary school | -.22* | (.09) | | | -.13 | (.09) |
| High school | -.10 | (.07) | | | -.05 | (.07) |
| Migration background (1=yes) | | | | | | |
| Stay abroad (1=yes) | .14* | (.06) | | | .08 | (.06) |
| Contact with foreigners (1=yes) | .30*** | (.05) | | | .24*** | (.05) |
| Inglehart index (ref. Materialist) | | | | | | |
| Mixed type | | | .11 | (.06) | .09 | (.06) |
| Post-materialist | | | .30*** | (.07) | .26*** | (.07) |
| Nationalism | | | | | | |
| Left-right self-placement (0=left, 10=right) | | | -.21*** | (.02) | -.18*** | (.03) |
| Identification (0=nation, 1=Europe & mixed type) | | | .22*** | (.05) | .16** | (.05) |

| | M ₁ | | M ₂ | | M ₃ | |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|
| Country (ref.: Germany) | | | | | | |
| Spain | -.02 | (.06) | .01 | (.05) | -.04 | (.06) |
| Poland | -.16* | (.07) | -.07 | (.06) | -.04 | (.07) |
| Constant | -.06 | (.15) | .54*** | (.13) | .30 | (.17) |
| R ² | | .06 | | .11 | | .13 |

Source: European Equality Survey 2009; own calculations; N = 2,104; linear regression with robust standard errors; weighted for socio-demographic composition; unstandardised regression coefficients and robust standard errors (in brackets) are displayed; * $p_{t} < .05$, ** $p_{t} < .01$, *** $p_{t} < .001$.

First, we analyzed the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable using data from all countries (Table 2). As the results from stepwise expanded models (M₁ = control variables + country membership + socio-economic variables; M₂ = control variables + country membership + cultural variables; M₃ = all variables) show, cultural factors comprise the largest contribution to the explanation of the acceptance of equal local voting rights. In contrast, socio-structural factors only show significant effects on attitudes towards equality when cultural factors are excluded from the equation. As model M₁ demonstrates, there has been an attitudinal gap between the unemployed and students (27 percentage point difference) and between the high and the medium educated (28 resp. 22 percentage point difference). Staying abroad and frequent contact with foreigners (domestic or abroad) increased approval of political equality by 14 resp. 30 percentage. However, when including cultural variables to the regression equation, all socio-economic variables' effects become insignificant, except contact with foreigners. Most importantly, preferences toward cultural nationalism showed the largest single effect. In M₃, with each step on the four-point nationalism rating scale, disapproval of equal political rights decreased by 18 percentage points. The same holds true for persons holding materialist orientations (26 percentage points, compared to post-materialists) as well as those tending towards the right side of the political spectrum (4 percentage points). Furthermore, people with an exclusive identification with their nation-state disagreed on equal political rights by 16 percentage points, compared to persons identifying themselves as Europeans or as mixed-types. However, the potential for mobilization seems to be rather weak considering the relatively low explained variance of 16 percentage and the absence of socio-economic conflict lines when considering cultural factors.

However, socio-economic and cultural factors may intensify each other and thus increase the likelihood of a conflict line. To give an example, the idea of equal rights might be additionally challenged by the less educated simultaneously holding nationalistic attitudes or from the unemployed with strong right-wing political convictions. To test this assumption, we calculated interaction effects between employment status, social class and education on the one hand, and nationalism, left-right self-placement and identification with Europe on the other (see Table A1 in annex for selected interaction effects models). It turned out that most of the interaction effects are insignificant. If there is a significant effect though, it comes out that the economically vulnerable who simultaneously hold nationalistic or right-wing attitudes do not constitute those who speak out against the idea of political equality. In contrast, nationalistic or right wing-minded members of the service class disagree on equal rights to a larger extent than the unskilled and low-educated holding the same attitudes. Hence, the overlapping of socio-economic and cultural factors does not additionally enhance the potential of political conflicts about political equality, but might lead to a fragmentation of social groups with the same socio-economic status. Therefore, it seems rather unlikely that people holding specific attitudes but opposing socio-economic statuses will be attracted to the same political actors and thus form a powerful movement against the Europeanisation of the national political sphere.

Finally, results of the country regressions (Table 3, only full models) show that at the national level the potential for cleavage-based mobilization against European political equality remains lower than at the European level among all countries under investigation. The explained variance in Germany (16 per cent)

TABLE 3 *Explaining attitudes towards equal voting rights in municipal elections for EU foreigners (separated countries)*

| | Germany | | Spain | | Poland | |
|-----------------------------------------|---------|-------|-------|-------|--------|-------|
| Age (in years) | .00 | (.00) | .00 | (.00) | -.00 | (.00) |
| Sex (1=male) | -.09 | (.08) | -.08 | (.07) | -.26** | (.09) |
| Employment status (ref.: unemployed) | | | | | | |
| Not in labour force | .13 | (.20) | .13 | (.15) | .04 | (.19) |
| Student/apprentice | .26 | (.23) | .13 | (.19) | .24 | (.25) |
| Employed | .13 | (.18) | .17 | (.12) | .13 | (.17) |

| | Germany | | Spain | | Poland | |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------|-------|---------|--------|--------|-------|
| Occupational status | | | | | | |
| (ref.: service class) | | | | | | |
| Routine non-manuals | -.11 | (.10) | .09 | (.11) | -.11 | (.15) |
| Petty bourgeoisie/farmers | .01 | (.15) | .14 | (.18) | -.04 | (.18) |
| Skilled workers | .03 | (.15) | .12 | (.12) | .07 | (.17) |
| Semi-/unskilled workers | -.29 | (.18) | .17 | (.15) | -.01 | (.30) |
| Class pos. not reported | .01 | (.22) | .01 | (.19) | -.08 | (.27) |
| Education | | | | | | |
| (ref.: university degree) | | | | | | |
| Without graduation | .62 | (.45) | .06 | (.17) | -.30 | (.20) |
| Less than secondary school | -.06 | (.12) | -.18 | (.13) | -.23 | (.19) |
| Secondary school | .02 | (.12) | -.28* | (.14)* | -.21 | (.25) |
| High school | .13 | (.11) | -.13 | (.11) | -.20 | (.16) |
| Migration background (1=yes) | -.02 | (.11) | -.20 | (.19) | -.23 | (.22) |
| Stay abroad (1=yes) | .22* | (.09) | .02 | (.10) | .01 | (.12) |
| Contact with foreigners (1=yes) | .23** | (.08) | .29** | (.08) | .14 | (.11) |
| Inglehart index (ref. Materialist) | | | | | | |
| Mixed type | .14 | (.12) | .07 | (.10) | .03 | (.09) |
| Post-materialist | .27* | (.13) | .30* | (.12) | .07 | (.18) |
| Nationalism | -.19*** | (.05) | -.21*** | (.04) | -.10 | (.05) |
| Left-right self-placement (0=left, 10=right) | -.05* | (.02) | -.04** | (.01) | -.02 | (.02) |
| Identification (0=nation, 1=Europe & mixed type) | .16 | (.09) | .22* | (.09) | .11 | (.09) |
| Constant | .20 | (.31) | .21 | (.24) | .31 | (.29) |
| <i>N</i> | 840 | | 791 | | 473 | |
| <i>R</i> ² | .16 | | .14 | | .08 | |

Source: European Equality Survey 2009; own calculations; *N* = 2,104; linear regression with robust standard errors; weighted for socio-demographic composition; unstandardised regression-coefficients and robust standard errors (in brackets) are displayed; **p*_t<.05, ***p*_t<.01, ****p*_t<.001.

and Spain (14 per cent) is about as low as the overall model and still lower in Poland (8 per cent and b-coefficients are correspondingly small. Regarding socio-structural factors, a difference between university graduates and those with mid-level educations was found only in Spain, while contact with foreigners has a positive effect in both Germany and Spain. Of the cultural factors, fear of a threat to national culture (the indicator of nationalism) is the strongest explanatory factor with effects of $-.16$ and $-.22$ respectively. In Poland, the effect falls just short of significance although it points in the same direction, at $-.10$. In addition, in Germany and Spain, post-materialist attitudes exhibit a positive effect on citizens' attitudes, while acceptance of equal rights decreases with political self-placement from left to right. Overall however, the cultural cleavages in the individual countries are also weak.

Conclusion

With the implementation of European citizenship, the European Union recorded the political rights of the citizens of all member states. The citizens of the member states no longer exclusively constitute different peoples, but together constitute a European people. The key aspect of European citizenship status is the guarantee given to any EU citizen that they can enjoy the same rights, regardless of which EU country they come from or which EU country they happen to be in. All citizens of member states have access to all European labor markets, to the respective national welfare systems, and to political participation at the local level, irrespective of the EU country they currently reside in.

Granting European citizenship status is part of a broader effort by the EU to push for the social integration of Europe. The construction of a civic European identity, however, cannot only be implemented "from above", it must also be accepted 'from below'. This means that the citizens of EU countries should consider the idea of Europeanized equality as legitimate.

Our analyses show that the idea of political equality, when conceived as equality of voting rights at the local level, is supported by about two-thirds of the citizens of the three EU countries analyzed, and hence legitimate. Our results are also supported by a more recent 2012 Eurobarometer survey carried out in 27 member states of the EU. In this survey, a clear majority of 76 per cent agreed on allowing EU foreigners to participate in national elections of the member state in which they reside. Support even increased from 2010 to 2012 by 17 per cent. In Germany, Spain and Poland, approval rates range between 64 and 70 per cent (European Commission 2013:22). Although there

is no established political equality regarding national voting rights at present, these findings support the existence of a European-wide legitimacy of equal political rights.

Furthermore, there are only slight indications of the existence of social cleavages. The minority who are opposed to the idea is under-determined both socio-structurally and culturally, and as such will be difficult to mobilize politically against the majority position in the EU. Most likely, this will still apply to those citizens who have materialistic orientations, identify themselves politically with the right, or who are strong nationalists. All in all however, the results indicate that citizens believe in the legitimacy of this important component of European citizenship and that these beliefs are socially stable.

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Appendix

TABLE A1 *Determinants of attitudes towards equal voting rights in municipal elections for EU foreigners: selected interaction effects models only (all countries)*

| | M4 | | M5 | | M6 | | M7 | |
|----------------------------------------------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| Age (in years) | .00 | (.00) | .00 | (.00) | .00 | (.00) | .00 | (.00) |
| Sex (1=male) | -.13** | (.05) | -.13* | (.05) | -.13** | (.05) | -.13** | (.05) |
| Employment status (ref.: unemployed) | | | | | | | | |
| Not in labour force | .11 | (.10) | .12 | (.10) | .10 | (.10) | .11 | (.10) |
| Student/apprentice | .24 | (.13) | .25* | (.13) | .24 | (.13) | .24 | (.13) |
| Employed | .15 | (.08) | .17* | (.08) | .15 | (.08) | .15 | (.08) |
| Occupational status (ref.: service class) | | | | | | | | |
| Routine non-manuals | -.35* | (.15) | -.03 | (.12) | -.19 | (.27) | -.05 | (.12) |
| Petty bourgeoisie/farmers | -.42 | (.22) | -.05 | (.06) | -.15 | (.15) | -.06 | (.06) |
| Skilled workers | -.26 | (.17) | .01 | (.09) | -.37 | (.20) | -.01 | (.09) |
| Semi-/unskilled workers | -.25 | (.25) | .06 | (.07) | -.17 | (.15) | .04 | (.08) |
| Not reported | .00 | (.26) | -.02 | (.10) | -.27 | (.20) | -.05 | (.10) |
| Education (ref.: university degree) | | | | | | | | |
| Without graduation | .05 | (.11) | -.61* | (.25) | .03 | (.11) | -.40 | (.21) |
| Less than secondary school | -.14 | (.08) | -.55** | (.18) | -.16 | (.08) | -.29 | (.17) |
| Secondary school | -.11 | (.09) | -.24 | (.21) | -.12 | (.09) | -.24 | (.20) |
| High school | -.04 | (.07) | -.25 | (.16) | -.05 | (.07) | -.20 | (.16) |
| Migration background (1=yes) | -.10 | (.08) | -.09 | (.09) | -.10 | (.08) | -.09 | (.08) |
| Stay abroad (1=yes) | .09 | (.06) | .08 | (.06) | .08 | (.06) | .09 | (.06) |
| Contact with foreigners (1=yes) | .24*** | (.05) | .23*** | (.05) | .24*** | (.05) | .24*** | (.05) |
| Inglehart index (ref. Materialist) | | | | | | | | |
| Mixed type | .09 | (.06) | .09 | (.06) | .09 | (.06) | .09 | (.06) |
| Post-materialist | .25*** | (.07) | .25*** | (.07) | .25*** | (.07) | .26*** | (.07) |
| Nationalism | -.26*** | (.04) | -.30*** | (.06) | -.18*** | (.03) | -.18*** | (.03) |

TABLE A1 *Determinants of attitudes towards equal voting rights (cont.)*

| | M4 | M5 | M6 | M7 |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| Nationalism * occupational class | | | | |
| Routine non-manuals | .12* (.06) | | | |
| Petty bourgeoisie/ farmers | .18* (.09) | | | |
| Skilled workers | .13 (.07) | | | |
| Semi-/unskilled workers | .09 (.10) | | | |
| Not reported | -.02 (.09) | | | |
| Nationalism * education | | | | |
| Without graduation | | .28** (.09) | | |
| Less than secondary school | | .18* (.07) | | |
| Secondary school | | .07 (.08) | | |
| High school | | .10 (.07) | | |
| Left-right self-placement (0=left, 10=right) | -.04*** (.01) | -.04*** (.01) | -.06*** (.02) | -.07** (.02) |
| Left-right self-placement * occupational class | | | | |
| Routine non-manuals | | | .03 (.04) | |
| Petty bourgeoisie/ farmers | | | .02 (.02) | |
| Skilled workers | | | .06 (.03) | |
| Semi-/unskilled workers | | | .04 (.02) | |
| Not reported | | | .04 (.03) | |
| Left-right self-placement * education | | | | |
| Without graduation | | | | .08* (.03) |
| Less than secondary school | | | | .03 (.03) |
| Secondary school | | | | .02 (.03) |
| High school | | | | .03 (.03) |
| Identification (0=nation, 1=Europe & mixed type) | .16** (.05) | .16** (.05) | .17** (.05) | .17** (.05) |

| | M4 | M5 | M6 | M7 |
|-------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| Country (ref.: Germany) | | | | |
| Spain | -.03 (.06) | -.03 (.06) | -.03 (.06) | -.03 (.06) |
| Poland | -.05 (.07) | -.05 (.07) | -.04 (.07) | -.04 (.07) |
| Constant | .46* (.18) | .53** (.19) | .43* (.18) | .46* (.20) |
| R ² | .13 | .14 | .13 | .13 |

Source: European Equality Survey 2009; own calculations; N = 2,104; linear regression with robust standard errors; weighted for socio-demographic composition; unstandardised regression-coefficients and robust standard errors (in brackets) are displayed; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. See Table 2 for models without interaction effects.

TABLE A2 Variable description and descriptive statistics.

| Variable | Definition | All | Germany | Spain | Poland |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Age | Age (in years) | 48.7 (17.7) | 51.8 (17.5) | 45.5 (16.5) | 49.0 (18.6) |
| Sex | 0 Female | 52.9 | 50.7 | 51.2 | 56.9 |
| | 1 Male | 47.1 | 49.3 | 48.8 | 43.1 |
| Employment status | Not in labor force/retired | 37.2 | 39.3 | 27.7 | 44.7 |
| | Unemployed | 8.6 | 4.2 | 13.1 | 8.6 |
| | Employed | 48.6 | 52.0 | 53.7 | 40.2 |
| | Student/ apprentice | 5.6 | 4.6 | 5.6 | 6.5 |
| Occupational status | Service class | 30.1 | 49.4 | 25.1 | 15.8 |
| | Routine non-manuals | 25.7 | 26.9 | 28.0 | 22.0 |
| | Petty bourgeoisie, farmers | 9.0 | 5.0 | 6.5 | 15.5 |
| | Skilled workers | 20.2 | 7.4 | 21.3 | 31.9 |
| | Semi-/unskilled workers | 6.8 | 6.1 | 10.2 | 3.9 |
| | Class position not reported | 8.4 | 5.2 | 9.0 | 10.9 |

TABLE A2 *Variable description (cont.)*

| Variable | Definition | All | Germany | Spain | Poland |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|---------|-------|--------|
| Education | Without graduation | 11.1 | 1.4 | 11.2 | 20.4 |
| | Less than secondary school | 27.0 | 31.6 | 22.5 | 26.9 |
| | Secondary school | 14.4 | 28.9 | 8.3 | 6.2 |
| | High school | 29.5 | 23.8 | 30.9 | 33.8 |
| | University degree | 18.1 | 14.3 | 27.1 | 12.8 |
| Migration background | Were you or one of your parents born abroad? | | | | |
| | 0 No | 91.9 | 87.3 | 95.2 | 93.3 |
| | 1 Yes | 8.1 | 12.7 | 4.8 | 6.7 |
| Stay abroad | Have you ever lived abroad for three months or longer, either for private or professional reasons? | | | | |
| | 0 No | 83.3 | 79.4 | 85.0 | 85.4 |
| | 1 Yes | 16.7 | 20.6 | 15.0 | 14.6 |
| Contact with foreigners | Do you have regular contact to people from other countries in your circle of friends and acquaintances? | | | | |
| | 1 No, none | 47.7 | 35.4 | 28.4 | 79.4 |
| | 2 Yes, but only with foreigners living in [country of resp.] | 26.4 | 28.3 | 43.3 | 7.6 |
| | 3 Yes, but only with foreigners living abroad | 5.6 | 4.7 | 3.0 | 9.0 |
| | 4 Yes, with foreigners living in [country of resp.] and to foreigners living abroad (recoded: 0 = no, none; 1 = other) | 20.3 | 31.6 | 25.4 | 3.9 |

| Variable | Definition | All | Germany | Spain | Poland |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Inglehart Index | 1 Materialist only | 25.3 | 11.3 | 18.6 | 46.3 |
| | 2 Mixed type (materialist/post-materialist or post-materialist/materialist) | 53.5 | 51.7 | 59.1 | 49.5 |
| | 3 Post-materialist only | 21.3 | 37.0 | 22.3 | 4.2 |
| Nationalism | A high share of foreigners leads to a dilution of [national] culture and way of life. 1 totally agree, 2 tend to agree, 3 tend to disagree, 4 totally disagree (recoded) | 2.4 (1.0) | 2.4 (1.0) | 2.2 (1.1) | 2.5 (0.9) |
| Political orientation | In political matters people talk of 'the left' and 'the right'. How would you place your views on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right? | 4.8 (2.6) | 4.8 (1.9) | 4.4 (2.9) | 5.4 (2.7) |
| Identification with Europe | Do you think of yourself predominantly as | | | | |
| | 1 [Nationality] only | 38.5 | 32.8 | 24.8 | 57.1 |
| | 2 [Nationality] and European | 55.7 | 57.6 | 68.7 | 41.6 |
| | 3 European only (recoded: 0 nationality only, 1 other) | 5.8 | 9.6 | 6.6 | 1.3 |
| N (max.) | | 3,006 | 1,000 | 1,006 | 1,000 |

Note: Means & relative frequencies in per cent are displayed; they do not always cumulate to 100 per cent due to rounding errors. Where indicated standard deviations are in parentheses.