

The Challenges of European Citizenship: the Political Participation of Mobile Citizens in the EU

Introduction

The Maastricht Treaty (1992) introduced “European Union citizenship”: free movement of EU citizens within its borders, and the same electoral rights as nationals of the Member states where they reside. The new rights were meant to deepen the process of European integration.

Mobile EU citizens could arguably be considered more engaged and interested in EU policies and politics than citizens residing in their own country. And yet, in most cases their participation in EU elections seems to be even lower than the average turnout in each countries.

Considering the large number of mobile EU citizens, this situation might lead to an underrepresentation problem.

Objective

Determine the issues behind the low political participation of mobile EU citizens in European the electoral participation of non-citizen residents in the 2019 European Parliament elections.

Research question: *What are the factors behind the political engagement of mobile EU citizens in their host country?*

Methodology

Quantitative analysis, using data from the 2019 European Electoral Study.

Binary logistic regression model:

- DV → voting in EP elections (yes/no)
- IVs → selected from EES Questionnaire and literature

Theoretical framework

Electoral participation of mobile citizens is often hampered by administrative regulations and long registration procedures imposed by Member states. The literature also considers several factors at individual and system level:

- The length of time spent in the country might be positively correlated with the likelihood of voting (H1): more political integration and understanding of host country's Administration.
- The individual's attitude towards the European institutions could determine if they vote or not (H2): less Eurosceptic individuals are more likely to participate.
- The context of the country of origin might influence their decision to participate or not in the host country (H3): post-enlargement Member states (2004-) have usually lower turnout rates.

Control variables:

- Level of education and gender.

Predictor	Estimate	SE	Z	p	Odds ratio
Constant	0.1448	0.52467	0.276	0.783	1.156
trust EP	-0.2936	0.07594	3.867	<.001	0.746
years in country	0.0364	0.00503	7.225	<.001	1.037
EU membership:					
Old – New	0.1838	0.18104	1.015	0.310	1.202
level education:					
medium – low	-0.0478	0.43172	0.111	0.912	0.953
high – low	0.2830	0.42462	0.667	0.505	1.327
gender:					
female – male	-0.2768	0.17003	1.628	0.104	0.758

Note. The estimates represent log odds of "voted EPE = yes" vs. "voted EPE = no"

Findings

EU mobile citizens have a lower turnout than the general population (50.66% < 71%).

- ✓ Years spent in country of residence positively affect the chances of mobile citizens' voting (odds increase with time)
- ✓ Trust in European Parliament and institutions also increases possibilities of non-citizen residents voting.
- ✗ Status of country of origin is not found to be significant, but there might be a **spurious relation** with the variable *trust_EP*.
↳ Newer EU countries have lower values of trust in the European institutions than older Member states
- ✗ Level of education or gender are not relevant factors in the electoral participation of mobile citizens (not significant *p* value)

Conclusions

The **length of time** spent in the host country and individuals' **attitudes towards the European institutions** are the main factors behind the electoral participation of mobile citizens.

Administrative regulations also need to be taken into consideration to develop a better understanding of the issue. That means **better data gathering** on registration rates is also needed.

Non-electoral participation is another option for mobile citizens to engage politically with European institutions.

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