

Political Empowerment of European Citizens. A Comparative Public Opinion and Approach¹

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Over time, the European Union has undergone a number of highly significant integration processes on an economic, social and political level. With the structure of States, it has implemented a number of actions aimed at empowering citizens by harmonising different rights and producing relevant processes in first-generation political rights. Through the EU members' public opinion, this article analyses the effects of European foreign migrants' electoral rights in both local and European elections. With the analysis of the data from the 2010, 2012 and 2015 European barometers, it is concluded that there is a relation between the presence of European migrants and the opinion of the electoral effect, as well as a significant relation between the existing subjective perception of political empowerment, the opinion on the effects of these rights with regard to political participation and the wish to extend these electoral rights for other elections.

I. Introduction

Society, its opinions and beliefs regarding politics and representation are an essential aspect to be considered at this time of general questioning of the legitimisation of democracy. Political sociology should accept new realities that have been created in political rights, such as the acknowledgement in the European Union for non-national European citizens to vote and stand for elections (in certain electoral processes) in their country of residence. From a host society's point of view, this means that «foreigners» (from another country, even if it is a Member State) can be political representatives, creating scenarios where it is difficult to accept the traditional concept of sovereignty in a

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nation-State. Thus, a central element constitutes how such right is perceived or valued in different societies.

This research focuses its attention on a small revolution that has not been addressed, despite the profound consequences. This includes the extension of first-generation political rights to nationals from other States, especially «the right to choose and to be chosen, as well as to participate in public affairs». However, a foundation process is initiated from a social and citizen basis that is as significant as the introduction of the euro or free movement of people or goods. In this case, we talk about the free movement of political representation.

From an integration point of view, extending foreign residents' electoral rights creates obvious integration and participation opportunities. Nonetheless, taking into account the legal status and the diversity of local systems within the European territory, the issue is more delicate as it contains elements related to constituent processes and the formation of nation-States and liberal representative democracy. Ultimately, extending foreign residents' electoral rights would be part of an inclusive process within societies that, at the same time, overpower the national schemes of societies that are delimited by States.

A complementary approach to the consideration of electoral rights as an element of integration in the country of residence or with respect to sovereignty is the interpretation of this right as part of a broader and more general process of European citizen empowerment. The analysis of how different societies perceive *de facto* empowerment of non-national European residents (given the increase in their intervention ability in public affairs that acquiring electoral rights involves), as well as the interconnection of this perception with other elements linked to multicultural democratic systems, offer us a privileged panorama on a social dynamic in which the reality of mobility of Europeans and the theory of national sovereignty come together.

By exploring the European public opinion, this study delves into the social sense that takes on the political role of European citizens residing in other EU member-States, taking into account their acquired right to vote and to stand for elections in their host country.

Firstly, the perceived effect is described regarding political participation that takes place due to the incorporation of foreign candidates (voter turnout in general, as well as the electoral results according to parties). In this sense, a social vision on the role of foreign electoral participation is obtained; an indicator of the perceived electoral effectiveness. Additionally, such effectiveness is observed in relation to the proportion of European foreigners in each country. Finally, research is carried out on the existence of social belief models that give us information on the empowerment of European citizens. The models

answer the question: To what extent does believing in the existence of a higher or lower degree of empowerment influence electoral consequences or the wish to increase the right to vote or stand for elections?

2. Background and context

Over the last decades, research in Social Sciences has portrayed the combined effects of globalisation processes and the development of new technologies. These changes have increased analysis strategies that researchers have available, as well as objects of research. Globalisation has given rise to new questions as a consequence of the reconfiguration of the social, political and economic reality. Political sociology is no exception to such dynamics or their consequences.

A significant characteristic for all Social Sciences has been the progressive increase in comparative research, especially since the last quarter of the 20th century, as more data and information are increasingly designed and accessible. Nowadays, simultaneous studies on several societies is common, allowing to reveal those phenomena that were perceived as national specificities as more general processes, as well as the existence of behaviour patterns and shared values. In this sense, the relation citizens have with politics and democratic institutions, or the political socialisation processes of young people, have a different interpretation when similar patterns are detected, as for example, for several societies. This applies to technological advances, thanks to those who have facilitated the integration of mathematical, statistical or logical procedures in comparative research. The empirical work, of systematisation, analysis and interpretation, reaches an unprecedented versatility and agility thanks to new technologies.

In societies and their political expressions, the globalisation processes and technological development have produced substantive transformations. Representative democracy, based on the nation-State, undergoes continuous legitimacy crises; threatened both from within the institutional system (for example, corruption and oligarchisation of political elites) and from outside, by disseminating government ideologies of religion or authoritarian type. As a consequence, civil and political rights, as they are understood in the western world with regard to liberal approaches, are at the centre of debate. Society, its opinions and beliefs regarding politics and representation are an essential aspect to be considered at this time of general questioning of the legitimisation of democracy. In the structural framework of liberal democracy, political representation is a cornerstone. Its meaning goes beyond the electoral scope

and reaches highly substantive aspects that are related to the legitimacy of the rule according to higher law. In the case of the European Union, previous to the current crisis, significant steps were taken towards the dissemination of some first-generation political rights.

This research focuses its attention on a small revolution that has not been addressed, despite the profound consequences. This includes the extension of first-generation political rights to nationals from other States, especially «the right to choose and to be chosen, as well as to participate in public affairs». European citizens extend these rights when moving across borders, which has changed throughout the history of Europe.

Among the different processes undergone by the political systems of the States that make up the current European Union, highly political regulatory changes have been defined since Maastricht. The changes affect the notion of sovereignty, the founding constituent processes of the States, legitimisation or citizenship. Taking into account that many of the Member States of the European Union have a long historic experience regarding unions and divisions, this is not a minor issue. Some of them were constituted by means of relatively late reunifications (such as Italy) or they recently separated (such as Czechia and Slovakia). The extension of political rights as we have mentioned, modifies yet again the terms of political participation of nationals and foreigners. Thus, in the example of the former Czechoslovakia, after the States were separated, political rights to vote on a local or supranational level were unified. Again, a Czech citizen has electoral rights in local and European elections in Slovakia and vice versa, something that may seem paradoxical.

It is obvious that political sociology should accept the new realities that have been produced in the area of political rights, as is the acknowledgement for non-national European citizens to have the right to vote and to stand for elections (in certain electoral processes). From the point of view of host societies, this means that those who are socially classified as foreigners (in our study: European citizens residing in another EU member-States) can become political representatives. A central element constitutes how such right is perceived or valued in different societies

While expanding these rights expresses a consolidation of democracy in the European Union, on a participation level, this international transversality of electoral rights is a reformulation of the construction of a democratic Europe. However, a foundation process is initiated from a social and citizen basis that is as significant as the introduction of the euro or free movement of people or goods. In this case, we talk about the free movement of political representation.

Foreign migrants' electoral rights can be considered from different points of view, depending on the researcher's interest. One of these approaches is the

idea of social integration. The acquisition of rights in the country of residence, from a foreigner's point of view, opens obvious opportunities for integration and participation. In this sense, a number of authors have carried out research on this, such as Rubio-Marín (2000), Day and Shaw (2002), Givens (2007) or Duran & Martín (2008). In a study on the integration of immigrants, Duran and Martín (2008) indicate that:

Studies on the political integration of immigrants are usually focused on those who were immigrants, but have obtained the nationality of their host country or their descendants. Immigrants per se are usually excluded from such research, as well as nationals from countries that are not their host countries in which the basic right to political participation is not granted: to vote. Community nationals are not considered when the migratory phenomenon is addressed; in any case, it is not common for it to be included in the joint analysis (of community and non-community nationals) in a study.

Coinciding with this idea, it is even less frequent for studies to be carried out regarding the European public opinion on electoral rights. The central idea in the case of an integration approach is the ninth of the Common Basic Principles on Integration from 2004, approved by the Council of the European Union: «the participation of immigrants in the democratic process and in the formulation of policies and integration measures, especially locally, favours integration». Several authors such as Rubio-Marín (2000), Day and Shaw (2002) or Beckman (2006) provide arguments of regulatory nature in favour of facilitating political participation of foreign migrants.

Alongside the approximation of integration, legal considerations have a special importance, especially that related to the constituent processes and the formation of nation-States and liberal representative democracy. In this framework, the Maastricht Treaty itself and its consequences on the constitution of member countries are included. Two levels clearly exist in the currently recognised electoral rights: local (place of residence) and European. The local level is closely related to national constitutional rights and, in general, it is associated to the debate on national sovereignty. Raskin proposes three reference principles that would inspire the need to recognise foreign residents' electoral rights, at least, in municipal elections. Firstly, it is important to form governments that have a social consensus. Secondly, there is a need for a relation between the contribution of tax authorities and the ability to intervene in public policies. Consequently, no taxation without representation. Finally, the appeal in terms of «good-enough-to-fight-good-enough-to-vote».

Nonetheless, the approach is different regarding voting in the European Parliament elections. In the Declaration of 1 July 1992, the Spanish Constitutional Court, in line with the position adopted by other higher judiciary powers, such as the French Constitutional Council, established that the decision for the holder to have the right to vote and stand for elections corresponds to the European Union «in the framework of the transfer process of sovereignty regulated by article 93». Thus, Directive 93/109/EC of 6 December 1993, established «the detailed arrangements for the exercise of the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament for citizens of the Union residing in a Member State of which they are not nationals». From this point of view, foreign residents' of the European Union right to vote or stand for elections can be understood as part of the process of extending rights to the people. In the same sense that the census suffrage was extended to even broader parts of society, reducing the age to exercise it or finally, including women, the extension of the right to vote of foreign residents would be part of an inclusive process within societies defined by States. This interpretation of the phenomenon goes back to the analysis of the space of nation-States losing, in some sense, the aspiration to exceed such reference framework. In a number of countries, a coordinated generalisation of such right is granted properties that cause national schemes.

Finally, a complementary approach to the consideration of electoral rights as an element of integration in the country of residence or with respect to sovereignty is the interpretation of this right as part of a broader and more general process of European citizen empowerment.

Also, Bertelsen and Holland (2006) define empowerment as «the process of enhancing an individual's or group's capacity to make effective choices, that is, make choices and then transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes». In the larger sense of this complex and multidimensional concept (Ibrahim and Alkire 2007), the aforementioned phenomenon is an external element, especially in the structure of opportunities. A structure regarding «the broader institutional, social and political context of formal and informal rules and norms within which actors pursue their interest» (Samman and Santos 2009). The first interpretation under this perspective indicates that the extension of electoral rights empowers "European citizens residing in other EU countries" as opportunities for political participation increase. On the other hand, the general social perception on the empowerment of citizens offers us the possibility to observe the process from a public opinion point of view. Despite observing an individual right, ramifications found in the social aspect are taken into account.

Many researches in recent years have been aimed at studying the possible emergence and development of European citizenship. Citizenship whose

centre of gravity is generally considered within the notion of civil society and organisations that shape them. Thus, European citizens have received particular emphasis in the structuring formulae from a society and social point of view. Meanwhile, processes have been developed that provided content to citizens: free movement, labour and economic rights, etc. Some of them, such as free movement, have been identified in the public opinion as one of centres of gravity of the European Union, according to European barometers. The extension of political and first-generation rights that come with such movement by being a European citizen is not less significant, although less visible in research.

The extension of electoral rights for nationals from EU countries residing in other EU countries has been produced by the Treaty of the European Union (TEU), signed in Maastricht in 1992. In this treaty, it was established that European citizens, all those from Member States, had a list of fundamental rights, among which the right to vote and stand for elections in the State of residence was and is found, regarding both municipal elections and European Parliament elections (article 8.B.1 TEU). The Treaty of Lisbon reaffirms the right to vote and stand for elections to the European Parliament (articles 17.2 and 19.2), as well as municipal elections in the country of residence (article 19.1).

The extension of such fundamental rights, especially electoral rights regarding all aspects, such as notions of nationality, sovereignty, representation, State, etc. involves a number of disciplines and research approaches, in particular, Political Sociology and, especially, its comparative approach. There are many societies that have reinforced the notion of nation-State, characteristic of European history. Mutual perceptions, experiences and exposure to different European cultures and other elements make the reactions, perceptions and assessments of this extension of rights very heterogeneous. In principle, not all citizens of European countries have the same movement probability and, in the same sense, the right to vote and stand for elections in another country. However, on a local level, exercising such right by those who can be defined as foreigners in the country becomes effective. In this sense, the reactions towards the right for other citizens of the European Union to be political representatives and make decisions on the town in which they live, for example, is an excellent sign of Europeanness. From a political culture point of view, the existence of such electoral rights enables participation on an individual level that complements other aspects, such as association, of a generally more community character (Alaminos, Penalva, Santacreu 2016).

3. Research design

This study focuses its attention in a social sense, adopting the political role of European citizens residing in another EU member-States, bearing in mind their right to vote and stand for elections in the host country.

This approach allows us explore, with regard to the effects of this new element (foreign candidates), the public opinion on voter turnout in general, as well as the electoral results according to parties. In addition, we can read such opinions in relation to the proportional presence of this population in each country. Finally, we will delve into the existence of belief models that give us information on the empowerment of European citizens.

For this, the following questions are set out:

- Is there a relation, in aggregate terms, between the presence of European foreigners in the country and their opinion on the effects of participating?
- Are there significant differences between European countries and their public opinions regarding the effects of incorporation on the lists?
- To what extent does believing in the existence of a higher or lower degree of empowerment influence the electoral consequences or the wish to increase the right to vote or stand for elections?

The data used to reach answers to the questions come from studies on the public opinion of the European Commission: *Flash Eurobarometers 431 (2015), 364 (2014) and 292 (2011)*. We take into account four questions from these questionnaires (Q1, Q2, Q4 and Q5) which are designed to assess the knowledge that European residents have on their rights to vote and to stand for different types of elections: local, regional, national and European. Obviously, the question on regional elections is not applied where such State organisational level does not exist. Hereafter, the statements of the questions are indicated, as well as some theoretical and methodological considerations to be incorporated into the design.

This question has a double theoretical interpretation, on the basis of operationalisation. On the one hand, the degree of knowledge that citizens have on European foreign residents' right to vote and to stand for elections is assessed (provides objective information on the correct and incorrect answers). On the other hand, based on the opinions, we are shown to which extent citizens believe that foreign residents can be candidates or vote in different elections, in other words, how they believe foreigners can be politically empowered. Thus, the question measures the degree of objective knowledge, but also the subjective beliefs on the existence of such rights. It is in this last sense that we consider the question to be especially relevant. The degree of objective knowledge is important, but from a Social Science point of view, «believing in the existence of something» is even more important. This is known as the

Fig. 1. Q1 Flash Barometers

- For each of the statements which I am going to read out, please tell me if this is true or false:
- A citizen of the EU living in (OUR COUNTRY) has the right to vote or to stand as a candidate in municipal elections
 - A citizen of the EU living in (OUR COUNTRY) has the right to vote or to stand as a candidate in regional elections (by "regional" we mean any sub-national level of government between municipalities and the State)
 - A citizen of the EU living in (OUR COUNTRY) has the right to vote or to stand as a candidate in elections to the national Parliament
 - A citizen of the EU living in (OUR COUNTRY) has the right to vote or to stand as a candidate in European Parliament elections

principle of Thomas (1928), «If men design situations as real, they are real in their consequences». In the study of social and political behaviour, it is a well-received idea that believing something is real has consequences on reality, regardless of whether it is real or not. In this analysis, we do not take into account objective knowledge, or subjective belief in a greater or lesser political empowerment of European residents in other countries of the European Union. Instead of assessing knowledge, we measure the belief on the existence of such rights.

In order to assess the data of questions Q1, regarding the indicated dimension, a new variable is created based on an additive scale that accumulates the amount of elections to which they believe foreign residents have a right to participate in. The new variable is ranked between 0 (they do not have the right to vote in any elections) and 4 (the right to vote in all elections). In empirical terms, the theoretical and empirical rankings coincide, just as it is shown in the following table. In the case of countries with no regional political structure, the theoretical maximum is of three elections. In such countries, these types of elections were not asked about.

Inasmuch as the analysis is carried out in each country, the differences in the ranking of the variable exclusively affect the internal variance of each model. Therefore, the differences of variances between countries respond to the different territorial organisations of the State and not to the differentiated structures of opinion.

In order to consider the social acceptance of the extension of foreign residents' electoral rights, data regarding two types of different elections are used. Thus, questions are asked on the extension of electoral rights in national elections and the right to vote or stand as a candidate in regional elections (number 2 and 3 of Q2). The following figure shows the phrasing which was used to ask the questions.

Tab. 1. Number of elections where it is believed that foreign residents can participate

	0	1	2	3	4	
France	8,00%	24,20%	24,80%	19,70%	23,50%	100,00%
Belgium	4,80%	16,80%	22,00%	21,10%	35,40%	100,00%
The Netherlands	4,60%	17,00%	21,20%	22,50%	34,60%	100,00%
Germany	5,60%	22,80%	24,70%	20,40%	26,50%	100,00%
Italy	9,10%	20,20%	19,20%	17,00%	34,50%	100,00%
Luxembourg	8,10%	26,40%	38,90%	26,60%		100,00%
Denmark	15,80%	23,60%	16,70%	20,50%	23,50%	100,00%
Ireland	5,20%	18,00%	34,40%	42,40%		100,00%
United Kingdom	9,50%	14,10%	18,90%	24,30%	33,30%	100,00%
Greece	12,20%	22,20%	22,80%	42,80%		100,00%
Spain	6,70%	17,40%	21,10%	18,30%	36,60%	100,00%
Portugal	15,90%	27,70%	25,10%	31,30%		100,00%
Finland	14,80%	23,50%	22,20%	39,60%		100,00%
Sweden	8,60%	25,00%	17,60%	23,40%	25,40%	100,00%
Austria	8,50%	26,30%	26,40%	19,30%	19,50%	100,00%
Cyprus Republic	17,80%	21,20%	20,40%	40,60%		100,00%
Czech Republic	8,10%	19,10%	19,20%	21,90%	31,80%	100,00%
Estonia	7,80%	23,90%	35,50%	32,80%		100,00%
Hungary	10,00%	21,20%	28,90%	39,90%		100,00%
Latvia	12,50%	25,90%	26,70%	35,00%		100,00%
Lithuania	6,80%	20,10%	25,20%	47,90%		100,00%
Malta	17,50%	14,20%	25,80%	42,50%		100,00%
Poland	5,10%	13,10%	18,80%	22,90%	40,10%	100,00%
Slovakia	2,70%	7,80%	13,20%	26,10%	50,20%	100,00%
Slovenia	9,50%	21,70%	25,10%	43,80%		100,00%
Bulgaria	4,30%	18,90%	29,80%	47,00%		100,00%
Romania	4,10%	13,70%	24,10%	58,10%		100,00%
Total	8,70%	20,20%	23,80%	31,10%	16,20%	100,00%

Source: Flash Barometer 364

The ending of the questions is carried out by means of dichotomy yes/no. In the construction of the variable, the same additive strategy is adopted. The questions are generic, in such a way that the questions are asked in all coun-

Fig. 2. Q2 Flash Barometers

- Let's take a situation where a citizen of the EU lives in another EU country than his/her country of origin (i.e. of which he/she is a national).
- Would you consider it justified that this citizen acquires the right to vote in national elections in his/her country of residence?
 - Should this citizen have the right to vote and to stand as a candidate in regional elections organised in the country where he/she lives in case regional elections are held there?

Fig. 3. Q2 Flash Barometers

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- Q4 Do you think that a list of candidates in the European elections can attract more votes if it includes candidates who are nationals of other EU countries?
- Q5 Do you think that the presence of candidates who are nationals of other EU countries can increase the general turnout in local elections?
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tries, regardless of the types of elections that exist there. It is for this reason that the resulting variable has a theoretical rank between 0 and 2, according to extending rights.

The opinion on the effect caused by foreign candidates participating in elections is observed through the following questions:

In this case, two differentiated questions are asked, even though they are linked to the same concept regarding turnout. On the one hand, the question is asked whether incorporating foreign candidates on lists can improve the results of such lists. In other words, heterogeneity of nationalities on European Parliament lists could benefit parties that stand. In the case of local elections, a modification in the approach is produced. In previous studies, the question was asked with a similar approach, regarding the extent of how local election lists are benefited by including foreign candidates. In this survey, as in following ones, the question is raised regarding the degree in which people think that voter turnout is increased.

In both cases, the consequence is the increase in participation in both electoral processes. Lists are benefited in the case of European elections, and participation is increased in the case of local elections.

In a certain sense, and as the normative consequences of the incorporation of foreign residents' right to vote and stand for both elections showed, the logic that justifies the extension of such right is different. In the case of European elections, the single Parliament concept is a key reference. This is a house of representation that aspires to exceed the notion of State, becoming part of the category of constituency. In this sense, political representation is

more abstract and far from daily reality. The adjustment in the logic of European citizenship is almost obvious. The case of local elections is somewhat different. The applied logic is different. The main reason is residency. People participate in the processes of political decision (voting and being a candidate) in their place of residence. It is the logic of cohabitation, daily life and cultural contact. The ability to decide on what directly affects them.

In this questionnaire, the answers are of ordinal type, and after recoding them in order to coordinate the indications with what has been expressed they are as follows: «Yes, definitely» (4), «Yes, probably» (3), «No, probably not» (2), «No, definitely not» (1). For the purpose of this analysis, the consequences of the increase in participation is taken as a reference, creating an additive escalation (Lickert). The variation range is between 2 (no effect) and 8 (has a large effect).

4. *Main results*

At first it is interesting to know, from a descriptive point of view, the perceived effects of incorporating foreign residents on lists on participation. Subsequently, we will answer the already anticipated questions: Is there a relation, in aggregate terms, between the presence of foreigners in the country and their opinion on the effects of participating? Are there significant differences between European countries and their public opinions regarding the effects of incorporation on the lists? How does knowledge or lack of it on the formal existence of such right influence this perception on the effects?

We will continue to explore and try to find an answer to the previous questions considering foreign migrants as nationals from other EU Member States. In accordance with the dates of EU incorporation, data for 2010 include all countries that currently belong to the EU, except for Croatia, who joined in 2013.

In the following table the answers «Yes» (Definitely and probably) and «No» (Definitely and probably not) have been included in each survey. Data show the percentage of citizens of a country that consider that foreigners from other EU countries participating as candidates in local elections would increase voter turnout. The percentages do not excessively change between the two years, showing a significant consistency.

Table 3 shows data regarding the presence of foreign residents from other countries belonging to the European Union, according to Eurostat.

One of the first questions set out is whether there is a relation between the presence of citizens from other EU countries and the opinion on a greater

Tab. 2. Candidates who are nationals of other EU countries can increase the general turnout in local elections

Do you think that the presence of candidates who are nationals of other EU countries can increase the general turnout in local elections?

	Yes		No		DK/NA		Total
	definitely+probably		definitely+probably				
	2012	2015	2012	2015	2012	2015	
France	48,6%	42%	49,2%	55%	2,2%	3%	100,0%
Belgium	48,6%	59%	48,9%	38%	2,6%	3%	100,0%
The Netherlands	48,5%	48%	48,4%	48%	3,1%	4%	100,0%
Germany	44,5%	35%	51,7%	58%	3,8%	7%	100,0%
Italy	49,5%	52%	45,3%	45%	5,2%	3%	100,0%
Luxembourg	57,1%	60%	40,7%	36%	2,2%	4%	100,0%
Denmark	20,9%	21%	72,6%	71%	6,4%	8%	100,0%
Ireland	60,9%	52%	35,9%	45%	3,2%	3%	100,0%
United Kingdom	52,5%	46%	43,1%	48%	4,4%	6%	100,0%
Greece	50,5%	51%	45,2%	47%	4,3%	2%	100,0%
Spain ¹	41,3%	48%	55,2%	48%	3,5%	4%	100,0%
Portugal	54,9%	56%	40,7%	39%	4,4%	5%	100,0%
Finland	20,0%	15%	78,2%	83%	1,8%	2%	100,0%
Sweden	39,9%	37%	55,0%	54%	5,1%	9%	100,0%
Austria	35,6%	35%	59,6%	63%	4,8%	2%	100,0%
Cyprus (Republic)	44,7%	48%	51,0%	50%	4,3%	2%	100,0%
Czech Republic	36,8%	41%	57,0%	55%	6,2%	4%	100,0%
Estonia	31,0%	25%	55,6%	66%	13,4%	9%	100,0%
Hungary	32,4%	36%	58,6%	57%	9,0%	7%	100,0%
Latvia	55,3%	52%	41,5%	46%	3,2%	2%	100,0%
Lithuania	36,3%	45%	58,1%	51%	5,6%	4%	100,0%
Malta	32,6%	38%	58,9%	53%	8,4%	9%	100,0%
Poland	49,2%	38%	47,6%	58%	3,2%	4%	100,0%
Slovakia	32,0%	42%	65,0%	48%	3,0%	10%	100,0%
Slovenia	20,8%	20%	74,3%	77%	4,9%	3%	100,0%
Bulgaria	48,4%	43%	48,9%	54%	2,7%	3%	100,0%
Romania	49,9%	54%	46,8%	43%	3,4%	3%	100,0%
	42,2%		53,2%		4,6%		100,0%

In the case of Spain, the 2012 survey asked about the effect of including foreign candidates in the lists, not on increasing participation. It is an error of harmonization in the questionnaires.

Source: Flash Barometers 364 and 431

Tab. 3. *Percentage of nationals from other EU countries in each country*

	Population from other EU member-State (%)	
	2011	2014
France	3,3	3,3
Belgium	7,0	7,5
The Netherlands	2,7	3,0
Germany	6,6	4,8
Italy	2,5	3,0
Luxembourg	31,4	32,3
Denmark	2,9	3,4
Ireland	12,1	10,2
United Kingdom	4,2	4,4
Greece	3,2	3,1
Spain	4,0	4,4
Portugal	2,0	2,1
Finland	1,6	2,0
Sweden	5,1	5,3
Austria	6,5	7,5
Cyprus (Republic)	12,7	13,0
Czech Republic	3,7	1,5
Estonia	0,9	1,0
Hungary	2,7	3,0
Latvia	1,4	1,4
Lithuania	0,6	0,6
Malta	4,2	4,4
Poland	0,6	0,6
Slovakia	2,3	2,7
Slovenia	1,0	3,3
Bulgaria	0,3	0,6
Romania	0,4	0,4

Source: Eurostat

turnout in local elections when the candidates may be foreign migrants. In order to check the expectations of positive association between the presence of European residents and the opinion on the effects of foreign candidates by means of an increase in the turnout, a correlation analysis has been carried out. Population data correspond to the year immediately prior to when the

survey was carried out. As long as we are only interested in focusing on one area in the association, a unilateral significance is given.

Considering the correlation, it can be observed that there is a clear relation between the presence of European residents and the opinion regarding the fact that a foreign candidate can increase participation in local elections. Thus, correlation between the presence of residents from other EU countries and the opinion on the positive effects on participation with the presence of foreign candidates is 355 (.035) for 2012 and 351 (.036) for 2015. Ultimately, it may be established, considering the stability between the estimations from the two surveys, that there is a positive relation between the presence of foreign residents from other EU countries and considering that incorporating foreigners on the candidate lists increases turnout. It should be noted that there is stability in the opinions on the effect of foreign candidates on participation with the correlation between the two surveys carried out in 2012 and 2015 (taking the national public opinion as a unit of analysis) being .868 (.000).

Also, results seem to be consistent when we consider the social perception on how including foreign residents on the lists influences the electoral results of the parties.

In this new definition, where increases in the turnout are referenced in the results of the lists that include foreigners, yet again, it is observed that there is a significant correlation in which a clear relation between the presence of foreign residents and the expected effect on the results of the lists is maintained. With a correlation of .584 significant to 0.01, a relation between the public opinion on the increase of votes for parties as a consequence of incorporating foreign candidates on their lists (EB 292, 2010) and the foreign population residing in the country can be seen, which is consistent with previous analyses.

In order to assess the effects of the results of the parties when including foreign candidates, countries with a higher foreign population are highlighted, such as Luxembourg or Ireland (see table 5). In the case of Luxembourg, with 31.4% of its population originating from other EU countries, 51% believe that including foreign candidates improves the results of the parties. In Ireland, with 12% of the population originating from other EU countries, there is a higher percentage of public opinion (54%) that believes it is beneficial for parties to include foreign candidates on their electoral lists.

Other countries with a high percentage are Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom, France, Greece or Slovakia. Mediterranean countries are the most significant when recognising the electoral advantage with foreign candidates.

Up to here we have described the social perception of European residents (candidates) by means of how the effect on voter turnout is perceived, as well as the repercussions of parties winning votes. The results point to

Tab. 4. Perception of the effect of foreign candidates on local electoral lists

Do you think that a list in local elections can attract more voters if it included candidates who are the nationals of other Member States?				
Country	Yes	No	DK/NA	Total
France	34,10%	60,70%	5,20%	100,00%
Belgium	25,60%	64,50%	9,90%	100,00%
The Netherlands	24,30%	69,30%	6,40%	100,00%
Germany	27,10%	68,90%	4,00%	100,00%
Italy	27,60%	68,20%	4,20%	100,00%
Luxembourg	51,10%	45,00%	3,90%	100,00%
Denmark	18,10%	76,80%	5,00%	100,00%
Ireland	54,00%	39,30%	6,70%	100,00%
United Kingdom	38,50%	54,30%	7,10%	100,00%
Greece	32,70%	63,80%	3,40%	100,00%
Spain	41,10%	53,60%	5,30%	100,00%
Portugal	45,20%	42,40%	12,40%	100,00%
Finland	20,90%	77,50%	1,60%	100,00%
Sweden	23,80%	66,50%	9,70%	100,00%
Austria	21,50%	74,50%	4,00%	100,00%
Cyprus (Republic)	29,70%	62,80%	7,50%	100,00%
Czech Republic	26,70%	65,00%	8,30%	100,00%
Estonia	25,60%	63,40%	11,00%	100,00%
Hungary	18,40%	75,30%	6,30%	100,00%
Latvia	28,30%	59,20%	12,40%	100,00%
Lithuania	29,10%	55,20%	15,70%	100,00%
Malta	29,00%	55,00%	15,90%	100,00%
Poland	25,00%	63,80%	11,20%	100,00%
Slovakia	30,70%	54,70%	14,60%	100,00%
Slovenia	19,20%	75,50%	5,30%	100,00%
Bulgaria	20,90%	63,80%	15,30%	100,00%
Romania	24,50%	61,30%	14,20%	100,00%

Source: Flash Barometer 292

a general perception of European residents, making them an effective element to increase turnout. Additionally, the presence of non-national European residents in each country (its relevant importance) has an influence on such opinion.

Tab. 5. Proportion of national foreign population from other Member States and the perception of the effect of foreign candidates on political parties' lists

Country	Population originating from other EU countries (2011) (%).	Candidates who are the nationals of other Member States attract more voters (2010) (%).
Slovakia	2,3	30,7
Greece	3,2	32,7
France	3,3	34,1
United Kingdom	4,2	38,5
Spain	4	41,1
Portugal	2	45,2
Luxembourg	31,4	51,1
Ireland	12,1	54

Source: the authors with data from Flash barometer 364 and Eurostat.

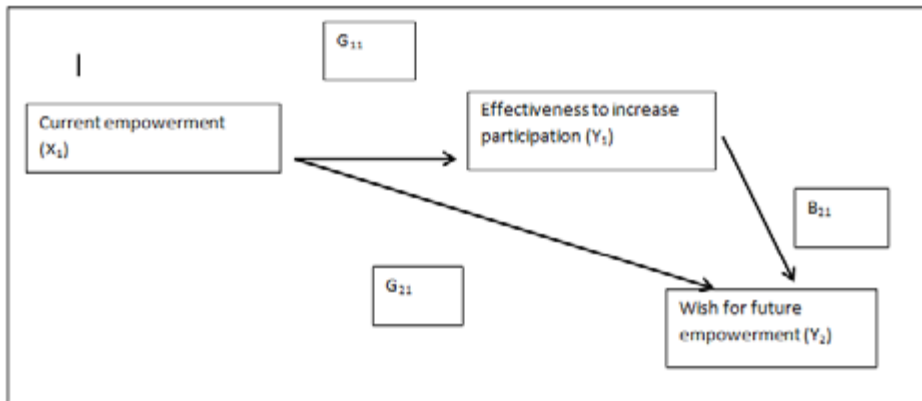
In order to answer the last questions in this study on how believing in the existence of a greater or lesser degree of empowerment influences the electoral consequences or the wish to extend the right to vote and stand for elections, an explanatory model is proposed to define the underlying logic between the public opinion and European foreign resident empowerment.

The terms of the model are created based on the variables from the questions described in the previous section. Thus, the perception of empowerment of foreigners (perceived right) corresponds to Q1. Questions Q4 and Q5 define the effect on voter turnout (effectiveness), while question Q2 provides information on the support (wish) of future empowerment of foreigners.

The idea is to find the relation that is established between a) believing in the existence of a greater or lesser political empowerment of European residents (x_1), b) with the support that first-generation political rights (right to vote and stand for elections) give other types of elections (y_2) as well as c) political effectiveness to increase voter turnout (y_1).

The explicative proposal is expressed in the following model (Figure 4). Believing in a certain degree of political empowerment of European residents (defined by means of the right to vote or stand for different types of elections) explains the opinion on the increase in voter turnout. In addition, the opinion on the increase in participation that produces this (the right to vote) explains the wish for such right to be extended to other types of elections (increase political empowerment of European foreign residents). Finally, it is proposed that believing in the current existence of a certain level of empowerment influences the wish to extend them to other types of elections. The proposed model establishes such explanatory sequence as a hypothesis.

Fig. 4. *Empowerment perceived of European foreigners: explanatory model*



The first observation refers to the structure of relations proposed for each country. The model is valid for the majority of considered countries, with the exceptions of: Germany, Slovakia and Luxembourg. The base model is a saturated model. In the case of Germany and Slovakia, the relation between believing and effectiveness is not significant. Both of them are independent, although the model is saturated due to a non-significant co-variation between them. In this model, covariation between effectiveness and rights is not controlled by the variable of belief (as in the base model) and is equal to a multiple regression. In the case of Luxembourg, belief does not have an influence on the wish to increase these rights. It is indirectly done through its effect (with a total indirect effect of 0.02). In some sense, the lower sample (453) can be found with value t of 1.7 for such relation.

We are going to consider both the weight of the effects in each country as well as the comparison between countries. Due to the differences in the variances between countries, gross ratios will be used for the comparative analysis. For the analysis of the influence of each relation in the model of a country, standardised ratios will be used.

Regarding the effects of each model, it should be noted that the relation between believing in current empowerment and effectiveness to increase the turnout is more important in the case of the United Kingdom (0.24) and Austria (0.22).

The relation between believing in current empowerment and the wish to extend rights shows a greater relation in The Netherlands (0.24), Italy (0.18), Greece (0.33), Portugal (0.21), Cyprus (0.22), Hungary (0.20), Lithuania (0.18), Malta (0.47), Slovenia (0.21) and Romania (0.14).

Also, the relation between believing in effectiveness to increase turnout by incorporating foreign residents on lists and the wish to extend rights has

Tab. 6. Structural model of citizenship empowerment (standardised and raw coefficients)

	Standardized coefficients (Comparison within countries)			Coefficients (Comparison between countries)		
	G_{11}^s	G_{21}^s	B_{21}^s	G_{11}	G_{21}	B_{21}
France	0.08	0.12	0.29	0.10	0.08	0.16
Belgium	0.10	0.15	0.17	0.11	0.10	0.09
The Netherlands	0.07	0.24	0.17	0.07	0.17	0.11
Germany		0.10	0.20		0.06	0.10
Italy	0.12	0.18	0.16	0.15	0.10	0.07
Luxembourg (1)	0.10		0.23	0.15		0.12
Denmark	0.12	0.18	0.23	0.13	0.11	0.12
Ireland	0.09	0.10	0.22	0.15	0.07	0.09
United Kingdom	0.24	0.22	0.19	0.27	0.13	0.10
Greece	0.19	0.33	0.15	0.32	0.25	0.07
Spain	0.10	0.12	0.20	0.12	0.08	0.11
Portugal	0.15	0.21	0.17	0.23	0.14	0.07
Finland	0.16	0.17	0.19	0.19	0.13	0.11
Sweden	0.17	0.22	0.30	0.19	0.14	0.17
Austria	0.22	0.13	0.19	0.26	0.09	0.11
Cyprus Republic	0.10	0.22	0.21	0.15	0.16	0.09
Czech Republic	0.17	0.13	0.24	0.18	0.08	0.13
Estonia	0.17	0.09	0.18	0.30	0.08	0.09
Hungary	0.14	0.20	0.18	0.23	0.17	0.09
Latvia	0.15	0.21	0.25	0.21	0.17	0.15
Lithuania	0.13	0.18	0.14	0.22	0.16	0.07
Malta	0.16	0.47	0.28	0.25	0.18	0.07
Poland	0.15	0.16	0.17	0.17	0.10	0.09
Slovakia		0.10	0.21		0.07	0.11
Slovenia	0.11	0.21	0.10	0.19	0.17	0.05
Bulgaria	0.10	0.09	0.14	0.21	0.08	0.06
Romania	0.10	0.14	0.12	0.21	0.11	0.04

(1) P 0.23; RMSA 0.030

Source: the authors. Flash barometer 364

the most influence in the model in France (0.29), Belgium (0.17), Germany (0.20), Luxembourg (0.23), Denmark (0.23), Ireland (0.22), Spain (0.20), Finland (0.19), Sweden (0.30), Czech Republic (0.24), Estonia (0.18), Latvia (0.25),

Poland (0.17), Slovakia (0.21) and Bulgaria (0.14).

On a global level, it can be observed that almost all countries have an important relation between believing that incorporating foreign residents on lists increases voter turnout and supports extending electoral rights for foreign residents.

From a comparative perspective between countries, it should be noted that the relation between believing in current empowerment and the effectiveness to increase turnout seem to be higher in countries such as the United Kingdom (0.27), Greece (0.32), Portugal (0.23), Austria (0.26), Estonia (0.30), Hungary (0.23) or Malta (0.25).

The relation between believing in current empowerment and the wish to extend electoral rights is higher, in comparative terms, in Greece (0.25) than any other country in the European Union. The next country with the highest relation is Malta (0.18), The Netherlands (0.17), Hungary (0.17), Latvia (0.17) and Slovenia (0.17).

The highest relation between believing in the effectiveness to increase voter turnout by incorporating foreign residents on lists and the wish to extend the right to vote in other types of elections can be found in countries such as France (0.16), Sweden (0.17), Latvia (0.15), Czech Republic (0.13) or Denmark (0.12).

In summary, regarding the hypothesis in this article, the first conclusion refers to the existence of a significant empirical relation between the presence of residents in the country when they originate from other EU countries and the belief that electoral empowerment has consequences on voter turnout and electoral results. Regardless of the fact that in practice residents participating in elections is generally low (Messina, 2006), their presence in the country is proof that shows the potential to have an influence on elections. This relation between foreigners and voter turnout becomes more speculative when there is no significant presence of foreign residents. Conclusions seem to guarantee that there is a higher social acknowledgement of electoral potential of foreign residents in countries where immigration is higher.

Taking the analysis of this evidence as proof, it is interesting to observe how countries with a higher number of foreign migrants originating from the European Union are those that show, first of all, adjustment specificities in the model, and second of all, ratios that are especially significant in the reasoning set out.

Thus, there are specific models for Luxembourg, Slovakia and Germany, three countries with a significant percentage of European migrants. In particular, among post-communist countries, Hungary, Slovakia and Slovenia are the countries that have higher immigration. In the west, the proposed ex-

planatory model shows a significant relation system, except in Luxembourg, which is the country with a higher percentage of European residents, and Germany, with a highly meaningful historical migration experience. In the cases of Slovakia and Germany, there is no empirical relation between believing in the level of electoral empowerment of European residents and the possible increase of voter turnout. These two variables show a significant relation by independently explaining the support of an increase in electoral rights. In the case of Luxembourg, there seems to be no direct significant relation between believing in the degree of current empowerment and the support for a greater future empowerment. The relation between both variables is indirectly established by means of the opinion on the effect on voter turnout.

In the rest of the European countries, the existence of the following reasoning is proved in terms of the public opinion. Believing in the current empowerment has an influence on the opinion of the positive or negative effects of voter turnout, as well as the wish to have greater empowerment. In other words, believing in the existence of a high degree of electoral rights of foreign residents explains the opinion on a possible increase in voter turnout, as well as the wish for these rights to be extended. Belief in the level of electoral empowerment of foreigners also has an indirect influence through the opinion on the increase of participation. Thus, the opinion on the increase of voter turnout, thanks to foreigners' right to vote, explains the support to extend such rights. On a global level, a relation between believing in the existence of a degree of empowerment of foreign residents with belief in the existence of positive effects on the increase of voter turnout, and the support to extend the right to vote to other types of elections can be noted, such as national or regional elections.

This model is especially significant in relational terms among countries with a higher percentage of European residents. Thus, in the relation between empowerment and the increase of rights, Greece and Portugal are highlighted. Regarding the relation between the increase of participation and the increase of rights, France, Spain and Ireland are highlighted. The United Kingdom has a higher ratio between empowerment and turnout. All in all, there seems to be proof that there is still research to be done, as European residents' migratory experience shows their influence on the opinion of these societies.

5. Debate on the results

This research explores the public opinion on foreign residents' right to vote and stand for elections (European residents in another member country). In

this sense, the research focuses on the opinions and not the actual behaviour. Thus, in practice, the different studies, such as Messina's study (2006), show a systematically lower voter turnout among foreign residents than natives. However, it is obvious that European societies, especially in societies where there is a higher volume of foreign residents, are aware of the electoral potential of such group. In fact, the model is consistent in different countries, which means there is a common relational structure.

Nonetheless, the limitations that the questionnaire imposes (very limited questions) involve possible explanatory biases; biases of structural nature that would appear to have a lower or higher intensity in different societies. This is the case of believing in a certain level of empowerment (types of elections to which European residents have a right to vote) and their relation with the wish for such right to be extended to other types of elections. Due to the order of the questionnaire, first a question on knowledge and second a question on extending electoral rights, this last question can be considered to have been contaminated by the answers given to the first question. Therefore, it is possible that some interviewees, who were wrong by recognising more rights than what actually exist, may opt to claim the extension of rights when realising the mistake, they had made seconds before. In accordance with the cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger 1957) there can be a systematic bias in the sense of wanting to extend or not electoral rights, according to the mistakes made in the first question (Alaminos 1998). In the proposed model, this bias would mainly affect the relation between X_1 and Y_2 (G_{21}), but this would not have an influence on the relations X_1 and Y_1 (G_{11}) and that established between Y_1 and Y_2 (B_{21}).

It may be considered that for one of the three hypotheses, biases have been reduced through a statistical control that may have caused structuring of the sequence of the questions in the questionnaire.

Taking these considerations into account, the proposed model on the perception of empowerment of European residents in an EU country where they are not nationals (a foreigner or immigrant) shows interesting social and political issues. Although indicated so at the beginning, the extension of electoral rights for these citizens influences the traditional basis of national sovereignty. This friction somehow seems to be solved in host societies. The relational logic of these elements introduced in the model point to the fact that extending citizens of other Member States' right to vote and stand for elections has not involved any danger perceived in societies (surrender of sovereignty). In contrast, social interpretation of this fact relates it to a democratic turnout improvement and, beyond that in the majority of cases, supports the continuation of this process of political empowerment. Nonetheless, in order to un-

derstand how this apparent conflict settlement has been produced, we should see the logic of cohabitation from other case studies.

Regarding the differences found in the comparison model among countries, exceptions suggest focusing on studies that delve into how these models are set up and the meaning of the differences. At the beginning of our approach, diversity of European political culture was mentioned on a map of borders that could be to some extent mobile, including issues regarding the evolution of the concept and applying sovereignty. Thus, for example, under the perspective of the model of perception of foreign empowerment of our study, the case of Slovakia is an exception (Perea 2008).

In conclusion, globally there is a European public opinion on the significant relation between believing in empowerment of foreigners regarding electoral rights, the expected consequences of the electoral results and the support of extending their political empowerment through electoral rights. Beyond the knowledge and lack of it regarding current rights, there is a clear relation between the expectations of an increase in voter turnout, ultimately, more democracy in some definitions (Alaminos 2008), and the support to extend such rights in other areas of political representation.

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