CITIZENS

OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Status, Identity & Beyond

EDITED BY
MIHAI ALEXANDRESCU

Citizens of the European Union. Status, Identity and Beyond

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Foreword

On November 1, 2023, it was three decades since the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty that established the European Union. The project of founding this organisation was widely debated in previous decades. After the Paris Summit of 1974, the prospect of such an organisation seemed closer to completion but still too timidly assumed by the European leaders to materialise. An important step was achieved in 1979 when the first direct vote for the European Parliament took place. That can be considered the first concrete gesture in the sense of the democratisation of European construction. Beyond the entire institutional architecture and the clarification of the community decision-making mechanism, the Treaty of Maastricht introduced the *citizenship of the European Union*.

This new status, officially assumed by the member states three decades ago, probably produced the most significant paradigm shift in European construction. The citizen was placed at the core of the European integration process, substantially changing the relationship between member states and citizens. These decades have witnessed fierce competition between the Member States and the European Union, each wanting to outline a specific trajectory for EU citizenship to protect their interests. The great chance of European citizenship was the support offered by the Commission and the European Parliament, but also by the jurisprudence of the European Court of Justice.

After three decades, European citizenship is expected to have organic support from the generation that grew up completely under this protection. The major challenge is given by an incredibly fluid international environment and information technology in an expansion that is difficult to limit. Left alone, European citizenship cannot stand by itself. Like democracy, citizenship must be activated and protected every day by those who constitute it.

This book includes the studies conducted by professors and master's students of the „Leadership and Communication in International Organizations" program (Faculty of History and Philosophy, Babeş-Bolyai University),

where the Citizenship and the State in the European Union course is held, which constituted the dialogue platform on how European citizenship has an impact on the relationship between the European Union and its member states.

This volume has two parts. The first part includes studies on the concept of EU citizenship, how it is defined in the process of accession to the European Union, the financial support offered to promote EU citizenship, the perspectives of digital citizenship and how the Union must be prepared to respond to people's expectations, how the flow of people from third countries and naturalising in EU member states affects the substance of European citizenship. The second part presents case studies that reveal how EU citizenship is instrumentalised and how this process can be responded to.

The message sent by the opinion polls published annually by Standard Eurobarometer is that European citizens are still not completely aware of their status in the European Union. For this reason, many rights provided by the Treaties are not yet fully exercised. The context of the elections for the European Parliament in 2024 can provide a platform for profound debate about the role that citizens will choose to make the EU Citizenship *status* a fundamental element of *identity* for the European construction to go *beyond* the appearances of a political and economic union.

We expect that through this book, readers will find sufficient arguments for a deep debate on the future of Europe by strengthening European citizenship.

Mihai Alexandrescu
Cluj, 15 September 2023

Part 1

Defining the European Union Citizenship

European Union Citizenship
and Its Avatars

Mihai ALEXANDRESCU

ABSTRACT: As a supranational construct, European citizenship needed a period of conceptual adaptation and practical consolidation. This study explores how citizenship of the European Union has been approached from a political, legal, theoretical and social point of view during its three decades of existence. From a theoretical point of view, the post-national and neo-functionalist approach provides the conceptual tools necessary for a deeper understanding of both the role that the EU Court of Justice played in the consolidation of European citizenship, as well as the way in which the member states have readjusted their relationship with citizens. This study explains why citizenship is a gain of European integration. However, the European integration project remains reversible without a permanent strengthening of the relationship between the EU and European citizens.

Keywords: EU citizenship, Member States, CJEU, supranational, post-national.

INTRODUCTION

The citizenship of the European Union is a personification (individualization) of the membership of the member states. When states got stuck in the economic and political construction of the organization, they turned the spotlight on the people. However, these re-reflectors were previously created by the jurisprudence of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU).

The citizenship of a non-state organization was created so that human rights transcend the traditional borders of states. EU citizenship is less a form of individual loyalty to the organization (as it is to the state) but more

a form whereby the individual's rights no longer remain under the patriarchal protection of the state.

The transformation of the individual from a subject of the king to a citizen of the state endowed it with rights, a sense of belonging and political participation (BELLAMY, 2008, P. 599). Instead, the citizen had a duty to show loyalty to the state and its national interests (MARSHALL, 1950; CHALMERS ET AL., 2010). In the absence of his belonging to the national status, the individual becomes an apartheid.

Today, this image of citizenship seems rudimentary. After the Second World War, international law developed a net to protect the individual against the abuses of states. The citizen's rights have been expanded, acquiring numerous special rights and, recently, even the right to security. The latter refers to the protection that the state must offer the individual against certain types of risks, such as environmental risks, uncertainty generated by terrorism, and risks associated with financial markets (CHALMERS ET AL., 2010; TURNER, 1990).

EU citizenship can be considered the embodiment of the absolute metamorphosis of citizenship. It started as a concept at a stage when European integration was focused only on the market, and today, it has come to express the quintessence of individual rights and freedoms.

This study reveals some of the metamorphoses undergone by EU citizenship in relation to the Union and the member states. In the first case, these transformations reflect a certain level of evolution and acceptance of European integration. In the second case, they highlight the shaping force that EU citizenship has on the member states.

THE UNIQUENESS OF EU CITIZENSHIP

From the perspective of international law, EU citizenship is unique and singular. The difficulty of its definition and the member states' resistance to the innovations it brought to the relationship between the state and citizens can be seen in the organisation's constitutive treaties and the jurisprudence of the EU Court of Justice.

Table 1. *Defining the EU citizenship in the EU treaties*

Year	Treaty	Provisions
1992	Maastricht	"Citizenship of the Union is hereby established. Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union."(Article 8)
1997	Amsterdam	"Citizenship of the Union is hereby established. Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union. Citizenship of the Union shall complement and not replace national citizenship." (Article 8(1))
2003	Constitutional Treaty	"Every national of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union. Citizenship of the Union shall be additional to national citizenship; it shall not replace it."(Article 8)
2007	Lisbon	"Citizenship of the Union is hereby established. Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union. Citizenship of the Union shall be additional to and not replace national citizenship." (Article 20)

Perhaps the most eloquent expression of the dilemma that EU citizenship has posed to member states belongs to WEILER (1997, P. 503):

> "Are we, then, faced with a crucial choice? Reject European citizenship and content yourself to living in a polity which may provide you with bread and circus a-plenty but which lacks the core of individual political dignity and public legitimation. Adopt European citizenship and fundamentally change the very Telos of European integration from its unique concept of Community to, frankly, a more banal notion of nation-building. This is an unappealing choice."

Furthermore, this is how the previous uniqueness of the post-war European integration project was superseded by a new uniqueness: supranational citizenship. The major fear caused by the new concept is the term itself – *citizenship*. However, this 'more banal notion of nation-building' is not the expression of a process of creating a new nation but of the awareness of the status of the individual given by a growing set of previously won rights and freedoms.

WEILER (1997) also describes the two visions that dominated the post-war European integration process: federal (the United States of Europe) and supranational (the European Community). In other words, the discourses

on the future of European construction put „European unity" and „European community" in antithesis. In the first vision, the member states should abandon nationalism, their source of existence, and accept a political union, but still built on territorial bases. Precisely this territorial dimension was rejected by political thinkers such as David Mitrany because it would only reposition the problems from the national level to a federal one without solving them (ALEXANDRESCU, 2010). The alternative vision offered by supranationalism does not necessarily eliminate the borders of nation-states but redefines them (WEILER, 1997, P. 507).

If we accept that EU citizenship is supranational, then we can understand the extent of its effect on member states in relation to their own citizens. International law developed on the constitutional-territorial bases of the state actors that make up the international system. As such, the characteristic of this right is that even when it creates norms regarding the rights of the individual, it does so with the states. The supranational perspective that EU citizenship brings changes the traditional paradigm in which the central element is the protection of the national interest. Without eliminating the national state, EU citizenship comes to put the citizen's interest at the centre of the debate, even if this means reshaping the national interests of the states. Here is what Weiler also noticed: „the challenge [...] to control at societal level the uncontrolled reflexes of national interest in the international sphere." (WEILER, 1997, P. 507).

It is the legitimate right of states to defend a specific approach to their relationship with their own citizens. At the same time, the Union should also protect its own construction of European integration, which can be done most efficiently by strengthening EU citizenship. On the other hand, states are in a position to admit that the core meaning of national sovereignty is no longer limited to the simple protection of territory and population. The state remains the guarantor of the rights and freedoms of its citizens. However, in an „area of security, freedom and justice" (TREATY OF LISBON, 2009), in which the four freedoms of movement are fundamental, the member states no longer have the capacity and resources to protect these rights and freedoms of their nationals alone. For this reason, EU citizenship is also an institution that supports states in protecting their citizens

effectively. The structure of EU citizenship rises from the foundation given by national citizenship and is solidified by the principles defined by the jurisprudence of the CJEU.

Before exploring the relationship between EU citizenship and national citizenship, it is worth expressing this study's meaning to the former. EU citizenship is a status offered to the citizens of the member states through which they are guaranteed the rights and freedoms conferred by the evolution of the European construction and an institution through which the member states are supported to guarantee the access of their own citizens to these rights and freedoms, in a uniform and non-discriminatory manner, throughout the European Union.

EU CITIZENSHIP AND NATIONAL CITIZENSHIP

The subsequent clarifications that the treaties brought to the definition of EU citizenship (see Table 1) reveal its innovative character's impact on the understanding of the role of the post-Maastricht nation-state (see OLSEN, 1997; MARTINIELLO, 1995).

The definition of EU citizenship as an institution in relation to the member states presupposes the assumption of the elements that are part of this institutionalisation process: "standardisation, homogenisation and authorisation of codes of meaning, ways of reasoning and accounts" (OLSEN, 1997, P. 159). From the beginning, institutionalisation includes various cognitive processes that facilitate „the development of collective identity and belonging, unity, coherence, shared understanding, loyalties and trust" (IBID.).

The relationship between the European Union (Communities) and the member states manifested itself through a supranational-intergovernmental dialectic, thus defining the course of European integration. EU citizenship could have the same balancing force of supranational and intergovernmental aspects as the principle of subsidiarity in EU governance. Just as the treaties regulated the principle of subsidiarity from Maastricht to Lisbon, the relationship between EU and national citizenship went through several stages of adjustment.

The simple definition, in the Maastricht Treaty, of EU citizenship as deriving from the „nationality of a Member State" created confusion because it was perceived as „a sketch rather than an accomplishment" (OLSEN, 1997, P. 167). Two years later, the European Commission confessed that its „implementation has been far from complete and contrasts sharply with the expectation generated" (COMMISSION, 1995, P. 73). Being the product of a compromise between the federalist perspective of Jacques Delors and the confederalist one of John Major, EU citizenship was presented, after Maastricht, as „nothing more than a 'functional' citizenship as opposed to a 'substantial' one" (MARTINIELLO, 1995, P. 41). Basically, the Maastricht Treaty described EU citizenship as a set of pre-existing rights to which it added some new ones. As such, at that stage, the new statute did not appear to have introduced „a new juridical and political subject" (MARTINIELLO, 1995, P. 41). In this sense, EU citizenship could have facilitated a specific European political identity, but it was based on a sense of national belonging. Here, TURNER (1990) came to complete the theory of citizenship by introducing the distinction between the passive and the active dimension of citizenship. Passive citizenship („from above") indicates that it guarantees citizenship rights, while active citizenship („from below") implies the participation of citizens in various aspects of social life. Apparently, EU citizenship is passive (MARTINIELLO, 1995), but in reality, it must be activated according to the interpretation offered by the jurisprudence of the CJEU (CHALMERS ET AL., 2019).

Activation is carried out at any time when a national of a member state exercises his rights under the constitutive treaties, in particular, the right to free movement in the EU. From that moment, the conflict with the traditional approach to national citizenship can be noted. The individual is in a relationship of loyalty to the state of origin but also under the protection of the rights guaranteed by his status as an EU citizen.

From its simple definition of a status derived from national citizenship, EU citizenship has been made explicit as „complementary" (TREATY OF AMSTERDAM, 1997) and then as „additional" (TREATY OF LISBON, 2009). However, the substance of the entire understanding of the impact of EU citizenship on the Member States was provided by the judgments of the CJEU in the various cases it was called upon to analyse. From the perspective

of the role played by the Court in consolidating the concept of EU citizenship, it acquired an evolutionary character rather than a revolutionary one (KRUMA, 2014).

Without going into details regarding the jurisprudence of the CJEU, which will be taken up in one of the following sections of this study and, more broadly, in the analysis of POPA (2023) in this book, a few aspects are worth highlighting here.

The CJEU had an overwhelming influence in reshaping the behaviour of member states with the European Union (Community). Through its constant jurisprudence, the Court has regulated various aspects of the relationship between the Union and the member states. The success of the CJEU was due to the internal and external context in which it acted. Given the fragmented structure of power in the institutional framework of the EU and the relationship between EU decision-makers and national administrations, the Court benefited from increased legitimacy in providing a balance in the European integration process (KELEMENN, 2016). However, the Court also had to face the resistance of states that developed various means to diminish the impact of sentences issued by European judges (HOFMANN, 2018). In such a fluid framework, the Court has learned to act cautiously so that Member States do not unduly extend their limits on the scope of EU citizenship.

Within the EU's institutional framework and decision-making mechanism, it was almost impossible for the CJEU to take a „constitutionalisation" approach to EU citizenship. According to the Treaty, EU citizenship is derived from the „nationality of a Member State". Consequently, states retain a fundamental role through their right to legislate on account of national citizenship. However, there were some situations when the CJEU also entered the field of national citizenship (Cases Rotman; Tjebbes; X).

On all these occasions, the Court has (re)confirmed the legitimacy of the national state to protect the „special relationship of solidarity and loyalty with its own citizens" (CASE X, point 31; CASE ROTMANN, point 51; CASE TJEBBES, point 33). In essence, it is the member states that decide the criteria for obtaining and losing national citizenship. However, when the individual risks becoming stateless, the national authorities must take into account

international and community law. In its most recent case (CASE X C-689/21), the Court recommended that when deciding on withdrawing a person's nationality, the Member States should „examine the proportionality of the consequences of the loss of that nationality from the point of view of EU law".

As such, the fundamental and primordial role of national citizenship as a source of EU citizenship is confirmed by the constituent treaties that affirm the derived, complementary and additional nature of EU citizenship, as well as by the constant jurisprudence of the CJEU that confirms the right of national authorities to decide on the criteria for granting and withdrawing national citizenship. The nuance that the Court additionally introduces refers to the proportionality of the consequences of a decision to withdraw nationality on the individual's human rights.

Next, this study explores two theoretical approaches that can complete the understanding of the influence of EU citizenship on member states in the process of European integration.

TWO THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES
ON EU CITIZENSHIP

Personhood citizenship – post-national approach

YASEMIN N. SOYSAL (1994) has attempted to trace the transformations that citizenship underwent both as an institution and as a meaning after the Second World War. The legitimization of the principles of individual citizenship rather than state membership was one of the significant gains of the post-war period. However, this was due less to a humanistic impulse than to a calculation of opportunity. After the war, the large economies of Europe recruited foreign workers. Initially admitted temporarily, these workers have become permanent residents but without the benefit of formal citizenship status. The paradox identified by Soysal is that these „aliens" or „foreign communities" from the host societies have incorporated themselves into various aspects of society: „educational system, welfare schemes, and labour markets", becoming an active part of the state. This is the moment when it is found that, despite the classic definition of citizenship,

the „foreigners" who came to these states of post-war Europe integrated „into a system of membership rights" without having to be incorporated „into the national collectivity" (SOYSAL, 1994, PP. 1–3).

In this way, the author introduced the concept of a mode of post-national citizenship in which national citizenship, defined by a cultural belonging based on national rights, was replaced by a legitimization based on „personhood". The post-national model is based on the equality of treatment between members of society. In the classic model, this attribute was reserved for members with shared nationality. As SOYSAL (1994, 142) comments, „the basis of legitimacy for individual rights is located within the nation-state". In contrast, in the case of post-national citizenship, the foundation of nationhood is replaced by „universal personhood"; in other words „universal human rights replace national rights." (IBID.). The logic of such a transfer of legitimacy resides in an evolution and strengthening of post-war international norms in which „the individual transcends the citizens". It is essential to keep in mind that this change in the legitimizing basis of membership rights did not delegitimize the state. Ultimately, the state remains „the immediate guarantor and provider" of these rights as long as a person lives on its territory.

Given that the state remains the guarantee of the new model of citizenship, it means that we are facing the effects of the transformation of the international system of the last eight decades. The increasing mobility of labour in the context of intensifying interdependencies and connectedness has transformed the very foundations of the structure of the international system. The United Nations has been building the framework of the new international structure since 1944. Step by step, human rights norms have expanded into more areas traditionally belonging to nation-states. However, it was precisely the demand for workers in the large European economies to help achieve the post-war development goals that paved the way for mobility. These people were caught between an obligation of loyalty to the sending state and a civic, economic and social obligation to the receiving state. Thus, international law came to protect these people by defining the norms regarding their life, education, welfare, family relations, and political activities." (SOYSAL, 1994). As a result, *citizenship* is not defined by

the „exclusive sovereignty" of the state over the territory and population, but by the rights that the state is obliged to guarantee to the individuals who live within its borders. In other words, within the post-national model of citizenship, the state is not delegitimized, but its functions have only been reshaped through the development of human rights at the global level. A long transition period was necessary until states began to accept that international human rights norms are not applied in a discriminatory manner by favouring citizens and depriving non-citizens.

Table 2 contains some of the international and European instruments that have significantly impacted the sovereignty of nation-states. With the person at the centre of its concern, international law has created a net to protect it against the abuses of states, regardless of whether it is a sending or receiving state. As a result, after eight decades of development of these international norms, a revolt by states against these norms is the equivalent of a direct attack against their own citizens.

Table 2. *International and European norms concerning citizenship and human rights*

Year	Document	Main provisions
1945	United Nations Charter	Outlines principles of International relations, including respect for human rights
1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights	Establishes a common standard of fundamental human rights to be universally protected
1949	Geneva Conventions	Sets humanitarian laws governing armed conflicts.
1950	European Convention on Human Rights	Protects civil and political rights of people within the Council of Europe
1951	Geneva Convention on the Legal Status of Refugees	Persons shall not be forced to return to their country of origin if they have a „well-founded fear of persecution" for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinions.
1954	Convention relating to the status of stateless persons	Addresses the rights of stateless persons
1961	Convention on the reduction of statelessness	Aims to prevent and reduce statelessness
1965	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	Commits to eliminating racial discrimination and promoting understanding among races.

The right to have digital rights in the European Union. A step towards digital citizenship?

Year	Document	Main provisions
1966	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	Commits parties to respect civil and political rights, including freedom of speech and religion.
1966	International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights	Commits parties to work towards granting economic, social, and cultural rights to individuals.
1979	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women	Outlines an agenda to end discrimination against women and establishes women's rights.
1989	Convention on the Rights of the Child	Sets out the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of children.
1990	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families	Protects the rights of all migrant workers and their families, ensuring they are treated with dignity and respect.
1992	Treaty on European Union (Maastricht Treaty)	Establishes the European Union and European citizenship, and sets policy areas of EU jurisdiction.
1997	Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level	Grants foreign residents the right to vote and stand for election at the local level.
1997	European Convention on Nationality	Sets principles governing the rules of nationality, including the reduction of statelessness.
2000	Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union	Sets a range of civil, political, and social rights for EU citizens and residents.
2000	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Protection, and Child Pornography)	Provides requirements for criminalizing the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography.
2004	Citizenship Directive (2004/38/EC)	Outlines the right of EU citizens and their family members to move and reside freely within the EU and EEA member states.
2009	Treaty of Lisbon	Modifies the EU constitutional basis, enhancing the role of national and European parliaments and streamlining decision-making processes.
2013	EU Regulation No. 604/2013 (Dublin III Regulation)	Establishes criteria for determining the member state responsible for examining an application for international protection.
2019	EU Directive 2019/1157 on the use of supported features for Identity cards	Sets rules on the features of ID cards and residence documents, improving security features to prevent fraudulent use.

Based on this post-national model, the Maastricht Treaty (1992), which est"ablished the European Union, also created the status of EU citizens. This treaty only created the figure of the citizen. The new statute was defined to „strengthen the protection of the rights and interests of the nationals of its member states". SOYSAL (1994, 148) observed that the initial definition of this citizenship did not apply to nationals of non-EU states. The rights of these non-EU workers, who constituted the majority of migrants from the European Union, were regulated by other norms such as The Charter of the Fundamental Rights of Workers and by bilateral agreements. It was the role played by the Court of Justice of the European Union, which in the post-Maastricht period regulated numerous aspects of nationals from third countries (POPA, 2023).

Supranational citizenship

EU citizenship cannot just be about observing the rights of non-EU workers. Citizenship is both *status* and the *definition* of a new identity (MAAS, 2007). Again, the discussion revolves around the state and its sovereignty. EU citizenship does not replace national citizenship but only complements it (OLSEN, 2012). The natural question would be: What gaps of national citizenship are filled by EU citizenship?

The evolution of the Communities and the European Union has created a growing package of freedoms for people. However, states cannot adapt their constitutional-territorial nature to guarantee these transnational rights individually. This defines the supranational character of EU citizenship.

In the context of the temptation to embrace the relativizations specific to the post-truth current, which aims to alter the real meanings of the social and political processes in contemporary society, a clarification of the 'supranational' dimension of EU citizenship is necessary.

Supranationalism is not defined by a hierarchy in which states are subordinated to an external authority. This would be hegemony or empire, and in this situation, the sovereignty of states would not exist. Instead, in the case of supranationalism, sovereign states create the foundation, framework and context in which they then appoint the supranational agent

to manage and develop public policies. The treaties signed by the member states represent the foundation on which the institutional architecture (framework) is built in which the supranational agent acts based on principles and general directions (context) defined by the states. The supranational character of EU citizenship reveals the fact that it is not under the direct control of the member states but under the guarantee of the supranational agencies designated by the states: the European Commission and the Court of Justice of the EU, together with the European Parliament, elected by the citizens of the member states (CRAIG & DE BÚRCA, 2015).

Discussions about the supranational dimension of EU citizenship usually fall within the neo-functionalist literature on European integration.

The most popular concept from this theoretical perspective is spillover. The success achieved in a particular area pushes the integration process towards new areas where cooperation between the member states can be deepened. For this reason, the term 'dynamics' can be found in the works of neo-functionalist authors (LINDBERG, 1967; FLIGSTEIN, 2009).

On the one hand, it is about market integration; on the other hand, it is social integration. In both dimensions, the dynamics of integration are observed in a spiral that reveals a process of expansion and deepening according to the successes achieved in the previous stages. Social integration is a slower process if economic integration is more visible through its dynamics.

European social integration can be detected in a process of intensifying the mobility of people and in a process of building organizational identity. These are two distinct processes (material and immaterial), but they may have segments of mutual influence. The mobility of people can potentially increase material awareness of the benefits of EU citizenship. The construction of an identity is an analysis that cannot be circumscribed only to the neo-functionalist approach. In this case, social-constructivist lenses can clarify the image of a complex process whose evolution is trans-generational but complicated precisely by the novelty and uniqueness of EU citizenship.

Ultimately, the validity of this construct can be measured by the benefits it brings to the people endowed with this legal status. The Euroba-

rometer is a tool to measure the progress of cementing the new identity through EU citizenship. This tool for constantly polling European opinion evaluates through some of its questions to what extent the population identifies as European.

The awareness of being an EU citizen can be built either through the discursive act of the leaders (SĂLĂGEAN, 2023; STOICA, 2023) or by experiencing the various aspects (activation) of this status (RÎNDAȘU, 2023; MIRONIUC, 2023).

THE SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE OF EU CITIZENSHIP

The literature discusses decoupling citizenship rights from (national) identity (SHAW, 2014; BALIBAR, 2004; HABERMAS, 1992; BELLAMY, 2008).

For example, BALIBAR (2004) believes that citizenship should be freed from its exclusive character and incorporate all those who choose to participate in the life of a community. However, in the absence of identity, the community is deprived of the cohesion and unity that myths and symbols give them (CHALMERS ET AL., 2010, P. 443). For his part, HABERMAS (1992) tries to find a middle way between 'community of fate' and 'community of participation'. In other words, a middle way between a closed community and an open one. To what extent does the state still allow itself to maintain a closed community in an era in which the individual has discovered the advantages of his freedom of movement, and international law has consolidated human rights in a myriad of dimensions.

KOCHENOV (2013) seemed optimistic in defining this status, highlighting that EU citizenship frees nationals from „suffocating bonds" with member states. The „federal European citizenship", which emerged a decade ago, did not set out to imitate nation-states (SCHÖBERGER, 2007). However, at this stage of the Union's evolution, EU citizenship cannot be analysed as an „unrelated phenomenon" from the nationalities of the member states (SHAW, 2011, P. 578), even if they have different characteristics.

The financial crisis of 2007-2009, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian-provoked war in Ukraine were some tests to observe the robustness of EU citizenship awareness (see CHAMPEAU ET AL., 2015). Euroscepticism is born either from a distrust in the validity of the European project and the

desire to return to an intergovernmental approach or from adversity to any form of weakening of the state's control over the population and territory. Thus, Euroscepticism is the disappointment of those who believed in a specific objective of European integration, respectively, the ideology of those who always opposed it.

Even if some consider EU citizenship as paradoxical by nature (SHAW, 2019), others have identified an ongoing civil project. PUKALLUS (2016) created five expressions illustrating how European citizens were imagined in public communication coordinated by the European Commission.

Table 3. *The five styles of representing European citizenship*

Type of citizenship	Period	Image	Style of public communication
Social-economic	1951-1972	Homo Œconomicus	Factual
Political-federal	1973-1992	A People's Europe	Affective
Political-dialogical	1993-2004	Europe of Transparency	Deliberative-rational
Civil-spatial	2005-2009	Europe of Agorai	Mixed between deliberative-rational and factual
Civil-legal	2010-2023[*]	Europe of Rights	Factual style with some affective elements

(Source: adapted from the approach of PUKALLUS, 2016)

Through these representations of European citizenship, the European Commission's speech aimed „to stimulate a European civil consciousness" in order to forge „an active European civil society" (PUKALLUS, 2016, PP. 20-21). This interpretation is slightly different from that of Shaw (2019). The latter emphasized that the initial intention of building EU citizenship was to grant people civil and socio-economic rights and freedoms within an emerging single market. The literature recognizes that EU citizenship was not designed to build loyalty to a supranational political authority. In fact, political rights were associated only later.

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[*] For this study, we opted for an extension of the period until 2023, considering that the judgments of the CJEU kept the same concern for defining the rights of EU citizens.

In either approach, we are dealing with an affirmation of the level of awareness of rights and less with a solidification of a sense of belonging or identity (PUKALLUS, 2016; SHAW, 2019). European cohesion is achieved around a *corpus* of rights and freedoms, not around common values.

The hard work of the CJEU focused on activating and protecting this corpus because judicial power can never create a community of values. This is the point of supranational agencies and member states to forge a foundation on which the European identity can then be built.

For the nationals of the member states, EU citizenship is not an aspiration in itself, but a material benefit with little affective value. In contrast, for third-country nationals, EU citizenship is an aspiration to offer them the chance of material well-being or a life of physical security.

The paradox of EU citizenship is that it wanted to provide a common identity and consciousness but to become a platform through which European citizens acquired the right to challenge the evolution or direction of the European integration project. In the name of the rights conferred by this statute, the citizens of the member states can express themselves as Euro-optimist, Euro-pessimist or Euro-sceptic (ARATÓ & KANIOK, 2009).

EU CITIZENSHIP AS A POLITICAL CONSTRUCT

EU citizenship is an eminently political product with a legal substantiality without an incipient organic development.

The centring of the European construction on the citizen was affirmed right from 1969, when „The Third General Report of the Activities of the Communities" was published. It announced the concern „of showing how in the future this world could transform the lives of Community citizens" (COMMISSION, 1970, P. 443)

The concern for the social rights of the citizens of the member states has been mentioned since the Paris Summit (December 1974). Following this summit, in 1975, the Commission produced two reports (both entitled „Towards European Citizenship"), one on the advisability of introducing a „passport Union" (COMMISSION, 1975A) and the other on „guaranteeing the rights special" (COMMISSION, 1975B). This association of the passport with

the concept of the Union was unfamiliar because it was a document that traditionally established the connection between a citizen and his state when he was on another state's territory. In the context of a Passport Union, it was understandable that the Member States should adopt three measures: the prior introduction of a uniform passport, the harmonization of legislation affecting foreigners and the abolition of passport control in the Community (COMMISSION, 1975A). The special rights to which the second report refers are the political right to vote and to stand in elections for the European Parliament and at the municipal level in another member state of the Community (COMMISSION, 1975B).

On the same occasion of the Paris Summit, Belgian Prime Minister Leo Tindemans was commissioned to draw up a report explaining what a „European Union" means. A declared federalist, Tindemans accepts that European integration is a process that cannot be achieved by governments alone but requires the involvement of citizens.

> „No one wants to see a technocratic Europe. European Union must be experienced by the citizen in his daily life. It must make itself felt in education and culture, news and communications, it must be manifest in the youth of our countries, and in leisure, time activities. It must protect the rights of the individual and strengthen democracy through a set of institutions which have legitimacy conferred upon them by the will of our peoples. The image of Europe must be in line with its motivations and opportunities, it must demonstrate to those within and without the solidarity of our peoples and the values of our society. I am convinced that this Europe, a progressive Europe, will lack neither power nor impetus." (TINDEMANS, 1976, P. 12)

In his report, Tindemans included a particular chapter on „A Citizen's Europe", highlighting that two new directions of action were needed: (a) the protection of the rights of Europeans and (b) concrete manifestation of European solidarity through external signs discernible in everyday life. (TINDEMANS, 1976, P. 26).

After this debate, reflected especially by the three reports mentioned, the issue of special rights was left in the background precisely because of the impact it would have had on national citizenship. What remained was the vote for the European Parliament, considered „an embryonic form of

citizenship" (MINDUS, 2017) and the adoption of the Council Resolution on the introduction of the single European passport (COUNCIL, 1981).

The topic of European citizenship was taken up more strategically in June 1984 at the Fontainebleau European Council. At this meeting of the heads of state and government of the member states, it was stated that building a People's Europe is necessary. In this framework, two ad hoc committees were established: one chaired by the Italian politician Pietro Adonnio, regarding „The Europe of Citizens" (COMMISSION, 1993) and the second chaired by James Dooge, regarding „Institutional Affairs" (MINDUS, 2017). The report of the Adonnio Committee was relatively modest, making instead references to a state of affairs existing up to that time and taking some of the ideas previously expressed by the President of the Commission, Jacques Delors (COMMISSION, 1985). The Adonnio report did not significantly impact the Single European Act (SEU), adopted in 1986 (MINDUS, 2017). From the perspective of European citizenship and citizens' rights, the SEU has been a disappointment. However, it created the foundation for the reforms desired by Jacques Delors.

It was not until the European Council in Madrid (June 1989) that it was requested that a formulation of the rights of European citizens be included in the future treaty amending the Treaty of Rome. Spain (which joined the European Community in 1986) continued to insist on this point the following year, when Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez sent the Council a letter (May 4, 1990) suggesting the establishment of supranational citizenship as a step towards achieving a European political union. The inclusion of EU citizenship in the Maastricht Treaty ended a long conceptual and political debate phase, opening the door to a new chamber: that of EU citizenship as practice.

In an organization in a permanent process of expansion and deepening, it is almost impossible to have any EU consciousness. Nor could it, as long as each expansion included new states, each bringing its own history, cultural experience, societal construction, and constitutional-political evolution. The accession to the EU was achieved after 1989, based on the so-called Copenhagen Criteria (1993), which drew the guidelines of the behaviour expected from the states in their future membership (GRABBE, 2002).

Citizens of the candidate states perceived the individual economic and social opportunities that their new status as EU citizens offered. Even the „return to Europe" (SĂLĂGEAN, 2023) could not be considered a manifestation of European consciousness but rather a slogan that reveals a geocultural and geopolitical significance of the European construction.

For these reasons, it is worth emphasizing that „European consciousness" does not overlap with the European Union. This is not an organizational consciousness, but it goes far beyond it. For this reason, we can consider „Back to Europe" to have two dimensions:

(a) The individual aspiration of the nationals of the candidate states to benefit from the rights and freedoms offered by EU membership;
(b) The geopolitical recognition of the fact that the Union is not European enough without including the states of Central and Eastern Europe, and the post-war reorganization negotiations of the continent were done without including the political and national interests of these countries.

As a result, the manifestation of a European consciousness through EU citizenship is an unreasonable expectation for current generations. Only the generations of young people who grew up and were educated after 2000 could begin to develop an attachment and a sense of belonging to the EU.

EU CITIZENSHIP AS A LEGAL CONSTRUCT

The Treaty of Lisbon created a silhouette of the EU citizen through articles 20-24 of the TFEU. The Court of Justice of the Union created the body of this concept through its judgments given in the numerous cases brought before it. From the text of the Treaty, it can be noted that EU citizenship is derived from the national citizenship of a member state. To be as explicit as possible, the Treaty specifies that „citizenship of the Union does not replace national citizenship but is added to it" (Article 20 TFEU). By virtue of this status, the EU citizen is endowed with a set of rights: (a) free movement and residence (Article 21 TFEU); (b) the right to participate in local elections and for the European Parliament, in the state in which he resides (Article 22 TFEU); (c) the right to receive diplomatic and consular protection in third countries from any EU member state (Article 23 TFEU); the right to address petitions to the European Parliament (Article 24 TFEU).

Formally, EU citizenship is dependent on national citizenship, which means that a person must first have the citizenship of a Member State in order to be able to benefit from the status conferred by the Treaty. From the perspective of those who acquired EU citizenship by birth (as their state was already a member of the EU), EU citizenship appears as an organic continuity, and the argument of belonging and identity is applicable. Instead, from the perspective of a third-country national, the goal of obtaining EU citizenship defines a material process that begins with efforts to first access the citizenship of an EU member state.

As in the case of the member states, the CJEU has played its (almost demiurgic) role as a shaper in shaping EU citizenship. The stages of gestation (pre-1992) created the infrastructure where the organization could openly assume the concept of EU citizenship. The stage of formation and modelling (1993-2004) is the one in which the principles and development directions of EU citizenship were finalized. Finally, the consolidation stage (post-2005) is the one in which the themes surrounding this concept aim to correct the attitude of states through the set of rights and freedoms that nationals have as EU citizens.

Therefore, it can be observed that the states are the ones who decide who is an EU citizen within the limits of international norms regarding human rights. The constant jurisprudence of the CJEU has confirmed this sovereign right of the states (see the sentences in the cases of MICHELETTI (1992), ROTTMANN (2010), X (2023), TJEBBES (2017):

> „Under international law, it is for each Member State, having due regard to Community law, to lay down the conditions for the acquisition and loss of nationality." (MICHELETTI, 1992)

A fundamental limit imposed by the CJEU on states is not to challenge the right to the privileges of EU citizenship for a national of another member state, even when he has dual citizenship, and one of these is from a non-EU state EU (MICHELETTI, 1992). For this reason, KOSTAKOPOULOU (2007) sees EU citizenship as having a transformative effect on national citizenships.

However, from a sociological point of view, establishing and consolidating alternative citizenship, such as the European one, needs the forging

of a sense of belonging through a set of common values (BELLAMY, 2008). Only the normative dimension of treaties, agreements, international conventions, and jurisprudence is insufficient. BELLAMY (2008) gives the example of the European Convention of Human Rights to which all EU member states have adhered. However, the cultural foundation of each state determines, almost inevitably, that certain rights enunciated by the ECHR are interpreted differently: criminal and justice policy, welfare, or social security.

KOSTAKOPOULOU (2007) is rather convinced of the shaping power of EU citizenship when it comes to membership. The author is based on the way in which the very concept of national citizenship has evolved in the general context of migration. States have limited capacities to restrict the rights of European citizens when they are on the territory of other states. Apart from national elections and specific occupations sensitively connected to national interests, states cannot discriminate between EU citizens.

EU citizenship's most significant advantage is the right of circulation and residence in the European Union. In order to be able to guarantee this right, the states had to adapt. Mentioned in Articles 20 and 21 TFEU, this right is detailed in the Citizenship Directive (2004). Beyond the various types of residence that the European norm describes, all states have adopted the fundamental principle that the European citizen must not become a burden for the host state. CHALMERS ET AL. (2010) put it much more explicitly: expensive members of society do not enjoy free movement rights. As a result, those who depend on the material support of the host state or who have expensive medical conditions for this state are not among the beneficiaries of EU citizenship. The expression of this principle can be considered a protective net of the state in the context of the freedom of movement of persons.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the run-up to the elections for the European Parliament in 2024, both the European Union and its member states approach the citizen as a force shaping the direction of the construction of the EU. This can be seen

through manipulating public discourse, shaping education about the EU, financing programs to consolidate a shared European consciousness, and presenting alternatives. Knowing the course and transformations of EU citizenship in the last three decades provides a platform on which scholars, politicians, mass media, and civil society can debate various options regarding the future of the European Union through its citizens. Unlike the social environment that existed at the time of the creation of EU citizens, communities are currently developing under the influence of new factors, one of which is digitization. The expansion of the communication environment in virtual space significantly impacts how people's perception of EU citizenship is shaped.

For this reason, the future of the dialogue between the Union and its citizens must take this new dimension into account. CUGLEȘAN (2023) presents in this volume how the EU understands to participate in „building digital citizenship and its human-centric and value-oriented strategy to extend the rights that apply offline also in the digital environment". Along with this dimension, how the national and European authorities manage to deal with the highly fluid geo-political environment of these years can impact the citizens' confidence level in European construction.

Through this study, it was possible to observe that EU citizenship was built first of all as a political-legal construct to facilitate a rapprochement of citizens with the Union. It can be seen that the new statute also changed the substance of national citizenship and led states to readjust their abode with their own citizens. Belonging and a sense of security have become stronger links between the state and the citizen than loyalty in the classical approach to citizenship. Even if the advantages of EU citizenship are obvious, the communication of community policies and the active involvement of citizens in the community decision-making process help to increase the democratic dimension of the Union and implicitly solidify the sense of belonging that European citizenship needs to endure. The European integration process is evolutionary and progressive, but it can also be reversible in the absence of solidarity of the states and citizens that make up the European Union.

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The right to have digital rights
in the European Union.
A step towards digital citizenship?

Natalia CUGLEŞAN

ABSTRACT: The chapter investigates the European Union's (EU) approach to building digital citizenship and its human-centric and value-orientated strategy to extend the rights that apply offline also in the digital environment. It focuses on the Digital Rights and Principles Interinstitutional Declaration, a manifesto of EU beliefs on what digital rights represent. The paper argues that the EU's under-standing of digital rights builds extensively on fundamental rights, such as the right to privacy, by adding new developments, such as the right to digital legacy or by extending other fundamental rights, such as the right to education in the digital world. Still, at the same, it has contributed to the emergence of new rights that do not fall into the category of fundamental rights, such as the right to a digital identi-ty or internet access or to file complaints under AI, which resulted from current global realities. As such, the EU has adapted to technological advancements and protected user rights in the digital space, scoring as a normative digital global actor.

Keywords: digital citizenship; digital rights; EU digital policy; digital transformation; digital norms; digital citizens.

INTRODUCTION

EU citizenship is one of the most important constructs in the history of EU integration. Introduced through the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, European Citizenship rests on granting rights, such as the free movement of people, the right to vote in the European Parliament (EP) elections or to stand in local elections. At the same time, it has a protective character as EU citizen rights are enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European

Union, which acquired a binding role with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009.

However, with the changes brought by digital transformation and the growing impact of technology on societies, citizens' rights have also been impacted negatively. The role played by disinformation and fake news, or the violation of privacy through surveillance practices, is suggestive in this direction. Moreover, as democratic participation is increasingly linked with the online environment, the rise of technologies has exposed a digital divide, more visible with the COVID-19 pandemic. The digital divide can disenfranchise people living in rural areas or those with poor digital skills. And not lastly, the growing impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and algorithmic decision-making could lead to discrimination, especially for more vulnerable and marginalised people.

In this transformative context, the EU has responded to these challenges and in the last years, the EU has been committed to protecting citizens' rights in the digital space and has contributed to the emergence of nascent digital citizenship (ILIOPOULOU-PENOT, 2022, P. 976). Its approach relies on the right to have rights and empowering the EU's digital citizens. It has adopted legislation on privacy, which has been taken to a whole new level with the adoption of the GDPR in 2016; it has regulated the big tech companies and has culminated with the adoption in 2022 of the European Declaration of Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade. A piece of soft law legislation that is non-binding but guides the member states in their response to protecting citizens' rights in cyberspace. Despite the criticism that it is not a Digital Charter of Human Rights, it is a critical document providing a coherent digital rights framework. In this sense, the EU as an actor is unique and plays a leading role as few states have adopted a Charter of digital rights. It serves as a model for other actors on the global stage and as best practices in the field, with the ambition of being a global trendsetter in the area of digital rights.

As a result, this article aims to investigate the EU approach to digital citizenship. It raises the following RQ: *What is the EU approach to constructing digital citizenship*? The paper argues that the EU understands the pivotal role of digital rights in consolidating EU digital citizenship. It conceptualises

digital rights as an extension of human rights, with a particular preference for the right to privacy. Nevertheless, the EU has been able to be an innovative actor by introducing new digital rights – beyond those covered by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights – as a result of the growing impact of technology on citizens' rights in cyberspace. In this context, this study contributes to the scholarly debate that bridges the concept of citizenship and digital rights and examines the EU's response to the issue of digital citizenship, as few studies link the literature on digital citizenship with digital rights and how states or international actors regulate the topic of digital rights. The contributions are primarily theoretical in nature, and empirical studies are scarce.

The paper is organised as follows. In the next section, I will evaluate scholarly contributions to the concept of digital citizenship and digital rights. In contrast, the following sections will evaluate the EU's stance on digital citizenship, its understanding of digital rights, and how they contribute to enhancing EU digital citizenship. The focus point is represented by the Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles and how digital rights have been embedded. Nevertheless, the paper outlines other legislative initiatives that complement and precede the Declaration, thus contributing to their consolidation.

RESEARCH ON DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP AND DIGITAL RIGHTS

The concept of digital citizenship

Digital citizenship is a disputed concept, as there has yet to be a consensus on how to define it. However, digital citizenship is, in essence, "the right to participate in society online" (MOSSBERGER ET AL., 2007). However, academic inputs contribute to explaining the concept despite the lack of a common understanding. Authors like Hintz et al. conceptualise digital citizenship as "the self-enactment of people's role in society through the use of digital technologies" (HINTZ ET AL., 2017, P. 731). Other scholars link digital citizenship to citizens' experiences in the digital age (JØRRING ET AL., 2018, P. 21).

A first generation of scholarly contributions on digital citizenship analysed the role of technological aspects and digital competencies (FERNÁNDEZ-

PRADOS ET AL., 2021, P. 1). In this direction, one of the top authors of the digital citizenship literature, Karen Mossberger, highlights the critical role played by factors such as educational competencies, skills and technology access to enable citizens to participate entirely in online society (MOSSBERGER ET AL., 2007). Similarly, other authors examine the factors that determine or influence digital citizenship. They show that attitudes towards the Internet, computer self-efficacy or expertise are critical (AL-ZAHRANI, 2015, P. 205). Other authors discuss a series of factors critical for modelling digital citizenship, such as equal digital rights, upholding digital rights in digital forums or protecting personal data (SEARSON ET AL., 2015, P. 731).

Despite the fuzzy definition of the concept, theoretical contributions to digital citizenship are scarce. However, Choi made a significant contribution by advancing a framework for defining digital citizenship. Building her approach on a systematic evaluation of scholarly works published over more than ten years, the author argues that digital citizenship is a multidimensional concept that can be defined as "ethics, media and information literacy, participation/engagement and critical resistance" (CHOI, 2016, P. 573) and states that: "abilities, thinking, and action regarding Internet use, which allows people to understand, navigate, engage in, and transform self, community, society and the world" (CHOI, 2016, P. 584). Also, digital citizenship refers to the impact of digitalisation on the citizens and their relationships with public authorities, political engagement and social activities (JÆGER, 2021, P. 2).

Recent accounts on digital citizenship argue that it is a fluid concept and avoid labelling or defining it (JÆGER, 2021, P. 5). This can be attributed to the emergence of digital citizenship due to digital acts (ISSIN & RUPERT, 2015), or digital citizenship can be characterised by people's actions (CALZADA, 2023, P. 163). If the concept of digital citizenship originates in the citizenship literature, the issue of digital rights benefits from the contribution of different fields. The question of digital rights will be examined in the next section.

What are digital rights?

The issue of digital rights has sparked the interest of different actors, ranging from academics and international organisations to human rights NGOs or digitally fluent citizens, which have prompted the digital rights movement.

This movement has led to the production of different declarations on digital rights. One of the noteworthy manifestos was the *Declaration of Internet Freedom*, which proposed five principles of digital rights: expression, access, openness, innovation, and privacy (ISIN & RUPPERT, 2020, P. 174).

Researchers of digital rights have paid attention to defining and examining the rights that fall in the category of cyber rights and whether these rights should be an extension of human rights. In their paper, Pangrazio and Sefton-Green, building on the definition provided by (REVENTLOW, 2017), define digital rights as "human and legal rights that allow individuals to access, use, create and publish digital content on devices such as computers and mobile phones, as well as in virtual spaces and communities" (PANGRAZIO & SEFTON-GREEN, 2021, P. 19). On the same note, Rosamund Hutt characterises digital rights as human rights. She stresses that in the Internet age, privacy and freedom of expression have become increasingly relevant (HUTT, 2015).

However, an important body of scholarly works scrutinises the need to advance new rights due to technological advancement, which has created new realities impacting citizens' rights, advocating for a protective framework. As such, Custers argues that new digital rights have to be advanced rather than connecting them to fundamental rights and clarifies that digital rights denote that they have not been incorporated into legislation in a digital context (CUSTERS, 2022, PP. 1-5).

Custers underlines that fundamental rights were developed in an era that looked completely different, such as with the adoption of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in the fifties before the Internet ever existed (CUSTERS, 2022, P. 4). An example in this direction is the right to be offline. The European Parliament advanced in 2021, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, "the right to disconnect", as some member states have already introduced legislation allowing employees who work online to disconnect from technology outside office hours. The Parliament has called for the Commission to adopt an EU directive on this issue, considering it to be a fundamental right of workers (EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, 2021).

Additionally, the issue of digital rights regulatory protective frameworks has been investigated by the digital rights scholarship. Authors point

to the difficulty in exercising digital rights online and offline. The problem is the transfer from the nation-state in charge of rights to private companies that own "digital sites, services and infrastructure" (LIVINGSTONE, 2014, P. 22). Digital citizenship is impacted by the state and commercial actors (PANGRAZIO & SEFTON-GREEN, 2021, P.23), with the state engaging in surveillance activities, while online platforms are exploiting and compromising privacy issues through financial gains through targeted advertising. These results lead to the need to regulate big tech companies.

Also, pundits of digital rights have attempted to frame contributions and identify the gaps in the digital citizenship and digital rights literature by resorting to meta-evaluations (SHARMA ET AL., 2022; OZTURK, 2021; JØRRING ET AL., 2018; JÆGER, 2021). In the literature review analysis carried out by Birgit Jæger, she states that scholarly works in the area of digital citizenship can be classified according to four dominant policy streams: "digital rights and privacy", "political engagement", "digital public service" and "training and learning" (JÆGER, 2021, PP.7-8). The research streams are organised further according to different rights. She frames that the *digital rights and privacy* stream falls under civil rights *political engagement* under political rights. At the same time, social rights are linked to *digital public service* and t*raining and learning (*JÆGER, 2021, P.7*).* Under each stream, she lists the predominant themes in the literature, classified following the number of publications.

To grasp the type of rights proposed by the EU, this study employs the classification proposed by (JAEGER, 2021). Under *civil rights*, the chapter investigates the theme of privacy and surveillance and aims to evaluate how the EU understands the right to privacy and data protection. Under *political rights*, it examines the question of democracy and participation, linking the role played by AI and algorithmic system and how it threatens fundamental rights, while under *social rights*, it looks at the subject of citizens and digital services and the EU project to create the right to digital identity and the problem of digitalisation of education and the right to digital education. Although the author encloses several themes covered by the scholarly literature, under each research stream, this paper has selected the topics that generated the highest number of publications. Figure 1 summarises the approach of the paper.
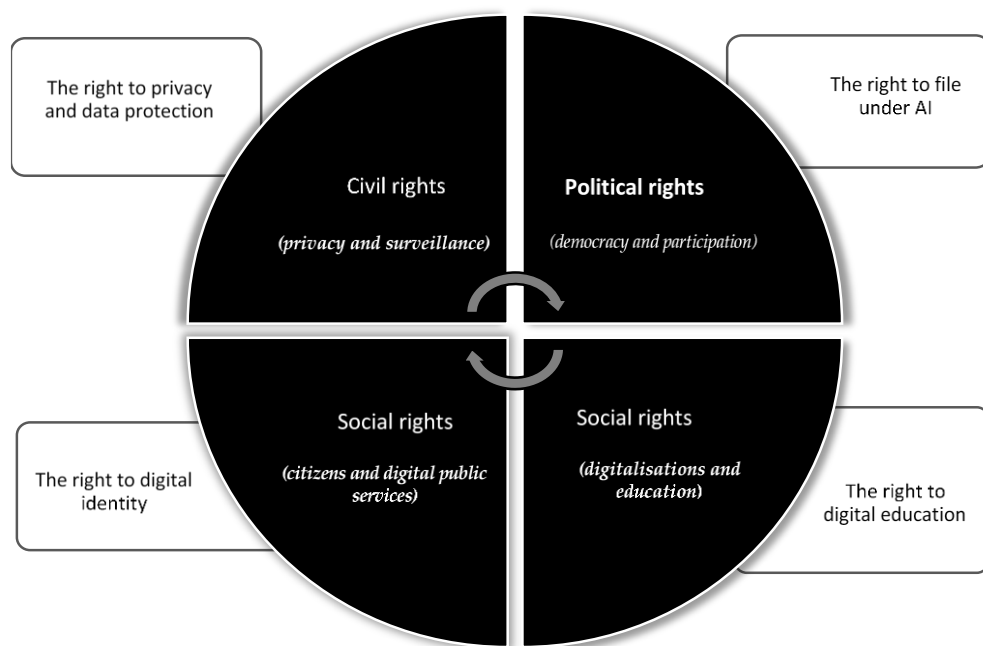
Figure 1. *Conceptual approach*

Source: Natalia Cugleșan based on Birgit Jaeger,
Digital Citizenship – A Review of the Academic Literature, 2021, p.7.

MAPPING EU CONTRIBUTION
TO DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

The drive of the EU to create digital citizenship has to be understood as part of the digital transformation plan of the EU. In the last decade, the EU has adopted several initiatives to prepare the EU to be fit for the digital age, which also translates through empowering and protecting citizens' rights. Established as a key priority under the Von der Leyen Commission, the European Union has advanced a wide range of actions that must be developed in line with EU values.

The EU's understanding of digital citizenship translates as the right to have rights in cyberspace. The EU builds on the extension of fundamental rights in online space, but at the same time, it is able to innovate and introduce new rights. The EU has steadily adopted secondary legislation to protect users' rights in cyberspace, focusing on the issue of privacy and fram-

ing digital rights as human rights. However, the EU does not use the concept of digital citizenship often enough but extensively emphasises the issue of rights in official documents. One of the few documents introducing the concept of digital citizenship is the *Communication from the European Commission 2030 Digital Compass: the European Way for the Digital Decade.* The Communication states that the same rights that apply offline should also operate in the online environment and announces the intention to create an inter-institutional declaration on digital rights and principles.

As a result, at the end of 2022, the EU adopted a Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles as part of the Digital Decade policy programme, which should guide the EU's approach to the digital future. The declaration could represent "a political impetus to the process of creating digital citizenship" (ILIOPOULOU-PENOT, 2022, P. 970). The Declaration, a soft law instrument, should steer the member states to respect the citizens' digital rights. The EU will monitor the member states progress and formulate recommendations in the State of the Digital Decade reports[1], which will be published annually. At the same time, it aims to inspire other actors on the global stage to follow the EU path.

Iliopoulou-Penot defines the European approach to digital citizenship as "a protective personal status which gives expression to membership in the EU, as a polity committed to upholding distinctive values and rights in society, also in its online dimension" (ILIOPOULOU-PENOT, 2022, P. 975). This approach should lead to adopting a Bill of Digital Rights (GAK, 2021). Other EU member states have already gone this path. Spain is one of the first countries to adopt a Digital Rights Charter, placing Spain at the core of EU countries that have embraced such initiatives. It is not a binding legal document, but it puts forward the most important rights in the digital age (SANTIAGOTORO, 2021).

There are several arguments why the EU needs to adopt an EU Digital Rights Charter. First, the Charter of Fundamental Rights was adopted more than 20 years ago when we were not living in a digital age. Second,

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[1] According to the calendar announced on the European Commission website, the first annual report was to be published in June 2023. At the moment of writing the paper, the Report was not available online.

the EU has adopted consistent secondary legislation to protect users in cyberspace. Still, it needs a more coherent and coordinated approach, and the EU Charter would serve such a purpose. This argument is also supported by the data uncovered in the Special Eurobarometer on Digital Rights and Principles. Only 48 % of EU citizens believe that the EU protects well their digital rights, and 82% of citizens endorse the emergence of a common EU vision of digital rights and principles (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2021B, PP. 21-26).

It must go beyond a mere declaration of principles and update EU rights in a digital era (BENIFEI ET AL., 2022). It was expected for the Declaration to be adopted as an EU Charter, but it has no mandatory role. However, it serves as a normative model at the global level for the protection of citizen rights in a digital age (MIAI).

In conclusion, the EU has gradually adapted to the changes in the digital space and has aimed to become a global digital power by setting rules and standards that should protect its values and citizens, but at the same time, is determined to promote its human rights approach outside the EU, by cooperation with other states such as Japan or South Korea, or with its transatlantic partner, the US, but also to engage in multilateral institutional settings to promote its human-centred digital agenda. It stands out as a third model, with the laissez-faire approach of the US or the more authoritarian approach of China to digital policy (OBENDIEK, 2021, P. 5).

The following sections will discuss the digital rights prioritised by the European Union based on the Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles and interconnected legislation using the model proposed by B. Jaeger.

Civil rights -the right to privacy

Privacy is one of the most discussed human rights issues connected to digital technologies (CUSTERS, 2022, P.3). The European Union has adopted legislation in the area of privacy, starting with the adoption of the Directive on Data Protection in 1995 in the area of telecommunications following the completion of the Single Market. It has since constantly updated the legal framework. The right to privacy has been recognised as a fundamental right under art. 7 and 8 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. However, due to the growing changes and challenges in the digital space, the EU initiated a

reform of the data protection framework and, in 2016, adopted the most ambitious data protection regime in the world through the GDPR and has confirmed its identity as a "regulatory champion" (OBENDIEK, 2021, P. 6).

Although the European Commission has initiated and adopted several legislative packages aimed at protecting the right to privacy of the EU citizens, it has not always been loyal to this approach, and this has been visible, especially in the negotiations of the transatlantic agreements on data transfers, where it has favoured the issue of security over human rights. As such, the Court of Justice of the European Union has invalidated several agreements, such as the Safe Harbour Act (2015)[2] or EU-US Privacy Shield (2020), as they were in violation of privacy laws and the GDPR framework adopted by the European Union and allowed the transfer of data to entities in the US. The annulment of these frameworks has led to the renegotiation of a new EU-US data framework, which both parties announced, reaching an agreement in March 2022. In July 2023, the European Commission published its adequacy decision[3] on the new EU-US Data Framework that data can travel freely from the EU to companies in the US (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2023C). The Biden Administration has addressed the objections raised by the CJEU in its Schrem II ruling by introducing new safeguards and ensuring that US intelligence agencies have access to data "only to the extent that is necessary and proportionate" (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2023C). Thus, the CJEU proved to be a decisive institution in protecting the right to privacy of EU citizens by nullifying several cross-border data agreements and ensuring

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[2] The Safe Harbour Act (2000) and the EU-US Privacy Shield (2016) are two EU-US data transatlantic commercial data agreements. In 2015, an Austrian Privacy Advocate, Max Schrems, filed a complaint with Facebook requesting not to transfer its data to the US due to privacy concerns. He felt that due to the Snowden revelations, its right to privacy was not sufficiently protected due to US surveillance programs. (Further details in MONTELENONE & PUCCIO, 2015). The CJEU invalidated the Safe Harbour Act on the Schrems I ruling. The EU-US Privacy Shield was a substitute for the nullified Safe Harbour Act. However, the CJEU considered that the US does not provide an adequate level of protection as the GDPR and CFR and invalidated the agreement in 2020 under the Schrems II ruling (MILDEBRATH, 2020).

[3] An adequacy decision is a formal decision adopted by the European Commission that a non-EU country offers an adequate level of data protection, similar to EU standards. Currently, there are 15 countries covered by the adequacy decision. More on adequacy decisions can be found in (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2023A).

that the US complies with data privacy legislation. The EU has been able to lead to changes also in US domestic legislation, as the Biden Administration has signed the Executive Order "Enhancing Safeguards for United States Signals Intelligence Activities", which implements into US law the EU-US Agreement (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2023C). Thus, the CJEU has created, step by step, a "coherent set of rights and guarantees for the individual acting in cyberspace" (ILIOPOULOU-PENOT, 2022, P. 974) and has been able to act as a game changer.

Another instance where the tension between surveillance and fundamental rights was evident was represented by the EU-US Passenger Name Records (PNR) negotiations with the US or Canada. The role played by the European Parliament was fundamental, calling out these agreements and taking them to the Court of Justice. In the case of the EU-Canada PNR Agreement, it sought the CJEU's opinion before giving its consent, which judged in 2017 that the airline data transfer agreement violates fundamental rights such as the right to privacy. Negotiations between the EU and Canada striking a new deal started in 2018 but have yet to be finalised. A final example that highlights the commitment of the European Parliament to protecting the fundamental right to privacy of EU citizens is also reflected in the negotiations of the EU PNR directive[4]. The directive was adopted in 2016 after five years of negotiations. The European Parliament submitted amendments related to the data retention period. The final version of the agreement included that data would be stored for five years but de-personalised after a period of six months instead of two years as proposed by the EU Council (EPSR, 2019). This shows that the European Parliament has the right to privacy and data protection written in its institutional DNA, given that it was the first EU institution in the history of the EU integration process to adopt in 1975 a Resolution on the rights of individuals to data protection (MILDEBRATH, 2023, P. 2).

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[4] *DIRECTIVE (EU) 2016/681 on the use of passenger name record (PNR) data for the prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of terrorist offences and serious crime* is a piece of legislation that regulates the transfer of personal data from air carriers to law enforcement authorities for flights that originate or land in the EU from third countries. The Directive aims to harmonise member states' legal framework. More on the EU PNR in (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 2022).

Given the importance of data privacy right, it is no surprise that it has been included in the Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles. The document under "Chapter V: Safety, security and empowerment" states:

> "Everyone has the right to privacy and to the protection of their personal data. The latter right includes the control by individuals on how their personal data are used and with whom they are shared". (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2022B)

Importance is particularly given to the protection of children in the digital environment. It is not the first time the EU has recognised the need to protect children's data, as it was addressed before under the GDPR framework. However, this issue occupies a central place in the Declaration of Digital Rights and Principles, under Chapter V: Safety, security and empowerment, section *Protection and empowerment of children and young people in the digital environment.*

The commitment of the European Commission concerning children's data protection can also be assessed following how it has integrated the issue of children's data privacy into secondary legislation. A cornerstone was the adoption of the Digital Service Act (DSA), which represents the world's most ambitious and without-precedent regulation of the digital space, following a human-centric approach. With its entry into force in November 2022, very large online platforms and search engines must comply with the new legislation by four months after the European Commission has finished the designation process of these platforms[5]. Part of the new obligations under the DSA Regulation is the protection of minors by banning targeted advertising of children by profiling them according to ethnicity, political views or sexual orientation criteria (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2023I) The platforms will have to "put in place measures to ensure high level of privacy, safety and security for minors", leading to new rights for EU users (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2023I).

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[5] The European Commission has designated in April 2022 17 very large online platforms and 2 very large search engines. The DSA applies to platforms with at least 45 million monthly active users. The list can be consulted at (European Commission, 2023f).

POLITICAL RIGHTS – THE ISSUE
OF ALGORITHMIC SYSTEMS

The issue of algorithmic systems and human rights is one of the most debated issues by states, international organisations or NGOs committed to protecting human rights in cyberspace. For example, The Council of Europe (CoE) highlights the impact algorithmic systems have on specific sectors but also its impact on society in general, from the right to privacy and freedom of expression or the right to life (Council of Europe, 2023). As a result, it has proposed a Recommendation on the Human Rights Impacts on Algorithmic Systems. The CoE proposed a set of guidelines from data management to accountability and transparency.

The European Union has also focused extensively on the issue of artificial intelligence and algorithmic systems. The European Commission proposed its first regulation on artificial intelligence (AI Act) in 2021. In June 2023, the Parliament made public its negotiating position on AI. It favours an AI in line with human rights and values and proposes the inclusion of the right of citizens to file complaints on AI systems. The final stage will involve the negotiations in the EU Council, which are expected to be finalised by the end of the year.

Under *Chapter Three, Freedom of Choice*, the declaration addresses the issue of algorithmic systems and their impact on fundamental rights:

> "ensuring that algorithmic systems are based on adequate datasets to avoid discrimination and enable human supervision of all outcomes affecting people's safety and fundamental rights". (European Commission, 2022b)

To respond to the challenges raised by algorithmic systems, the European Commission has created the European Centre for Algorithmic Transparency (ECAT), which will be "one of the first entities in the world to look into the emerging field of algorithmic transparency in such a comprehensive way" (European Commission, 2022a). The Centre's role is linked to the DSA which introduces new transparency obligations regarding algorithmic decision-making for very large platforms. For example, companies such as Google or Meta must explain how they use algorithms and target users with advertising (Vincent, 2022). However, Martin Gak argues that

the EU needs to go beyond calling for transparency by building technical strategies and imposing strict parameters on non-EU companies operating on European soil (GAK, 2021). With the emergence of the ECAT, the EU is on the road to developing such strategies. The ECAT is also responsible for practical methodologies for transparent and accountable algorithmic approaches.

Discrimination and algorithmic systems also deserve attention, as big tech companies have experimented with AI software in hiring practices. For example, in 2015, Amazon developed an AI program for candidate recruitment, which proved unsuccessful as it was more biased towards women and did not always recommend the most competent applicants (DASTIN, 2018). The e-commerce platform is not the only company experimenting with AI. Also, LinkedIn, the professional network owned by Microsoft, uses AI for recruiting. It allows employers to see the relevant postings. Still, there are also concerns about the ethical implication of AI that it might not select diverse candidates, women, people of colour or non-native English speakers (MAGE, 2021). As such, the EU Commission's regulatory framework on AI, which follows a risk-based approach, includes the issue of employment and management of workers under the category of high risks.

Despite AI's advantages, such as its use in healthcare, education, more affordable products and services, etc., the EU is firm in responding to the risks it brings to its citizens. As Margrethe Vestager, EU Commissioner for A Europe Fit for the Digital Age, puts it: "[i]f it's a bank using it to decide whether I can get a mortgage or not, or if it's social services on your municipality, then you want to make sure that you are not being discriminated [against] because of your gender or your colour or your postal code." (KLEINMAN ET AL., 2023).

PARTICIPATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Chapter IV, Participation in the Digital Public Space of the Declaration, discusses the extension of fundamental rights such as the freedom of expression or freedom of assembly or association in the digital space. Particular attention is also given to how very large online platforms should support

democratic participation by responding to risks such as disinformation, misinformation, or discrimination in the digital space.

> "Everyone has the right to freedom of expression and information, as well as freedom of assembly and of association in the digital environment." (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2022B)

Recognising the need to protect and take measures to stimulate the participation of citizens in the digital environment is fundamental for enforcing digital citizenship, especially as most accounts of digital citizenship point to the capacity to participate online. Buente offers a more comprehensive explanation: "Digital citizenship represents the capacity to participate in society online through frequent Internet use leading to economic, civic, and political outcomes" (BUENTE, 2015, P. 145).

The EU has been quite active in protecting citizens' participation in cyberspace. As the Snowden revelations boosted privacy advocates to claim their rights in the digital space, the Cambridge Analytica Facebook scandal represented an impetus for EU institutions to act. One example in this direction is the adoption in 2018 of the Voluntary Code of Practice on Disinformation signed by major online platforms such as Meta, Google, and Twitter. The Code sets a "wide range of commitments, from transparency in political advertising to the closure of fake accounts and demonetisation of purveyors of disinformation"(EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2018). However, in May 2023, Twitter announced that it would no longer implement the EU Code on Disinformation, which prompted a harsh response from the European Commissioner Vera Jourova, "that Twitter has chosen a hard way to comply with our digital laws". Russia's disinformation is dangerous, and it is irresponsible to leave EU's anti-disinformation Code." (JOUROVÁ, 2023). This move by Twitter confirms the criticism that the EU should rest more on binding legislation to enforce rules. However, with the application of the DSA scheduled for February 2024, online platforms will have to take measures against disinformation or illegal interference with the process of elections; otherwise, they risk fines of up to 6% of their annual turnover (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2023I). The new piece of legislation also empowers the EU digital citizens, equipping them with new rights to notify illegal content and file complaints to online platforms. This will prove to be a salient

right, especially with the 2024 European Parliament elections closing and EU citizens taking the general or presidential elections in countries such as Austria, Romania, or Lithuania.

SOCIAL RIGHTS – THE ISSUE OF DIGITAL PUBLIC SERVICES – THE RIGHT TO A DIGITAL IDENTITY

The right to digital identity is a new right not covered before by the European Union. Recognised in the Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade, this new right is defined as:

> "ensuring that people living in the EU are offered the possibility to use an accessible, voluntary, secure and trusted digital identity that gives access to a broad range of online services." (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2022B)

In 2020, the European Commission announced that it would propose a secure European e-identity available to EU citizens when using public and private services, allowing citizens to control what data is shared and how it is used (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2023E). The initiative to create a digital identity wallet that "allows citizens to identify themselves, store and manage identity data and official documents in electronic format" by using a smartphone app (European Commission, 2023B) has its legal basis in the Digital Single Market and the 2030 Digital Decade Programme. To make this project a reality by 2030, the EU has proposed a Regulation for a European Digital identity – amending Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 – which currently has reached the political agreement of the European Parliament and EU Council (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2023D). According to the proposed regulation, member states will have to offer their citizens digital identity wallets so that at least 80% of EU citizens can use a Digital ID scheme to access public services by 2030 (European Commission, 2021A, P.3).

Also, the EU uses financial instruments to make this ambitious project a reality by allocating 46 million from the Digital Europe Programme (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2023G). Although creating a digital identity wallet is a "revolutionary programme", as underlined by European Commissioner Thiery Breton, some technologically advanced states have already introduced such systems. For example, Estonia has had digital ID cards for more

than twenty years, since 2002, while Poland introduced the digital wallet in 2023. Finland is also on the same route as Poland, having announced in 2022 that it will develop a digital wallet in line with EU regulations (PHILLIPS, 2022).

This initiative shows that digital rights are born out of emerging realities, and the EU has tried to be at the forefront by adopting measures to support citizens' rights. Especially as there are not many countries in the world which have adopted e-ID schemes; however, countries such as the US, Australia or Asian countries are in the process of creating such schemes, with Australia announcing the intention to step up towards digital citizenship, recognising the impact of digital identity on the citizen (SULLIVAN, 2016, PP. 474–475).

The set-up of a digital identity contributes to enhancing the technological sovereignty of the EU. EU digital sovereignty can be defined as digital leadership and the ability to "act independently in the digital space" (MADIEGA, 2020). In the 2020 State of the Union address, EU Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen underlined the need for the EU to achieve digital sovereignty. Amongst others, she emphasised the need for a secure digital identity (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2021A).

SOCIAL RIGHTS – THE RIGHT TO DIGITAL EDUCATION

Under the Principle-Solidarity and Inclusion of the Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles, the European Union includes the right to digital education. It extends the fundamental right to education in the digital sphere. The Declaration states:

> "Everyone has the right to education, training and lifelong learning and should be able to acquire all basic and advanced digital skills.". (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2022B)

This is one of the most important principles central to overcoming the digital divide and supporting citizen participation in a digital environment. In this direction, the right to digital education rests on other policy initiatives, such as the Digital Education Plan for 2021-2027, which aims to support the adjustment of the EU member states educational systems to the digital age.

This was also recognised in the consultation on digital rights and principles initiated by the European Union, where more than 85% of the respondents stated that it is an important issue (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2021C). The right to digital education is central for the EU to reach 2030 targets of at least 80% of EU citizens acquiring basic digital skills as assumed through the Digital Compass (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2023H). This is not a simple mission since the EU does not have strong competencies in education, using non-legally binding legislation, and it needs to rely on the member states to achieve progress in this area. Also, the digital skills gap among member states is an issue that persists, even if the pandemic has been a push for change. According to the 2022 Digital Economy and Society Index report, only 54% of European citizens between 16 and 74 years old have basic skills (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2022D, P.6). The report also highlights the differences between the citizens of more advanced countries such as Finland or the Netherlands (80%) and those from countries such as Romania and Bulgaria, which score last (40%), And finally, the Covid-19 pandemic has revealed more than ever the negative impact of digitalisation. A new digital divide emerged between well-connected urban and rural areas, and the EU has exposed a new "digital poverty". The EU has called for a digital transformation where no one is left behind, and digital education is fundamental.

OTHER RIGHTS

Internet access as a universal right

The EU recognised the right to Internet access in the Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade. Although not framed as a universal human right, as called by the European Parliament, which has been a strong advocate for the recognition of internet access as a universal fundamental right, the document states:

> "ensuring access to high-quality connectivity, with available Internet access, for everyone wherever in the EU, including for those with low income." (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2022B)

This understanding of the right to internet access as a critical right shows the differences between the view of the European Parliament, which,

under the Presidency of the late Francisco Sassoli, called for the recognition of internet access as a universal human right. At the same time, the Von der Leyen Commission avoided such language (MILDEBRATH, 2021, P. 4).

However, this is not the only legally non-binding document that discusses internet access as a citizen's right but also the European Piller of Social Rights covers, under Principle 20, the right to the internet as a basic service. The problem with this soft law legislation is, as pointed out by the European Parliament, that it "does not provide the individual with any justifiable rights" (MILDEBRATH, 2021, P. 47). And this is a problematic issue, as shown in the 2022 Digital Index Report. Although Internet access has improved extensively in the last decade, with 92% of households connected to the Internet, the urban-rural digital divide persists. The lack of internet access will limit marginalised or vulnerable groups' ability to access public services such as educational programs, apply for jobs or participate as digital citizens in democratic life. This is also complicated further by the fact that only 54% of EU citizens have basic digital skills (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2022C, PP. 5-6); thus, access to the internet needs to be supplemented by policies which will capacitate the digital skills of EU citizens.

The right to a digital legacy

The right to a digital legacy is connected to the right to privacy in the Declaration of Digital Rights and Principles. It stresses the right of digital users to decide what happens with their digital trail after their death. The introduction of the right to a digital legacy was a necessary step, as the GDPR does not apply to the data of defunct people, or at least it does not explicitly tackle this issue (DIGWATCH, 2023)**.** The right to digital legacy is also connected to another aspect of the right to privacy, such as the right to erasure recognised under the GDPR legislation. According to research covering the timeframe 2014-2019, more than 8000 requests have been filed on behalf of a deceased person for de-listing URLs from the Google search engine (BERTRAM ET AL., 2019, P. 7). The following section will discuss more on the right to be forgotten.

WHAT RIGHTS HAVE BEEN LEFT OUT?

The right to be forgotten

The right to be forgotten or the right to de-list, although not acknowledged in the Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles, stemmed from the case law of the European Court of Justice in 2014. It was later covered by the GDPR Regulation, which includes the right to erasure and allows individuals to request platforms for the removal of personal data (WOLFORD, 2018). This can be solicited under certain conditions: the data is outdated, does not serve the purpose for which it was collected, the subject can withdraw its consent, or the storage period has expired (BERNAL, 2014, P. 62). This does not mean that data is deleted, but it empowers people to request the removal of information from indexing in major search engines, making it less visible (MASSÉ, 2019).

However, pundits of digital rights claim that authorities must go beyond the right to erasure, and this right should be reframed as the "*right to start over with a clean slate*"**,** as data controllers do not always comply with requests from data subjects (CUSTERS, 2022, P. 10). This has a firm foundation if we examine the landmark *Google Spain⁶* CJEU case. The CJEU ruled that Google needs to apply the right to be forgotten to all domain names from the EU (MASSÉ, 2019). Following a request from the French Data Protection Authority in 2015 that Google should apply the right to be forgotten globally, Google turned to the CJEU, which, under a new ruling from 2019, clarified that the right to be forgotten should be restricted only to EU territory (GOOGLE INC. V CNIL, 2019).

A potential explanation for non-inclusion in the Declaration is that the right to be forgotten, which is part of the fundamental right, such as the right to data privacy, conflicts with other fundamental rights, such as the right to information or expression, therefore requiring careful balancing.

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6 In 2010, a Spanish citizen launched a complaint against Google at the Spanish Data Protection Authority against a Spanish newspaper and Google. His action concerned that when listing his name in the Google Search engine, two newspaper articles would result covering an old story on his bankruptcy and house confiscation. The requester deemed that the information was no longer relevant. In 2014, the CJEU ruled that the plaintiff has the right to erase his data from Google, leading to new rights, such as the right to be forgotten.

Also, as Faisal argues, the interpretation given by the CJEU is that the right to erasure is not exclusive, and it will desist if not balanced with other rights, such as the right to free expression (FAISAL, 2021, P. 3). Lastly, as only some countries outside the European area recognise the right to be forgotten, there is a need for more clarification on the balancing component. There is an opportunity for the EU to act as a norm setter on digital rights at the global level, especially as a significant number of European users have claimed the right to erasure; almost 1.500.0000 requesters since the CJEU Google Spain ruling in 2014, according to the Google Transparency Report (GOOGLE, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The EU aims to become a digital power that translates as accomplishing digital sovereignty and using its digital leadership to shape the global stage regarding cyberspace. To reach this goal, the EU had to build its policy on protecting citizens' rights in the digital space. The EU has innovated and adopted legislation building on its regulatory capacity but also more experimental modes of governance.

Digital rights emerged from the input of institutional actors such as the EU Commission, which, under Von der Leyen's Leadership, has defined digital policy as a central priority. This objective has led to the adoption of several legislative pieces that have regulated the big tech and placed user rights at the core, following a human rights approach. Crucial was also the role played by the European Parliament, which has fought to protect citizens' right to privacy in several instances. It has questioned the transatlantic agreements on data transfer and referred them to the Court of Justice of the European Union. The CJEU has annulled the agreements, which have compelled the European Commission to renegotiate the agreements with the US by protecting the right to privacy for EU citizens. Also, as a crucial part of the digital movement, human rights NGOs have turned to the CJEU, which has responded positively, and the resulting jurisprudence has led to the reinforcement of digital rights.

The materialisation of digital rights at the EU level will lead to the consolidation of digital citizenship, as, at this point, there are only traces of embryonic digital citizenship. The EU's approach to digital citizenship ex-

tends the rights that apply offline in the digital space. This perspective culminated with the adoption of the Declaration of Digital Rights and Principles as an important step in this direction because it clarifies the EU's vision of digital rights. It is a coherent manifesto of the EU's position on users' rights in the digital world. The Interinstitutional Declaration reiterates the importance of fundamental rights such as privacy. Still, it stretches the concept of privacy by adding new dimensions, such as the right to digital legacy. It also expands other fundamental rights in the online environment, such as the right to digital education. It also emphasises how new technological advancements, such as AI and algorithmic systems, should not compromise the fundamental rights of EU citizens. This will lead to the emergence of new rights for digital citizens, such as the right to file complaints against providers of AI guaranteed under the Artificial Intelligence Act. At the same time, it introduces new rights, such as the right to a digital identity or internet access, even if the latter is not framed as a universal human right. The undertaking to protect users' rights in the digital sphere has also implied the emergence of new structures, such as the European Centre for Algorithmic Transparency (ECAT) or new financial instruments, such as the Digital Europe Programme.

However, the EU needs to go further and adopt a Charter of Digital Rights, as was the case of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, adopted in 2000. As a statement of beliefs, the Declaration is non-binding and represents a transitional stage that will be instrumental in adopting the future EU Bill of Digital Rights. As happened with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which required almost ten years to become legally binding with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, the genesis of a Charter of Digital Rights requires more time. For this to become a reality, citizens must play a leading role and claim their rights in the digital arena, which has already become more pronounced with the adoption of the GDPR, with more and more citizens launching complaints to the national data protection agencies and some of the cases reaching the CJEU, such as the landmark cases Schrems I and Schrems II rulings which have invalidated two transatlantic agreement (Safe Harbour Act and EU-US Privacy Shield) or the Google Spain case. At the same time, the response of online platforms to EU norms and values is

also a crucial factor that will test the EU's enforcement capacity and its ability to protect digital rights and consolidate EU digital citizenship.

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Stateless persons
and third-country nationals shaping
EU's citizenship policies

Paul POPA

ABSTRACT: European citizenship is a dynamic concept, to which political contexts determine new interpretations regarding the applicability of regulations of EU. Over time, it was noticed that an important role in defining the dimension of European citizenship is that of stateless persons and third-country nationals, who through the judicial mechanisms, especially of the European Court of Justice (ECJ), bring new interpretations and changes regarding European citizenship.

The importance of these mechanisms is worth noting, as they accept major changes that greatly complete the definition given by the Maastricht Treaty to European citizenship. A main concern must be how the role that stateless and third-country nationals play in the EU citizenship discourse is defined and how the EU might address the challenges it faces in accessing citizenship. Eventually, their role should be to change the perspectives on how we understand and grant European citizenship. The national perspectives could become obsolete, since EU is a place for all of those who contribute to its development.

Keywords: stateless individuals, third-country nationals, European citizenship, EU policies

DO WE NEED A DE-EUROPEANISATION
OF EU CITIZENSHIP?

The last decades have brought new challenges to the European Union on its policies regarding the rights of stateless persons and third-country nationals. If the Arab Spring, the Syrian war and more recently the conflict in Ukraine, led some states to adopt an open policy towards non-EU citizens, one of the

major events of recent years, Brexit, has largely focused on rejecting immigration, mainly illegal, and many of the right-wing parties of the Member States gained political capital also through a speech brought against people who do not have the right to reside on the territory of the European Union. The debate is all the more complex as it has an impact both from a political or cultural point of view, but especially from a legal or economic perspective, challenging the core of EU itself.

The concept of European citizenship established by the Treaty of Maastricht was grounded, one could even say irreversibly for this form of organization of the EU, as a reference in the interpretation of the rights and obligations of the citizens of the Member States. *European citizenship* is understood to be the ideal mechanism for the *constitutionalization* of the European Union, which is why it has experienced numerous transformations and developments, both through political, and especially, judicial mechanisms. Several articles in the TFEU (Treaty on the Functioning of European Union) emphasize the need to protect the citizens of the Member States and strengthen their relationship with the Union institutions. European citizenship constantly suffers from numerous transformations, being strongly influenced by legal interpretation of some political, cultural, and social or even economic contextual challenges. Thus, Article 18 of the TFEU captures non-discrimination based on nationality and the interpretations offered by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) (COWAN V. TRÈSOR PUBLIC, 1987), which in many cases, extend the scope of Union law. (EIJKEN, 2015, P. 65).

Although, the application of Article 18 of the TFEU has become less and less contestable, generating a clear applicability regarding the nationals of the member states, one of the main sources of debate is the situation of stateless persons and third country nationals. Many times, the activism and the political agenda of such categories manages to determine changes regarding European policies and legislation on the acquisition and development of European citizenship. But the most important changes are related to the way in which these categories of persons challenge the European jurisprudence to identify new solutions for the cases they are involved, and which determine new perspectives for the interpretation of citizen rights as they are protected by the European institutions.

In this regard, the main concern of this article is to evaluate how this category of stateless persons and third country nationals can derive their rights from European citizenship based on the principles of proportionality, economic welfare, social security, etc. In this sense, the analysis will consider the presentation of the main regulations and jurisprudence associated with this subject, especially the legal interpretations of EU's principles and freedoms. And after that, further going, on how stateless persons and third-country nationals, through these legal requests, play in the discourse surrounding EU citizenship, and how might the EU address the challenges they face in accessing citizenship.

Mainly, the analysis tries to capture the role that the ECJ, based on the legal interpretations brought before it, has shaped so far, the discourse regarding these categories of people and the long-term effects of the current regulations and policies on citizenship. In this sense, the research question: *What role do stateless persons and third-country nationals play in the discourse surrounding EU citizenship, and how might the EU address the challenges they face in accessing citizenship?* emphasize the continuous struggle and development of the agenda. The main objective of this article is to highlight the growing role of stateless persons and third-country nationals in defining European citizenship. The cases that attract the competence of the European Court of Justice are in a position to accelerate mechanisms that the European Union faces in consolidating European citizenship in relation to non-citizen residents.

EU AGENDA AND LEGAL BACKGROUND ON STATELESS PERSONS AND THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS

For a better understanding of the present analysis, the terminologies and definitions that we must consider when we refer to stateless persons and third-country nationals must be mentioned. According to art. 1(1) of the *Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons* (1954) and the *Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness* (1964) a stateless person is defined as 'a person who is not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law' (UN, CRSSP, 1954). In determining the statelessness of a person, each country will apply its national law for individual cases (UNHCR, 2014). Regarding

third-country national (TCN), in the legislation assumed by UNHCR, is a person who is *stranded in a country that is not his or her own*. This may occur as a result of conflict or natural disaster, or deportation from another state (UNHCR, 2020). Numerous other international legislations establish conditions and criteria for the protection of stateless persons (UNHCR, 2020) and third-country citizens (UNHCR, 2012) for which the European Union (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2008) has its own mechanisms (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2015) regarding the two categories of persons, as presented below.

Concerning *stateless individuals*, the European Commission admits that there is no unitary procedure found within the member states. The procedures are differentiated, determined in particular by the national legislation, in which administrative procedures are mixed together with *ad hoc* procedures, sometimes adding judicial procedures, depending on whether there is residency in the host state. In 2015, the conclusions of the European Council have called for a unifying policy regarding statelessness in EU. Based on these conclusions, the European Migration Network (EMN) was called to ensure a platform of statelessness entered into force in 2016 (COUNCIL EU, 2015).

In a 2016 statement by Migration and Home Affairs, it is emphasized that the differentiated procedures are determined by the fact that not all EU member states have agreed to become members of the conventions (from 1954 and 1961) on stateless persons, or have only ratified one of the two (EMN, 2016). For this reason, the different procedures inevitably determine diverse legal effects, since statelessness is understood differently, and the residence permit can attract dissimilar policies. In this sense, in most cases an interpretation of the courts is needed, through which even the ECJ itself is called upon to clarify some gaps in interpretation. Later in 2017, EMN Platform on Statelessness, in collaboration with UNHCR and ENS (European Network of Statelessness) in a Conference called "*Addressing Statelessness in the European Union: One year on from the adoption of European Council Conclusions*"(EMN, 2017), underlined that statelessness in EU should be eradicated, to help states deal with vulnerable cases, and since there isn't a common procedure for states on establishing statelessness, there should definitely be a different procedure than the procedure for asylum. In this sense, ENS assumed the role

in organizing the activity of NGOs in order to develop a common approach and project the cost for the procedures (ENS, 2017)

However, regarding *third-country nationals*, EU is more focused on developing a coherent agenda based on regulations that are related to the policies on migration (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2008). In a broader term, a *third-country national is considered a non-EU national or third country national to be found illegally present*. Directive 2003/109/EC (the Long-term Residents Directive, or LTRD) is establishing the conditions for non-EU citizen (third-country nationals) to acquire EU long-term resident status and have a secure residence status after at least 5 years living in an EU Member State. The Directive also grants protection in different areas and rights similar to citizen in terms of work, social security, access to goods and services, to reside and have free movement within the borders of EU as follows and have a secure residence (Directive 2003/109/EC). In 2011, the LTRD was amended to cover third-country nationals, "such as refugees or the stateless, to ensure and develop the international protection" (EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, 2022).

Also, Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals, underline numerous criteria and conditions for identification, selection, integration, and expulsion of this category (Directive 2008/115/EC). Along these, there are other regulations stipulated in different migration and border control (e.g., Schengen Boarders Code) (Regulation EU2016/ 399) that define a third country-national, mainly in opposition to the state member nationals, being still broader than the policies on stateless persons because of the multi-situation and special regulations applied to third-country nationals.

In this sense, EU has adopted in 2008 its strategy and agenda for integration of third-country nationals with recommendations for the member states to use European funds in order to establish educational policies, labour market accession, living conditions and housing (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2011). This agenda for integration, was followed by action plans in 2016 and 2021-2027 in which topics from the agenda such as education, healthcare access, social inclusion etc., were developed in order to achieve a more integrated policy (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2020). The main concern

was to link their statute to a more human rights-oriented agenda, focusing on the aspects underlined in international and EU treaties of individual rights. Thus, policies revealed in Convention on International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (UNHCR, 1966), or European Convention on Human Rights (COUNCIL OF EUROPE, 1953) and later European Charter of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2009), played an important role in defining the substantial content of the third-country national rights and freedoms in EU.

Although, third-country nationals benefit a wider legislation, and probably followed by an approachable strategy, in many situations only endorses the complex situations that challenge the EU legal framework. A main problem, as identified above when analysing the category of stateless persons, is the multitude of situations that can occur. In this regard, ECJ was called to issue numerous interpretations of the TFEU articles, in order to adjust the EU and member states policies to fundamental human rights development agenda. From this perspective, ECJ has played a major role in shaping the rights and freedoms on stateless persons and third-country nationals, and also redefining constantly the limits of European citizenship.

Non-EU citizen have challenged ECJ to frame clearly *what* or *how* some of the provisions of article 18 TFEU are also applied to them based on the similitudes with EU-nationals. In the case Athanasios Vatsouras (C-22/08) and Josif Koupatantze (C-23/08) v Arbeitsgemeinschaft (ARGE) Nürnberg 900, 2008 p. 52., the parties addressed the question to ECJ to establish if the article 18 of the TFEU could be applicable to third country nationals based on social security policies. In the case, an allowance was granted to jobseekers, that was later withdraw because they did not qualify as workers anymore. The main reason for questioning the application of article 18 of TFEU was based on the fact that the first pillar was managing the visa and migration policies, therefore is under the scope of article 18 of TFEU (EIJKEN, 2015, P. 68). ECJ excluded the possibility of the same treatment between similar situation of two EU-nationals or one EU-national a non-national: "concerns situations coming within the scope of Union law in which a national of one Member State suffers discriminatory treatment in relation to nationals of another Member State solely on the basis of his nationality and *is not intended*

to apply to cases of a possible difference in treatment between nationals of Member States and nationals of non-member countries."

In another case, Stephen Austin Saldanha and MTS Securities Corporation v Hiross Holding AG, 1996, p. 15, the Court suggested more clearly that the article 18 TFEU is not applicable to third-country nationals: the Court stressed "that the mere fact that a national of a Member State is also a national of a non-member country, in which he is resident, does not deprive him of the right, as a national of that Member State, to rely on […] Article 6" [Article 18 TFEU]. The Court was making a clear distinction in the applicability of article 18 of TFEU, establishing a delimitation of criteria when a non-national could invoke it (EIJKEN, 2015, P. 68). Therefore, Article 18 of TFEU is not applied directly and strictly to cases of third-country nationals, having the scope of granting EU-nationals the beneficiaries of citizenship. (EIJKEN, 2015, P. 68).

The scope of union law according to Article 18 of the TFEU (ex-Article 12 TEC) came to be interpreted in a broad sense by the European Court of Justice, which identified numerous situations that determined new applications and interpretations for more protection for the individual. From the right to reside under certain conditions in a member state of the European Union (TROJANI V CENTRE PUBLIC D'AIDE SOCIALE DE BRUXELLES, 2004) to access to services and social security (PUSA V OSUUSPANKKIEN KESKINÄINEN VAKUUTUSYHTIÖ, 2004), these interpretations have been determined by social or even economic contexts, in which the rights of the citizens of the member states have been extended, so that citizenship has known new forms of manifestation. Although, art. 18 of the TFEU is not applicable to stateless persons and third-country nationals, the Court of Justice of the EU retained certain substantial rights for these categories of persons that can be extracted from the application of it. In the following, I will present the major cases that influenced the agenda surrounding the *role stateless persons and third-country nationals play in the discourse surrounding EU citizenship, and how might the EU address the challenges they face in accessing citizenship.*

As can be seen, political mechanisms have been adopted for a better economic, cultural, and social integration of stateless persons and third country nationals. The EU has been very open to improve many of these

policies, which only promote and underline the interdependence created, at least from an economic point of view, between the citizens of EU and "non-citizens". These approaches can easily make the objectives of other papers and research, but in the following I want to highlight the way in which the ECJ, based on the cases and legal situations brought before it, understood to interpret these policies in accordance with the human rights international and EUs legal framework, and how these decisions subsequently influenced changes in EU and member state policies.

PENDING CITIZENS

Although it has proven to be a constantly developing concept, European citizenship is applied mainly, by authorities and political institutions, only to nationals of EU member states, disregarding, in many cases, the impact of non-EU nationals in the everyday EUs societal dynamics. It is well understood that many of the third-country nationals and stateless persons play an important role in defining the economy, politics and even cultural development of member states. Nevertheless, in many cases, they find themselves restricted and limited in their fundamental rights, gaining access to social security status or economic welfare becoming a constant step-by-step struggle. Being called generally "immigrants", national authorities and EU institutions were (and in many cases they still are) analysing their rights in accordance with this status.

Over time, many scholars and activists supported the need for change in defining EU citizenship, not only based on the nationality of a member state but through the conditions of their impact on European society or based on the criteria defining fundamental human rights. *All persons and their rights must be and must remain the core of the European construction* (SWOBODA, 2019, P. 56) - this is one of the strong statements that invite to new perspectives, leading to new approaches, taking into consideration even the right to vote of non-EU citizens. Having the inability of national authorities to evolve from their limited perspectives given by the legal framework of "immigrant status" and also of the EU institutions, always cornered by the diverse inequalities of national legislations, the "immigrants" needed a strong position to support their EU rights.

Since ECJ has established three main objectives regarding EU citizenship: (i) the principle for equality for all Europeans, means having a full citizenship that will grant all fundamental rights wherever the residence; (ii)the principle of free movement and (iii) the democratic principle or *solidarity for all*, as in "no taxation without representation" (PHILIPPE CAYLA & CATRIONA SETH, 2010, PP. 86-90), ECJ seemed to be the right path from "immigrant" to probably "co-citizenship". Taking the rights attributed to EU nationals, ECJ has manage over time to develop a certain jurisprudence that could entail new approaches and considerations for third country nationals and stateless individuals.

In his article, *EU citizenship and the European Court of Justice's 'stone-by-stone' approach*, Koen Lenaerts, the president of ECJ, underline how ECJ's *argumentative discourse is built up progressively* (LENAERTS, 2015, PP. 1-5), and we need to analyse the cases and their effects in a more linear perspective. We could say that there is a snowball model, through which the Court gradually builds, from case to case, a specific policy towards a certain subject. Still, since ECJ does not have another appellate court that can overthrow its decision, the following parts of this article wants to identify what are the means in which the European citizenship discourse is being shaped through ECJ decisions by viewpoints of third country nationals and stateless individuals' own rights.

Major principles taken into consideration by national authorities should remain the core for transiting to full time citizenship. But practically, these principles remain mainly under short and limited applicability. In the following the article will try to analyse how CJE has built gradually some of the derived rights of third country nationals. The primary concern is to see how the rights that follows the European citizenship could interact with the fundamental rights as marked by the EU Charter on Human Rights. The importance of this parallel is to see what are the criteria in which TFEU should be interpreted solely, regardless of the conditions expressed by the Charter, or what are the conditions that allow national courts and authorities to connect citizens' rights to human rights in order to emerge from the status of immigrants to that of a national.

Principles applied to stateless persons and third country nationals

Policies regarding non-nationals of the EU have shaped numerous principles from their perspective and of authorities over time. For example, when a non-national arrives in a country, he or she has perspectives on how will obtain permits, residence and eventually a citizenship. How will economic contributions benefit the social security system, how can they be assured against abusive workplace, benefit from the health and education system, and so forth? These expectations represent the first form of criteria that help analyse the cases and situations of non-citizens. This is known as the *principle of protection of legitimate expectations*. The policies of best choices adopted by political institutions and national authorities create legitimate procedural and substantive expectations for investors, traders or non-nationals. International law recognises this principle in relation to good faith for international cooperation, expanding the scope to fundamental human rights, immigration and citizenship, found in numerous national and international courts, even ECJ (GONÇALO, 2016, PP. 197-199).

Relevant perspectives of this principle are found in *the Rottmann* case, in which an Austrian citizen obtained German citizenship through fraud, which was subsequently revoked. Since the Austrian citizenship was withdrawn by operation of law, he remained stateless. Before ECJ, AG Poiares Maduro underlined that it is not clear in what way the principle of legitimate expectations was not respected in the process of de-naturalisation since the citizenship was obtained through fraud. However, in this case, the question is enquiring about the nature and scope of what "legitimate" means. The first criteria are to apply it to human beings, not just citizens. The second is the bilateral expectations raised in the relation between non-national and authorities: the shared information, the general conditions each of the parts has and even applied in relation to the principle of un-documented immigrants, since they are the less beneficial of expectations (GONÇALO, 2016, PP. 197-199).

In accordance with the principles of protection of legitimate expectations, another *principle, of proportionality*, is representing the non-nationals in their relations with national authorities, and even EU institutions, adjusting power dialogue based on a human rights agenda. The political power of

the authorities should not be unlimited, not restrictive or with an arbitrary treatment against the new arrivals. The principle of proportionality is strongly linked to expectations, not only in relation with authorities but even with the connections established with the host country, becoming a valuable instrument in determining whether a measure of deportation or withdrawal of residence permit or citizenship does not affect the well-being of the already recognised interdependencies between non-nationals and his expectations (GONÇALO, 2016, PP. 197-199).

Starting from the principle of proportionality, the relationship with stateless persons and third-country nationals implies sensitive care both in EU policy and especially on the different agendas of the Member States. The jurisprudence of the ECJ has nuanced some of the necessary approaches based on the articles of the TFEU. The tendencies in the Court decisions were to prevail the European law against national law. Starting with the case *Micheletti*, of an Argentinian national with Italian citizenship, the Court underlined the necessity of the state to take into consideration European law when national citizenship was at stake (GONÇALO, 2016, PP. 143-146). Moreover, having dual citizenship, the applicant should be treated according to the rules of intra-mobility based on his nationality of a Member State. ECJ restricts the Member State to use the "prior residence condition' to trigger the application of the right to intra-EU mobility" (OOSTEROM-STAPLES, 2018, PP. 451-452). The decision was challenging the national perspective on citizenship, consolidating the development of European citizenship.

Also, in the Decision *Tjebbes and others*, the Court retained that the Government of the Kingdom of Netherlands decided not to examine the passport applications submitted. Thus, the applicants had lost the Netherlands nationality by operation of law pursuant to Article 15(1)(c) and Article 16(1)(d) of the Netherlands Law on Nationality. The Dutch Council of State asked ECJ if the principle of proportionality should be applied when the Member State is amending its own nationality law (OOSTEROM-STAPLES, 2018, P. 443). The Court resumed that Article 20 TFEU should be read in the light of Articles 7 and 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, biding that" the authorities and the courts must determine whether the loss of the nationality of the Member State concerned, when it entails the loss of

citizenship of the Union and the rights attaching thereto, has due regard to the principle of proportionality so far as concerns the consequences of that loss for the situation of each person concerned and, if relevant, for that of the members of their family, from the point of view of EU law" (TJEBBES AND OTHERS V MINISTER VAN BUITENLANDSE ZAKEN, 2017)

The principle of proportionality continues in the landmark case for statelessness, *Rottmann* (ROTTMAN V FREISTAAT BAYERN, 2008), in which the ECJ supported the need for a principle of proportionality with regard to the withdrawal and loss of citizenship, so that they are in accordance with EU law, thus preserving the possibility of defending the rights of European citizens by virtue of Article 20 of the TFEU. The German state withdrawing citizenship, and leaving Mr *Rottmann* stateless, determined his inability to benefit himself from Article 17 of the EC Treaty (Maastricht consolidated version) (SHOW, 2010, PP. 8-10). In this sense, the Court has extended its competence to those situations involving the protection of fundamental rights, assuming an active role in controlling the policies of the member states regarding citizenship.

The *Rottmann* case led the Court to remove European citizenship from the dynamics determined or limited by free movement. The ECJ established that citizenship represents a "fundamental status of nationals" (LENAERTS, 2015, PP. 1-5). Furthermore, to give it a reference value, the Court emphasised that European citizenship not only refers to freedom of movement but also covers situations where there is no "physical movement". In this regard, the decision outlines the idea that Mr Rottmann was left without both citizenships due to the lack of procedures (Austrian and German). In this case, Article 20 opposes any actions which strip European citizenship itself of its content. It can be easily seen how the Court constructs a specific interpretation based on the lack of national or cross-national regulations, which will be used later in the Zambrano case, by which Article 20 is opposed, not only to the lack of provisions but to those provisions that restrict citizenship European.

A most recent case, *JY*, confirmed already the vision launched by ECJ in the case of *Rottmann*, establishing the prevailing of European law in cases where nationality is disputed. JY, of Estonian nationality, was assured she would be granted Austrian nationality if she could prove, within two years,

that she had relinquished her citizenship of the Republic of Estonia. Since the Austrian application was also relinquished, she became a stateless person. The Court decided that this situation falls by reason of its nature and its consequences, within the scope of EU law, where that assurance is revoked with the effect of preventing that person from recovering the status of citizen of the Union. The member state should ensure that the permanent loss of the status of citizen of the Union for the person concerned is compatible with the principle of proportionality in light of the consequences it entails for that person's situation (JY V WIENER LANDESREGIERUNG, 2020).

The principle of protection of legitimate expectations and the principle of proportionality are very well found and routed in the jurisprudence of national courts and ECJ. Along these principles, scholars have outlined other principles to consider when analysing non-citizen cases. *Ius Domicilii* is another principle applied in relation to non-nationals, which, contrary to the classical *ius soli* and *ius sanguinis* principles, *jus domicile* is trying to have a derivative process of obtaining citizenship, mainly through so-called naturalisation. Naturalisation is found in many national legislations, and if enhanced and deeply understood, it could further represent the easiest and perfect path to citizenship. Other scholars like Ayelet Shachar, cited by Matias Gonçalo in his book, *Citizenship as a Human Right. The Fundamental Right to a Specific Citizenship* developed new alternatives to the concept that could eventually lead to citizenship. Resuming that *jus domicile* is not broad enough to capture the entire complex interdependencies of non-citizen, his or her expectations and the new dynamics of the host country, the concept of *jus nexi* could project better the complexity of "experiences of social interaction that takes place under the normative umbrella of a given political community" (GONÇALO, 2016, PP. 197-199); thus citizenship should be the result of contemporary interdependencies, not the *status-quo* of former nation-built historical conditions.

Other principles proposed for this process of naturalisation and, eventually, citizenship are linked to adverse possession, in which continuous possession of property can build major legal implications for the non-citizen, which could speed up how we provide citizenship in respect to a predictable legal certainty. To this principle, we can also add the principle of "democratic

paradox", a long-debated condition in which the taxpayers need to be represented accordingly to their financial contribution to the economy. Some of the opinions suggest that according to the framework of international law, these principles should have a statute of *jus cogens* norms, developing binding international legislation for the national courts that could only reflect de realities and effects of the last decades' developing globalisation (GONÇALO, 2016, PP. 197-199).

Derived rights of non-EU nationals

Numerous situations have determined new interpretations regarding the derived rights of third-country citizens. More and more, ECJ found itself in the position to overstep national legislation, mainly in order to create a more unifying legislation for third-country nationals. For example, in the case C-302/18, a Cameroonian national obtained in 2007 a student visa, which needed to be renewed annually, gaining later also a work permit available until January 2017. In December 2016, his application for a long-term permit was rejected due to the lack of evidence of stable, regular and sufficient means of subsistence. In October 2019, the Court ruled that Article 5(1)(a): "LTRD must be interpreted as meaning that 'the concept of *resources* referred to in that provision does not concern solely the *own resources'* of the applicant for long-term resident status but may also cover the resources made available to that applicant by a third party. In this case, the evidence provided by the applicant concerned was considered to be sufficient" (X V. BELGISCHE STAAT, 2018). Thus, the income of a relative, his brother, was satisfactory for ECJ to consider that the applicant, a non-EU national, could benefit from a derived right to reside in a member state. In another case, (P AND S V. COMMISSIE SOCIALE ZEKERHEID BREDA AND COLLEGE VAN BURGEMEESTER EN WETHOUDERS VAN DE GEMEENTE AMSTELVEEN (2013), ECJ appreciated that once a national gained a long-term resident, a non-EU can be subject to civic tests under the penalty of a fine, or even expelled after a stay of 10 years, if he has committed numerous crimes that contravene national legislation (X V. BELGISCHE STAAT, 2018).

However, in the ECJ jurisprudence regarding third-country nationals, two fundamental rights specific to EU citizens stood out: *the right to residence*

and the *right to free movement*. To define the two rights in this context, one of the main interpretations given by the ECJ to the applicability of third-country nationals' derived rights were those closely related to the *citizenship of a family member*, questioning a relation of dependence that could exist. ECJ, in numerous cases, was called to clarify to what extent a relative or a family member can enjoy components and nuances of the rights of citizens of member states. The Court has found cases in which the rights of citizens of member states depend on the possibility of third-country nationals having access to the same types of rights. The ECJ understood that the right of a third country national to reside on the territory of a member state of the Union must not be dependent on the freedom of movement of an EU citizen family member. The matter of dependence is very sensitive since it can consolidate the derived rights of non-national and will be determined in the ECJ cases as follows.

In the *Metock* case, the ECJ insists that a third national, married to a European citizen benefits from the right to free movement, otherwise, without the possibility of family reunion while benefiting from the right to free movement based on the Article 21 of TFEU, even the right of the European citizen could be affected (METOCK AND OTHERS V MINISTER FOR JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND LAW REFORM, 2008). In another case, *Carpenter*, the ECJ held that Ms Carpenter, originally from the Philippines, cannot be expelled, as it would hinder the right of Mr Carpenter, a British citizen, to care and assistance, according to Article 56 TFEU (CARPENTER V SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT, 2000).

In the case *Zambrano*, the European Court is considering a new interpretation of Article 20 of the TFEU, which creates new premises for the right to residence, independent of the right to freedom of movement of third-country nationals. Ruiz Zambrano, a Colombian national, repeatedly requested asylum in Belgium but benefiting from the principle of non-refoulement, he was not deported. A few years later, his children born in Belgium, who were not registered at the Colombian embassy in Belgium to acquire their father's citizenship, were declared Belgian citizens to avoid the situation of them becoming stateless in accordance with Belgian law (ZAMBRANO V. OFFICE NATIONAL DE L'EMPLOI, 2009). In his case, the ECJ decided that the Belgian

state is obliged to grant him the right of residence in Belgium, based on Article 20 TFEU, because his children would be *deprived of European citizenship* if they had to move to Colombia.

Regarding the landmark case of *Zambrano*, it is noted that the way of interpretation offered by the ECJ is to give Article 20 of the TFEU a higher value over the national legislation. Thus, there must be a capacity to capitalize on the content of European citizenship, which ends up being extended to non-EU residents as well. The ECJ cases presented the opinion according to which the benefits of European citizenship can be extended to non-citizens if the impairment of their rights would limit the manifestation of European citizenship of another individual. In this sense, the interpretation offered by the Court is that the provisions of the treaty are not only a "*fifth freedom* which operates under the dynamics of free movement law" (LENAERTS, 2015, PP. 1-5) since the rights established based on citizenship are superior to those established by transnational legislation. The effects of this decision require states to regulate their migration and nationality policies, as Article 20 establishes strong protection of fundamental rights in "those situations that are covered by the concept of *falling within the scope of Union law*" as opposed to national policies.

One can see how the ECJ left some of Case Zambrano's main questions unanswered. First of all, in the absence of a cross-border element, how would Article 20 be applied in accordance with Article 21 of TFEU(i)? Also, what are the circumstances in which a national regulation could deprive the genuine substance of the right(ii) and probably the most critical aspect is that ECJ needs to clarify "whether the fundamental rights are to be taken into consideration for deprivation right" (iii)? Generally, this deprivation should occur only if the right founded upon citizenship is stripped of its privileges, *de jure* and *de facto*, but leaves room for establishing that the proper criteria should be made contextually in future decisions (LENAERTS, 2015, PP. 1-5).

To answer the first questions in which we need to recognize the situations where Articles 20 and 21 from TFEU are applied together, and what are the basic conditions for deprivation of citizenship, ECJ led us to the decision *McCarthy*, in which a dual citizen (Irish and UK), in order to prevent the deportation of her Jamaican husband applied for a residence permit as

an EU citizen with her spouse. Since the Secretary of State rejected it, the ECJ maintained this solution focusing on the fact that she was not deprived of the enjoyment of free movement, and the administrative solution was not impeding her from moving freely across the Member States, as imposed by Article 21 TFUE. ECJ is underlying that the combined reading of article 20 and article 21 of TFEU for a national measure to fall within the scope of the EU needs to have a "deprivation and impeding effect", where impeding effect refers to a cross-border link (LENAERTS, 2015: 1-5). Although ECJ supports that EU law should repair the damages produced by national measures towards a non-EU national that are affecting the substance of the citizenship of an EU national, these are limited by the deprivation and impeding effect of such decisions. If the citizenship of an EU national is not affected, there is no derived right of a non-EU national.

Regarding the second question on how to interpret and apply fundamental rights, a decision of the Court was not to link them, as established in the case *Dereci* (DERECI AND OTHERS V. BUNDESMINISTERIUM FÜR INNERES, 2011). Here, ECJ, in corroboration with Articles 21, 24 and 34 from the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, recognizes situations when a non-EU national's fundamental rights should not be considered when considering deprivation of the rights of an EU citizen. Mr *Dereci*, a Turkish national illegal residing in a member state, could not benefit from the right to further reside in the EU just because the children are Austrian nationals. Contrary to the decision of *Zambrano*, where the deportation of Ruiz Zambrano also meant the deportation of his EU-citizens children, in *Dereci* case, ECJ considered not expanding the scope of EU law because not granting the derivative right to reside in EU territory for Mr *Dereci*, would not deprive the EU citizenship of his children. Thus, an issue of family reunion does not fall under Article 20 TFUE and, eventually, should remain under the scope of national constitutional law or Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) (LENAERTS, 2015: 1-5).

The issue was also resumed in the case of Yemaraga, (KRESHNIK YMERAGA AND OTHERS V MINISTRE DU TRAVAIL, DE L'EMPLOI ET DE L'IMMIGRATION, 2012), in which CJE appreciated furthermore that family reunification is not under the scope of European citizenship substantive rights. The Kosovar

family of Mr Ymeraga, a Luxembourg national, applied for permanent residence permit. Since their application was rejected, the question addressed to the CJE was regarding depriving Mr Ymeraga of his substantive right as an EU citizen. ECJ was once more very clear, underlining that both the Directive 2003/86 or the CRD were not applicable to the family members of an EU citizen(Article 3(3)), recalling the decisions of *Dereci* and *McCarthy* by noting that: 'citizen[who]has never exercised his right of freedom of movement and has always resided, as a Union citizen, in the Member State of which he holds the nationality,[…] is not covered by the concept of 'beneficiary' for the purposes of Article3(1) of [the CRD], so that that Directive is applicable neither to him nor to his family members' (KRESHNIK YMERAGA AND OTHERS V MINISTRE DU TRAVAIL, DE L'EMPLOI ET DE L'IMMIGRATION, 2012, P. 32). So, rights attached to European citizenship would not be deprived if family members are not granted a residence permit since the free movement and residence of Mr Ymerega will not be affected at all (LENAERTS, 2015, P. 7).

Therefore, cases regarding family reunification do not fall under the scope of Article 20 (EIJKEN, 2015, P. 83), and also, the non-existing relation of dependence with other members of the family does not fall either under the scope of Article 20, as seen in case *Iida* (IIDA V. STADT ULM, 2011). Mr Iida, a third-country national legally residing in Germany, seeks to renew his residence permit as a spouse and father of EU citizens living in Austria. Although legally entitled to a renewal residency permit based on Directive 2003/109, he voluntarily withdrew his application for a permit based on family connection. ECJ disqualified his right to residency since (i) it did not affect the rights of his wife and child residing in Austria and (ii) did not affect their right to free movement across other member states of the EU, confirming that EU law should not be interpreted in the relation between national legislation and fundamental human rights in the situation where neither the Treaty provisions on EU citizenship nor Directive 2003/109 nor the CRD are applicable (LENAERTS, 2015: 1-5).

Family reunification based on fundamental rights was expressed better in the case *O. and S. and L.* (O and S v Maahanmuuttovirasto and Maahanmuuttovirasto v L), where it highlights a contextual application of article 20 of TFEU and of The Charter of Fundamental Rights, where citizen-

ship and family reunification "are connected up to a certain extend". The joint cases are about third-country nationals, both having custody of EU-citizens children from their previous marriages with Finnish nationals. In both cases, their second spouses, also third-country nationals, requested a residence permit but refused for not having sufficient means to reside. The questions addressed to CJE was whether the residence permit could be granted based on family reunification with the EU-citizen stepchildren. The Court considered the interest of children to be primary, focusing that Directive 2003/86 needs to be interpreted in the light of The Charter, meaning that it could apply to couples having family members of EU citizens, contrary to what Article 3 of the Directive 2003/86 is regulating. In this situation, the national courts are called to apply one of the two options for granting family reunification: through a limited interpretation of article 20TFEU or based on the Directive in the light of human rights (EIJKEN, 2015, P. 125).

What is interesting in the previous case is that CJE establishes that the relation of dependence could not always be on the grounds of a blood connection. In this sense, the role of both O and M, as second spouses, could be interpreted as sponsors or family caretakers; thus the national courts need to identify the balance between the interest of the child and the family and the appreciation of the national authorities. The case underlines what can be understood by a national measure that could cause a deprivation effect(i) but also when there is secondary legislation, like Directive 2003/86, must be interpreted in the light of the Charter. However, it does not fall under the scope of residence regulations or has a deprivation effect. (LENAERTS, 2015: 1-5).

Moreover, in the case of Ms Chen, a Chinese national, the Court held that, although her own child obtained Irish citizenship by being born in Belfast, she has a derived right to reside on the territory of the United Kingdom as she is a caretaker of a European citizen (CHEN V SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT, 2004). Thus article 20 of TFEU, former article 18 of EC, focuses on the conditions applied to EU nationals, being irrelevant if the situation of the third country national since the lack of derived right to Ms Chen will affect the substantive right of her daughter, EU

national. Nevertheless, more important criteria are also found in the case of Alokpa et al., where ECJ confirms the decision in Chen but also establishes that the rationale found in Zambrano maintains as long is regarding the Member State where the children have their nationality (LENAERTS, 2015, P. 8).

Mrs Alokpa, a national Togolese residing illegally in Luxembourg, was the caretaker of two French nationals. Since ECJ, in the case of Chen, established that 'while Article 21 TFEU and [the CRD] grant a right to reside in the host Member State to a minor child who is a national of another Member State and who satisfies the conditions of Article7(1)(b) of that directive, the same provisions allow a parent who is that minor's primary carer to reside with the child in the host Member State' (LENAERTS, 2015, P. 8).

Having a focus on Article 7(1)(b) from the Directive 2004/38/EC of the EP and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the member states is clearly underlines that these rights are strongly linked to having "sufficient resources for themselves and their family members not to become a burden on the social assistance system of the host Member State during their period of residence and have comprehensive sickness insurance cover in the host Member State" (DIRECTIVE 2004/38/EC).

The problem with Mrs Alokpa (ADZO DOMENYO ALOKPA AND OTHERS V MINISTRE DU TRAVAIL, DE L'EMPLOI ET DE L'IMMIGRATION, 2012) was that she was a carer of the nationals of another State Member than the one she is staying illegally and asking for a residence permit, not fulfilling the conditions from the Directive 2004/38/EC. In this situation, ECJ firmly addressed the solution to other cases before, saying that Mrs Alokpa could benefit from the derived right to residence in France, a country where her children have nationalities, so exclusion from her illegal stay in Luxembourg will not affect the substantive rights of her children, French nationals since no situation implied their expulsion from the EU territory entirely (LENAERTS, 2015, P. 8).

A joint reading of *Zambrano* and *Alokpa* stresses that the derived right to residence of a carer is strongly linked to the nationality of the carer. That means that Article 20 TFEU is not absolutely mandatory for Member States in every situation; authorities could also have a procedure to refuse a grand

residence permit if the carer has the nationality of another Member State. However, when the conditions of Article 7(1)(b) from Directive 2004/38/EC are fulfilled, the Member States are obliged to grant residence permit under the scope of Article 21 of TFEU (LENAERTS, 2015, P. 8).

Although there are national and EU regulations on third-country nationals and stateless persons, most are fundamentally political. The interpretations brought by the CJE strengthen the definition of European citizenship and the rights that arise from it. In this sense, Hannee von Eijken notes that "although third-country nationals do not fall under the personal scope of Articles 20, 21 or 18 TFEU, based upon European citizenship the rights and entitlements of third-country nationals have been extended by the Court", offering a de jure and de facto establishment of European citizenship (EIJKEN, 2015, P. 81).

THE AFTERMATH "DISCOURSE" OF THE ECJ DECISIONS

ECJ, as a citizen activist, has proven to build an efficient developing jurisprudence, projecting the supremacy of EU law over the national legislation but also trying to separate the EU law from fundamental human rights. These mechanisms did not remain without an echo, not only in relation to national and EU political institutions but also in its relation to the national judiciaries. The decisions created a "solid edifice" for the citizenship of the EU where national institutions were forced to change their policies, and national courts resumed their cases following the principles established in the ECJ decisions.

Although view changing cases, *Zambrano* or *Rottmann* manage to change the perspectives on citizenship, having a more inclusive approach on third-country nationals and stateless persons. Both cases represent not only a reference to following ECJ cases but also "released the link between the internal market and EU citizenship, since both the economic link and the cross-border element were untied". Also, we need to consider the perspectives on fundamental rights, where Article 20 of TFUE takes into consideration, in some cases, the dimension of family and relatives (EIJKEN, 2021, PP. 66-67).

After the landmark case of *Zambrano*, the Belgian law on nationality changed, adding more conditions, respectively, the steps taken by parents to the consular and diplomatic authorities of their origin country (WIESBROCK, 2011, PP. 2092-2093). By 2014, the *Zambrano* case was cited 16 times by the High Court and twice by the Supreme Court of Ireland, managing to change the pending cases and adding new ones based on this decision. Until 2013, in Belgium, the case was cited 17 times, with three positive impact decisions, in Germany, 22 citations with four positive impact decisions and in the UK, 27 times with five positive impact decisions (SCHMIDT, 2014, PP. 15-17). A gradual discourse has developed around the decisions of ECJ regarding the rights of third-country citizens and stateless persons that are affecting the way we understand European citizenship.

Taking back the analysis on the research question, what role do stateless persons and third-country nationals play in the discourse surrounding EU citizenship, and how might the EU address the challenges they face in accessing citizenship? I can pinpoint that the main role played by third-country nationals and stateless persons is to change the perspectives on how we understand and grant European citizenship. This means the future mechanism, supported only by a twisted "Ius soli European principle" or EU national origin, would be constantly criticized and eventually become ineffective.

Moreover, scholars have adopted a more open perspective of how European citizenship should be understood, updating new hypothetical questions in regard to the new dynamics. For example, Hannes Swoboda states that the 'necessary evolution of EU citizenship leads to a gradually growing relevance of residence as [the] defining criterion for the exercise of related rights', where Tony Venables adds that 'the right to vote is so fundamental to democracy that any arguments reflecting the difficulties of putting it into effect pale into insignificance', leading to what Roxana Bărbulescu is opposing regarding the *individual* solution of naturalization and the *collective* process of enfranchisement of EU citizens (CAYLA & SETH, 2010, PP. 86-90).

The discourse surrounding citizenship is focused on changing the criteria to determine the conditions for gaining citizenship. In many cases, Member States, and even the EU, fail to develop o new horizon on how we

understand citizenship. Heavily rooted in past conditions, the legal framework portrays an incapacity to adjust EU citizenship to globalization. Since we are debating EU citizenship based on a very reluctant position of Member States, maybe in future EU should consider developing its own instruments for gaining EU citizenship for those who fall in the scope of the principles evaluated before, case in which gaining EU citizenship will not depend on the nationality of Member States, but on the interdependencies created between non-national and EU dynamics.

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The impact of EU citizenship
on the accession and post-accession
process of Central and Eastern European
countries to the European Union

Marcela SĂLĂGEAN

ABSTRACT. This article explores developments in European Union (EU) citizenship perception among communities in Central and Eastern European countries before and after EU accession. Knowing the social and cultural nuances of the former socialist states, along with the level of expectations that people have created for the return to the free world, helps to understand recent manifestations of sympathy or resistance to European integration. Central and Eastern Europe is a space where the diversity of historical experiences and perceptions of otherness challenge how EU citizenship manifests itself as an individual status or a shared identity.

Keywords: EU citizenship, Central and Eastern Europe, national identity, euroscepticism

INTRODUCTION

The accession process of Central and Eastern European (CEE) states to the European Union remains a complex issue, with many sensitive details involving multiple socio-political, economic, and cultural aspects. The European Union, by its very nature, is a unique political and economic project which is based on mutual exchanges of sovereignty between member states for the achievement of common goals (WALLACE, 2001). This process led the states of Central and Eastern Europe to proceed with profound transformations, from restructuring their own economies to adopting a new legal and institutional-legislative framework corresponding to the *acquis communautaire*.

Certainly, the accession process took time and effort for all member states. However, it represented an opportunity, especially for the states of Central and Eastern Europe after 1989, both to establish and consolidate their democracies and to support their economic development (Hloušek & Fiala, 2020). At the same time, the accession process and the EU member state status also impose a series of compromises, such as the acceptance of the principle of free movement of people, which determined citizens' access, especially to social rights (BARBULESCU & FAVELL, 2020), outside the state of which they are citizens.

This study explores to what extent EU citizenship has affected the states of Central and Eastern Europe in their accession and integration into the European Union. In the following sections, we will first provide an overview of the historical context of EU citizenship and its evolution. We will then analyse the impact of EU citizenship on social and identity aspects of these countries, such as identity, migration, and minority rights. Furthermore, we will examine to what extent a relationship exists between EU citizenship and the different manifestations of Euroscepticism in Central and Eastern Europe.

In general, this paper starts from the premise that EU citizenship has played an essential role in the efforts of CEE states to become part of the European Union. At the same time, it has significantly contributed to their transformation into full-fledged members of the EU, exposing them to the challenges of debate and action on the direction of European integration.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT
OF EU CITIZENSHIP AND ITS EVOLUTION

The origins of EU citizenship

Since the French Revolution, the concept that citizens „build" legitimate states has become a globally accepted norm. That does not necessarily mean that every state practices popular sovereignty or democracy in its purest form. However, it does suggest that all states identify their citizens as distinct from persons who are only temporarily on their territory and subject to local laws. Citizenship is considered a lifelong status, acquired at birth and passed

on to subsequent generations. Therefore, the primary purpose of citizenship laws is to maintain the intergenerational continuity of the state by including principles that define *citizenship* as continuous across generations. Citizenship is, for most people, an involuntary legal status that associates them with the state of citizenship of their parents or with the state in which they were born. (VINK & BAUBÖCK 2013, P. 622)

As far as Europe is concerned, the first half of the 20th century, on the one hand, was full of progress in all areas. Reforms were introduced, and mentalities and ideas changed that marked all the countries and peoples of the continent to this day. On the other hand, in the first half of the 20th century, Europe experienced two great world wars, which destroyed it materially and morally. After each world war, Europe was never the same. However, each time, Europe had a chance for a new beginning, a chance that, unfortunately, it never took full advantage of. For example, after 1945, former World War II allies became enemies. Europe was divided between democracy and communism, and the security and peace of the continent were always endangered with the establishment of the Cold War. However, when, in May 1950, Robert Schuman read his famous „Declaration", there was already a desire in Europe that a new war was no longer possible. Against that background, the project of creating a united Europe from an economic and political point of view took shape more and more in the West of the continent. The challenge came on the favourable ground because, from the point of view of the democratic elites in the West, the imperial project of the Soviet Union in the East of the continent had to be countered somehow, a fact that gave the idea of a united Europe the sense of necessity and urgency.

It can be said that today's united Europe is the result of the search for its own identity, given that the two world wars left the entire continent exhausted by political-ideological pride and national disputes (SĂLĂGEAN & TODORESCU, 2010, P. 33). Parallel to the project of creating a united Europe and the acceptance of a shared set of values (collective identity, legal status and social action), the concept of a common European identity took shape, which became *European citizenship*, with the creation of the European Community, respectively the Union European.

The expression *European citizenship* did not always embody the meaning it possesses today. The concept went through various significant evolutionary phases during its formation. In the context of the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community of 1957, the right to free movement of people within the community was incorporated, as well as the right of residence for workers and their families. This right was predominantly associated with carrying out an economic activity. KAROLEWSKI (2010) highlights three components of identity: the rights, obligations, and compliance. The third one combines the citizen's perspective as a free person and that of being subject to political authority. However, from the perspective of the citizenship-collective identity relationship, the author defined three types of citizenship: *liberal* (associated with a weak collective identity), *Caesarean* (defined as a perceptual homogeneity and less a political collective identity) and republican (presenting a solid collective identity). This interpretive matrix defines EU citizenship as a „mixture of the caesarean and the liberal model" (KAROLEWSKI, 2010, P. 107).

In the first years of European construction, the European Communities promoted the caesarean model of citizenship. This fact was somehow also determined by the historical legacy of the relationship between France and Germany until the end of the Second World War. The first steps towards a liberal model of citizenship in the European Community were taken at the Paris Summit in 1972 when the need to reduce the gap between the European Community and its citizens was stated. Heads of state and government decided in Paris that the first stage of European citizenship must include student mobility, teacher exchange and degree harmonization. The outcome of the Paris Summit included the launch of new policy instruments by the European Council, including the development of a „passport policy", which aimed to introduce a European Community passport and eliminate border controls within the European Community. Fourteen years later, with the adoption of the Single European Act in 1986, the European Community took action against discriminatory national regulations and expanded the scope of the free movement of citizens (KAROLEWSKI, 2010, P. 108).

In 1976, the Tindemans report proposed the creation of a „Europe of the citizens", a notion later institutionalized. In the same document, the

introduction of direct elections for the European Parliament through universal suffrage was foreseen, thus marking the institutionalization of a critical element of citizenship: democratic participation. In 1984, at the Fontainebleau European Council, 'Citizens' Europe' was the subject of debate, resulting in the decision to place the citizen at the core of European construction. Then, by signing the Single European Act in 1986, the European Economic Community began to be more concerned with how the European common market was perceived and influenced the lives of community individuals (POP, 2010, P. 89).

In 1992, the Maastricht Treaty marked a significant turning point by including citizenship in the European Union. This Treaty brought additional rights and strengthened the concept of European citizenship. Subsequently, the Amsterdam Treaty of 1999 emphasized that Union citizenship should supplement national citizenship, not replace it, and extended certain rights in the European context. (BARBER 2013)

European Union citizenship confers four main rights: freedom of movement in any member state, freedom of residence in other member states, diplomatic protection in third countries and the right to petition the European Parliament and the European Ombudsman. The Lisbon Treaty of 2009 introduced the Citizens' Initiative, allowing citizens to ask the European Commission to address an issue of interest by directly participating in exercising the European Union's sovereign authority. Also, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, included in the Treaty, strengthened a wide range of rights for European citizens and people living in the European Union (KAROLEWSKI, 2010; POP, 2010).

EU citizenship marked the transition from an economic community to a more integrated political union (WALLACE, 2001). The introduction of EU citizenship was motivated by the desire to bring the Union closer to its citizens and promote a sense of belonging to the Union. By granting a set of civil, political, and social rights, EU citizenship sought to consolidate the bond between citizens and the Union (BARBER, 2002). This link is reinforced by the right to free movement and residence within the territory of the member states, which is perhaps the most visible expression of EU citizenship. This right facilitated labour mobility and contributed to developing a

unique transnational space characterized by interactions and exchanges between European citizens (BELLAMY ET AL., 2006).

EU citizenship also encloses political rights, such as the right to vote and stand for election to the European Parliament and local elections in the country of residence. Through these rights, European citizens have the possibility to participate in the political life of the Union without being limited by the territorial and constitutional dimensions of their states. (BARBER, 2002).

However, the introduction of EU citizenship has also raised several challenges. A central issue was the relationship between EU citizenship and national citizenship. According to the EU treaties, EU citizenship has an additional character to national citizenship without replacing it. This characteristic has generated a complex mechanism of citizenship in which the rights and obligations of citizens depend on both the national and the community levels (ALEXANDRESCU, 2023). On the other hand, access to the rights guaranteed by EU citizenship was a challenge for nationals who chose to use them in other member states. Even though the principle of free movement allowed the mobility of Union citizens, some member states continued to restrict the access of EU citizens to their social rights. These inconsistencies between free movement and social protection have become a source of debates, controversies and even tensions that have often been resolved by the European Court of Justice (BARBULESCU & FAVELL, 2020; BARBIER, 2013). However, despite the restrictions, EU citizenship represented an instrument of social and political integration for the nationals of the member states, paving the way for the creation of a common European identity (BELLAMY ET AL., 2006). In this sense, EU citizenship has also been described as a mechanism of civic inclusion in the context of transnational integration, emphasizing democratic values and respect for human rights (CLOSA, 1995).

Another challenge was managing ethnic and cultural diversity in the context of EU citizenship. In some Member States, citizenship questions have been closely linked to the management of inter-ethnic and minority relations. In this context, EU citizenship provided a framework for addressing these issues but also generated tensions (IORDACHI, 2004; KOVACS ET AL., 2010).

Finally, the enlargement process involved complex negotiations regarding the adaptation of EU norms and policies to the particularities of the candidate states, including regarding citizenship. This brought up the issue of dual citizenship and relations with kin minorities (IORDACHI, 2006; POGONYI, 2011).

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN STATES ON THE ROAD „BACK TO EUROPE"

A reconfiguration of the actors and the balance of power on the European stage marked the end of the nineties of the 20th century. The fall of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe represented for the states that entered the Soviet orbit at the end of the Second World War a reconnection to European democratic values. The process was not an easy one, as decades of communism left their mark not only on the domestic and foreign political life of each country but also on the mentalities, lifestyles, choices and ways of being of hundreds of millions of people in the eastern half of the European continent (TODORESCU, 2017). However, despite the pressures imposed by communism, the model of Western democracy had long attracted the inhabitants of the Central Eastern European space.

Shortly after the revolutions of 1989, the idea of „Europe" became an all-encompassing concept that united political elites and society in their burning desire to join the European Union. „Back to Europe" was one of the main slogans of the early 1990s (KOPECKY & MUDDE, 2002). The post-communist transition period from authoritarian regimes to democratic forms (a tradition traversed by the numerous nations in Central and Eastern Europe) was received with great enthusiasm at the end of the 20th century, mainly because it took place under the auspices of the European Union. That is how various popular movements have appeared in the territories of Central and Eastern Europe, with the aspiration to restore freedom and a democratic system. This stage culminated symbolically with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the removal of the communist regimes in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, former Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, the former Yugoslavia, and later Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. An

impressive wave of enthusiasm and optimism accompanied this emancipation from communism. It also marked the symbolic victory of democracy, perceived as the most evolved and desired form of political system and regime, reflected in nations where values such as freedom, respect for diversity and responsibility for the common good occupy a predominant place in the consciousness of citizens (KRZYWOAZ- RYNKIEWICZ & KENNEDY 2023, PP.1-4).

The process of democratization of the political system, initiated in December 1989, exerted considerable influence on the legislative frameworks of citizenship in post-communist countries, having a significant role in re-formulating the criteria governing the granting of citizenship (IORDACHI, 2004). The ideal of European citizenship has become an aspirational goal, especially in states that lived under communist regimes. At the same time, at the level of the European Community, significant progress has been made in legislation regarding citizenship. EU citizenship itself was built in successive stages during the entire process of European integration. However, at the beginning of the 1990s, the first complications began to appear in the structure of European citizenship, particularly in its Caesarian elements. The problem arose because the end of the Cold War put these components to the test, as the European Union not only lost the geopolitical foundation on which it was built but also faced accession requests from former adversaries and competitors. (KAROLEWSKI, 2010, P.108).

The accession of Central and Eastern European states to the European Union was a historic event in the early 2000s. This process was seen as a significant step and a success story for the EU's enlargement policy. The accession of Central and Eastern European states to the EU was also seen as a way not only to promote democracy but also peace and stability in the region. The process began in 1993 with the specification of the Copenhagen criteria, which established the conditions that candidate countries had to meet in order to be eligible for membership. These criteria included political stability, democracy, the rule of law, human rights and a functioning market economy. Over the years, the EU has worked closely with candidate countries to help them meet these criteria and prepare for membership. At the end of this road in 2004, ten Central and Eastern European countries joined the EU, including Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia,

Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Cyprus and Malta. Romania and Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007, followed by Croatia in 2013.

NATIONAL IDENTITY AND EU CITIZENSHIP IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

The literature highlighted, above all, how EU citizenship evolved from a legal, political, social, and economic point of view and how joining the Union accelerated the transition of Central and Eastern European states. However, another aspect deserves to be deepened in the relationship between EU citizenship and the states of Central and Eastern Europe. Access to the rights and freedoms conferred by EU citizenship has given Central and Eastern European citizens support in maintaining the mirage of Western Europe. In fact, the European Union is not only created by the state but also by its citizens (ALEXANDRESCU, 2010). Thus, in addition to states' contribution to the European project, citizens have made a significant contribution.

Just as states fear the loss of sovereignty, citizens also fear the loss of national identity. However, the accession of the ten central-eastern European states has sharpened precisely this fear. The literature analyses various sources of the tension between EU citizenship and national citizenship. Even though EU citizenship promotes a common European identity and greater integration between member states, it does not necessarily eliminate national identities but often coexists with them, sometimes generating tensions (BARBER, 2002). One source of tension is related to feelings of belonging. Although EU citizenship offers additional rights and opportunities for mobility, national identity often remains the primary source of identification for many citizens. That is compounded by the fact that, in some cases, EU integration has been perceived as a threat to national sovereignty and traditional culture (KOPECKY & MUDDE, 2002; BLOKKER, 2008).

In addition, EU citizenship implies a commitment to European values and principles such as democracy, the rule of law and human rights. However, in some Central and Eastern European states, these values may clash with traditional values or conservative political orientations. That can lead to conflicts between European commitment and national politics (HLOUŠEK & FIALA, 2020).

Another source of tension is related to economic and social differences between member states. While EU citizenship promotes equality between citizens, the reality is often different, with significant economic disparities between old and new member states. That can feed the feeling of inequality and generate resentment, thus strengthening national identities and undermining the idea of a common European identity (ULCELUSE & BENDER, 2022).

However, these tensions should not be interpreted as rejecting the idea of EU citizenship. In fact, many Central and Eastern European citizens value the rights and opportunities that EU citizenship offers. Instead, the tensions reflect the difficulties of reconciling different levels of identity and belonging and the complexity of the European integration process (BELLAMY ET AL., 2006).

On the other hand, EU citizenship has significantly impacted the Central and Eastern European states, shaping not only the relations between these countries and the EU but also the internal relations of these states. Accession to the European Union represented a complex alignment process with EU norms, values and policy, often involving significant changes in the national framework (HLOUŠEK & FIALA, 2020). First, all the rights offered by EU citizenship have opened opportunities for mobility, personal development, and significant economic opportunities. At the same time, EU citizenship also meant assuming a set of re-responsibilities, such as compliance with EU laws and norms (BARBIER, 2013).

Equally, the impact of EU citizenship on Central and Eastern Europe was also felt at the level of national policies. In many countries, governments have had to adopt major reforms to align with EU standards in critical areas such as democracy, the rule of law and the protection of human rights, and this has led to adjustments in economic, social and environmental policies in line with EU regulations (CLOSA, 1995).

EU citizenship also influenced CEE citizens' perceptions of self and belonging. In some cases, European identity was embraced as a sign of modernization and orientation towards the West. In other cases, this has generated tension and conflict, particularly when European identity has been perceived as a threat to national identity or sovereignty (KOPECKY & MUDDE, 2002).

Therefore, the impact of EU citizenship on Central and Eastern Europe was not uniform but varied according to the specific context of each country. In some states, EU accession has been perceived positively; in others, it has been met with scepticism or even opposition. These differences reflect the region's political, cultural, and historical diversity (KOVACS ET AL., 2010).

MINORITY RIGHTS AND EU CITIZENSHIP IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

In the conceptual framework of European citizenship, a special and delicate issue was the issue of ethnic and national minorities. Furthermore, this was no accident, given that the history of Europe was marked by identity disputes and inter-ethnic conflicts, which not only endangered the security of countries that had ethnic minorities but also of broader parts of the continent. That is how, based on the lessons of history, the initiators and supporters of the European project wanted the citizens of the Union to acquire the feeling that they belong to a single, plural-state, and multinational community.

However, after 1989, in the conditions of the brutal disintegration of Yugoslavia, conflicts and tensions at the level of the successor villages of the Soviet Union, the revival of nationalisms and the manifestation within the various ethnic groups of currents promoting the separation of ethnic criteria, the question of the status of minorities in Central and Eastern Europe, of their loyalty to the state of which they are citizens, was a widely debated topic. Being a controversial and highly publicized subject at the level of the political, academic, and legal elites in the mass media, but also at the level of the simple citizen, the issue of the status and rights of ethnic and national minorities was in the first post-communist decade a subject that influenced both bilateral relations between different Central-Eastern European states, as well as negotiations and decisions at the level of European institutions.

Post-communist states seeking to join European organizations such as the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union, and so forth, felt pressure in the early 1990s to adopt emerging European norms on minority rights. The first of several agreements dealing with minorities was the Copenhagen Document of 1990, which contained statements that could be taken narrowly or broadly—or

instead as extending „individual" or „collective" rights—given that „persons belonging to national minorities can exercise and enjoy their individually as well as in community with other members of their group" (Article 32.6) (TESSER, 2003, PP. 486-485).

The 1990 Copenhagen Document, the 1991 Geneva Report and the 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities convey the following principles: (1) – the idea that identity is a choice of the individual, one that must be made without the threat of consequences negative from the state; (2) – persons belonging to national minorities must have access to the human rights granted to all individuals; (3) – they are equal before the law and protected from discrimination supported by the state; (4) – they are guaranteed the chance to maintain and develop their own culture and to publicly manifest their national identity; (5) – they can come from contacts with other people of the same cultural origin who live abroad; (6) – they have the right to plead their case at European level forums, if they believe that the governments of their states have violated any of the rights summarized above; (7) – persons belonging to national minorities are expected, in turn, to demonstrate their loyalty to the states of which they are citizens. It is precisely this set of principles that constitute „European norms" or „European standards" in the post-Cold War era (TESSER, 2003, PP. 486-487).

At the same time, in the complex situation of the last decade of the 20th century, in 1992, the OSCE (then known as the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe) created the position of „High Commissioner for National Minorities" to deal with the increased level of ethnic tensions and ethnic conflicts that were occurring in Europe and many other parts of the world (JONS, 2003, P. 687).

Regarding the rights of minorities at the level of the European Union, the legal foundation can be identified in the Treaty of Maastricht, where the role of the Community in the democratization of the member states was emphasized by honouring national and regional diversity (EUROPEAN UNION, 1992). This fact is not surprising because, among the accession criteria established for the candidate states to the European Union by the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993 was the protection of national minorities

(EUROPEAN COUNCIL, 1993). Furthermore, that year, EU members initiated bilateral and multilateral negotiations, aiming to draw up the „Stability Pact for Central and South-Eastern Europe". This pact addressed the issue of minorities from the perspective of bilateral negotiations, favouring a dialogue between the relevant states and the minorities located on their sovereign territory.

In that context, for example, the negotiations between Hungary and Slovakia, Romania, and Hungary, as well as Romania and Ukraine, ended with the signing of bilateral treaties that explicitly referenced the protection of national minorities. Subsequently, the Treaty of Amsterdam (signed in 1997 and entered into force in 1999) stipulated that respect for national and regional diversity must take into account the common cultural heritage so that the Union respects and promotes the cultural diversity of the Member States (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 1997). This treaty also condemned discrimination on ethnic, racial and religious grounds. Recognizing diversity is one of the fundamental principles that have contributed to the formation of today's United Europe, which seeks to solve the problems of minorities, especially within the state of which they are citizens (COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, 1997).

Based on all these European legislative initiatives, and mainly due to their desire to move away from the communist past and to be part of the European Union, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, through the position adopted, have demonstrated that they can redefine many of the concepts over-burdened by the weight of the region's history. The conditions were created for the development of a framework through which the notions of minorities, nations and national identities became not only part of the process of strengthening democracy but also of the European citizen. The process required not only time but also the development of a liberal and democratic political culture, which required both the adaptation of national legislation to the standards of multicultural societies and the establishment of stable, operational institutions that respect and promote pluralism and democracy (DIMITRAS & PAPANIKOLATOS, 2013). At the same time, the process of implementing some legislative measures in favour of national minorities required time, understanding and especially consensus because

some terms regarding the minority, perceived as harmless in the West, not infrequently received negative connotations in the states of Central and Eastern Europe, a region where, both at the level of the majority population and at the level of ethnic and national minorities, there has always been a deep-rooted and promoted identity consciousness.

Another sensitive aspect the new member states have brought with them is that of compatriots in non-EU member states. In the literature, they are called kin minorities. In fact, after 2004, some states in this part of the continent encouraged dual citizenship policies. Dual citizenship, an increasingly common phenomenon in Central and Eastern Europe, is closely related to the integration process of these countries in the EU (IORDACHI, 2004). It draws its roots from various historical, socio-political, and demographic circumstances within this context.

Understanding the relevance of dual citizenship in a post-communist context, we can identify that it played an important role in facilitating regional integration (IORDACHI, 2004). In addition, it allows us to maintain links with the country of origin and the associated advantages while enjoying the rights of an EU citizen. However, there is also a reverse of the coin. In certain situations, dual citizenship can stimulate inter-ethnic tensions, especially when it is used as a tool to strengthen relations with ethnic minorities abroad (IORDACHI, 2004).

From a demographic perspective, we note that dual citizenship can bring significant changes in the ethnic composition of a state's population and create tensions between different ethnic groups (DUMBRAVA, 2019). Dual citizenship policies are not uniform across the region but are influenced by historical context and national ideology (DUMBRAVA, 2017). Using the example of Hungary, we see that dual citizenship has become a strategic tool in achieving some of its aspirations (KOVÁCS, 2006). By combining national and European demands, Hungary maintained its ties with the Hungarian diaspora while trying to strengthen its position in the EU.

An interesting aspect is the emergence of „compensatory citizenship", which refers to obtaining citizenship in an EU country, to improve global mobility (HARPAZ, 2019). In this context, dual citizenship is used as a bridge to the economic and social benefits associated with EU citizenship. This

demographic evolution carried out in various legal frameworks created by some states of Central and Eastern Europe, has caused dissatisfaction on the part of the EU institutions.

We must also consider the imaginary geography of the region (NOWAK, 2022). Different perceptions of Eastern Europe, Central Europe or Balkan Europe can impact how minority rights are conceived and applied in the about citizenship and minority rights is also context of EU citizenship. The importance of sovereignty in discussions found in the same register (POGONYI, 2011). Tensions between national sovereignty and EU principles can influence how minority rights are protected. However, we must be aware that more than EU policy is needed to solve all the problems related to these rights. Ultimately, the responsibility to protect and promote minority rights lies largely with member states (VINK & BAUBOCK, 2013).

EUROSCEPTICISM AND EU CITIZENSHIP IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Despite the enthusiasm of the first decade after 1989, when the citizens of the former communist states were clamouring for „the return to Europe", the Eurobarometers registered an increase of distrust in the European project in the last decade.

Euroscepticism in Central and Eastern Europe has become a feature of the post-EU political landscape (BÖTTGER & VANLOOZEN, 2012). That is often associated with a revival of nationalism in tandem with a reassessment of the Europeanization process (BÖTTGER & VANLOOZEN, 2012). The prevalence of Euroscepticism in Central and Eastern Europe is an important subject of analysis because it involves numerous historical, political, and socio-economic factors.

Euroscepticism refers to critical or negative attitudes towards the European Union and the European integration process. According to WEßELS (2007), it can be divided into three main types: those who are not satisfied with what the EU is doing (dissatisfied), those who are against the idea of the EU (opponents) and those who are against the current direction of EU integration (reformers). In Central and Eastern Europe, the three types of Euroscepticism coexist in a complex mix of resentments and aspirations.

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Kopecky and Mudde (2002) consider that Euroscepticism has two facets: an adverse position towards European integration and an opposition to the EU as an entity. In Central and Eastern European states, these perspectives are worrying, as they can deeply affect European solidarity precisely at the organization's borders.

Euroscepticism and revived nationalism have emerged as part of the Europeanization process, as the Central and Eastern European regions have been faced with what is perceived as a loss of national sovereignty (BÖTTGER & VANLOOZEN, 2012). This phenomenon has evolved over time, from an increase in trust towards the EU in the post-accession period to an increase in Eurosceptic sentiments, as populations have come to feel disappointed by what they consider promises unfulfilled accession requirements (STEFANOVA, 2017). Consequently, Euroscepticism does not manifest uniformly but reflects different types of dissatisfaction and mistrust towards the EU. This fact has given birth to a variety of Euroscepticism, which is not directed against the EU as an entity, but against the perceived degree of interference in the country's internal affairs (STEFANOVA, 2017).

A contributing factor to Euroscepticism in these countries is the sense of 'difference' or 'otherness' embedded in European discourse throughout EU enlargement (KUUS, 2004; BLOKKER, 2008). Central and Eastern European states are often perceived and presented as „the other" compared to „old Europe", which can fuel feelings of alienation and scepticism. The various projects debated in Brussels in the first decade after 2004, in which a „multi-speed Me-ness" was discussed, created precisely this sense of otherness. At the same time, Euroscepticism in this region is a side effect of a form of rewriting otherness in Central and Eastern Europe. In this sense, in the context of the eastern enlargement of the EU, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe can be seen as still being marked by a series of negative stereotypes that emphasize the differences between „East" and „West" (KUUS, 2004).

As a result, it seems natural that some of the highest levels of Euroscepticism are found in Europe's peripheries, where citizens may feel excluded from the benefits of EU membership (Ilieva & Wilson, 2011). Various explanations can be found for the emergence of „neo-traditionalism" as a reaction to the progress of globalization and Europeanization (MACH, 2022).

This direction of thought tries to revitalize traditional values and institutions in response to the pressures coming from the various manifestations of globalization. In these regions, the process of Europeanization can be perceived as a threat to the traditional way of life, fuelling the feeling of Euroscepticism.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the citizenship of the European Union represented an essential element in the success of European integration in the last three decades. This status allows nationals of member states to enjoy a wide range of rights and benefits, such as the right to free movement, the right to work, the right to education, the right to vote in European Parliament elections and the right to access social assistance. Despite some stumbling blocks that were inevitable due to the need for adaptation and assimilation, EU citizenship encouraged the feeling of belonging to the EU and facilitated the awareness of the existence of a common identity. Central and Eastern Europe is a space where the diversity of historical experiences and perceptions of otherness challenge how EU citizenship manifests itself as an individual status or a shared identity.

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A financial perspective
on European citizenship: MFF
and its developments 2004-2027

Doru TODORESCU

ABSTRACT. The present article explores the evolution of European citizenship through the lens of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) of the European Union (EU) and the strategic initiatives and programs developed in this context since 2004. The analysis is based on a diachronic perspective, highlighting the progress and continuous adaptability of the instruments promoting European citizenship in periods marked by economic, political and health crises. The „Europe for Citizens" program, launched in 2007, and its evolution to the current „Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values" (CERV) program for the period 2021-2027 demonstrates the EU's ongoing commitment to promoting European values and encouraging participation citizens to the European construction. The dynamics of these programs are addressed in the political-economic context, highlighting their role in strengthening the democratic dimension of the Union by stimulating active participation and the feeling of belonging to the European space. The analysis highlights the need for an adaptive approach and adequate funding to respond effectively to contemporary challenges and promote European citizenship in a relevant and sustainable way.

Keywords: Multiannual Financial Framework, EU citizenship, CERV, Europe for Citizens

INTRODUCTION

European citizenship is a political and legal product that has evolved over the last three decades thanks to the massive support offered by the institutions of the European Union (EU) and civil society as a whole. However, an important aspect in exploring the course of EU citizenship is the financial support the Union granted.

The EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) plays an exceptional role in shaping European policies, programs and initiatives. The way in which community resources are allocated by defining general directions and major objectives has a significant impact on the development of the various dimensions of European integration. EU citizenship can also be analysed in this key.

This study explores how the operationalization of the CFM impacts EU citizenship. For this purpose, the programs regarding the promotion of European citizenship that have been running since 2004 are analysed: Active European Citizenship (2004-2006), Europe for Citizens (2007-2013, 2014-2020) and CERV – Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (2021-2027).

BACKGROUND

The EU Multiannual Financial Framework is a financial plan developed by the European Commission. However, the Council should adopt it by consensus, based on the opinion of the European Parliament. This plan is designed for a period of seven years, indicating the directions and limits of Community budget expenditures. Before the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon (December 1, 2009), there was no legal basis given by the treaties to establish the adoption procedure. The first multiannual framework (1988-1992) was based on an Inter-Institutional Agreement (IIA) between the Council, Commission and EP. Prior to the 2013-2020 MFF, the EU institutions developed „financial perspectives" to define the Union's multiannual priorities (LEEN, 2015, P. 8).

In the literature, there is a broad debate about the power play of the EU institutions in drafting and adopting the MFF (DHÉRET ET AL., 2012; LEEN, 2015). The main actors competing in this process are the Council and the European Parliament. The negotiations for defining the EU's multiannual budget are incredibly complex. Some authors state they are often „lengthy, complex and conflictual" (BECKER, 2019, P. 5). In the end, political agreements between member states facilitate the adoption of the MFF. At the same time, the European Parliament claims that its voice should be heard more strongly, considering that its budgetary powers are in permanent consolidation thanks

to the successive amendments of the constituent treaties of the EU (KROLL, 2015; BECKER, 2019).

Decisions are made based on the political and fiscal priorities defined by the 27 member states for the next seven years. The need to obtain consensus within the Council makes the negotiations on the community public budget very time-consuming and real platforms for generating innovative solutions for obtaining compromises (MOLTERER, 2020). The European Parliament has included as a precondition in adopting an MFF that they must be reviewed halfway through the implementation period to be reanalysed and possibly adapted to the EU's budgetary needs. This condition helped a more flexible approach to avoid possible blockages in the spending of EU funds (DELASNERIE, 2023).

What complicates the agenda of the EU budget negotiations is the diversity of topics and concerns at the level of the European Union. The community has gone through many challenges in the last two decades. Economic crises, political crises, immigrant crises, climate issues, Brexit, and the COVID-19 pandemic have deeply marked the agenda of the discussions in Brussels. The speeches of the national political leaders were strongly nuanced in front of these major themes so that, in many situations, the approaches of the governments of the member states ended up becoming antagonistic. In addition, the European mass media and civil society contributed massively to the distribution of these approaches among the populations of the member states (LEHNER, 2020).

The European Union is trying to find practical solutions for these challenges. The MFF has also often been used as a tool to ameliorate these problems and, in some situations, even as a corrective to Member States' behaviour. For example, for the MFF 2021-2027, the Commission proposed the creation of a mechanism for conditioning EU funding on reaching a certain level of compliance with the Rule of Law (RANGEL DE MESQUITA, 2018; HEINEMANN, 2018). Likewise, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous EU budget resources were redirected to the Recovery Fund, and the conditionality formulated displeased certain member states (VALERO, 2020).

The negotiations for the last three MFFs took place in distinct contexts. In 2006, the negotiations for the 2007-2013 multiannual budget were marked

by two major issues: (a) the accession of 12 new member states and (b) the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty. The challenges were immense because the euphoria of EU enlargement was overshadowed by the negative vote of the Dutch and French on the Constitutional Treaty throwing the Union into uncertainty regarding the future of European integration (SCHILD, 2008).

In 2013, the context of the MFF negotiation was marked by the effects of the economic crisis that the Union went through. At the same time, it was the first multiannual financial framework adopted based on the new provisions brought by the Treaty of Lisbon (Berkowitz, 2015; Leen, 2015). In 2020, the negotiating environment was categorically defined by the COVID-19 pandemic and the need for member states to go through a broad phase of economic recovery. Initially, the Commission (as an agenda-setter) projected as the objective of the new financial framework the transformation of the EU economy into a climate-neutral one by 2050 through the ambitious „Green Deal" project (RUBIO, 2020). However, the COVID-19 pandemic and, subsequently, the war in Ukraine modified this objective to adapt to the new realities. The Green Deal target has changed, and the budget chapters have been redefined.

Table 1. *Allocation of community budgetary
resources through the MFF (2014-2020)* (in 2011 prices)

Headings	Amount (billion)
1. Smart and Inclusive Growth	€451
1a. Competitiveness for Growth and Jobs	€126
1b. Economic, social and territorial cohesion	€325
2. Sustainable growth:	
Natural Resources	€373
• of which: market-related expenditure and direct payments	€278
3. Security and Citizenship	**€15.5**
4. Global Europe	€59
5. Administration	€61.5
Total	**€960**

Source: CONSILIUM (2023)

Tables 1 and 2 show the development of the multiannual Community budget by chapter for 2013-2020 and 2021-2027, respectively. Comparing the total budget allocations, it is evident that the budget for the period 2021-2027 is significantly higher than that of the period 2014-2020, not only due to increased allocations in various categories but also due to the inclusion of the substantial NGEU fund, which adds €806.9 billions to the budget. Although the budget categories are pretty similar, the two tables reveal the European Union's effort to facilitate recovery and resilience following the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on modernization through digital transition and green initiatives (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2020).

Table 2. *Allocation of community budgetary resources through the MFF (2021-2027)* (in 2018 prices)

Headings	MFF	NGEU	TOTAL
1. Single Market, Innovation and Digital	€149.5	€11.5	€161.0
2. Cohesion, Resilience and Values	**€426.7**	**€776.5**	**€1 203.2**
3. Natural Resources and Environment	€401.0	€18.9	€419.9
4. Migration and Border Management	€25.7	-	€25.7
5. Security and Defence	€14.9	-	€14.9
6. Neighbourhood and the World	€110.6	-	€110.6
7. European Public Administration	€82.5	-	€82.5
TOTAL	**€1 210.9**	**€806.9**	**€2 017.8**
TOTAL expressed in 2018 prices	**€1 074.3**	**€750.0**	**€1 824.3**

Source: EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2023)

On the other hand, it can be observed that within the MFF 2021-2027, the budget allocation for Heading 2 („Cohesion, Resilience and Values) is the highest (€1203.2 billion) compared to the other headings. A visible transformation can be found in the „Security and Citizenship" chapter of the 2014-2020 MFF, which turns into „Security and Defence" in the 2021-2027 MFF. The Citizenship dimension has been moved to Heading 2. Understanding these changes is facilitated by exploring the programs to support EU citizenship in the following sections of this article.

Table 3. *Evolution of programs for financing actions*
and initiatives regarding the promotion of EU citizenship

Multiannual Framework	Programmes			
2021-2027	CERV (€1.442m)			
2014-2020	Europe for Citizens (€188m)	Rights, Equality and Citizenship (€439m)		
2007-2013	Europe for Citizens (€215m)	Fundamental Rights and Citizenship (€95.2m)	Daphne III (€124m)	Progress Programme
2004-2006	Active Citizenship (€72m)			

Table 3 reveals the evolution of programs for financing actions and initiatives to promote EU citizenship. A significant increase in the funds allocated for these programs can be observed, as well as the interest in promoting and increasing the level of awareness of the benefits of active European citizenship among the populations of the EU member states.

ACTIVE EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP (2004-2006)

Created by the Maastricht Treaty, EU citizenship had a timid start in society. In the context of numerous analyses and reports developed by the European Commission in the first decade of the existence of European citizenship, it was decided the need to increase the democratic character of the community decision-making process, but also the need for a closer relationship between the citizens of the member states and the Union. One means of achieving this desire was to support a more active participation of citizens in the European debate (TATRANSKY, 2006).

Although there was no budget projection to support such projects and citizen initiatives in 2004, it was decided to initiate a program supported by Part A (administrative appropriations) of the Commission budget. „The Community Action Program to Promote Active European Citizenship" was launched by Council Decision 2004/100/EC.

In the period 2004-2006, €72 million were allocated for projects that met the objectives set by this Decision:

a) „to promote and disseminate the values and objectives of the European Union;
b) to bring citizens closer to the European Union and its institutions and to encourage them to engage more frequently with its institutions;
c) to involve citizens closely in reflection and discussion on the construction of the European Union;
d) to intensify links and exchanges between citizens from the countries participating in the program, notably by way of town-twinning arrangements;
e) to stimulate initiatives by the bodies engaged in the promotion of active and participatory citizenship." (COUNCIL, 2004)

Through this financial support, the following were reported as results: the financing of 30 organizations, over 250 projects of NGOs, associations and federations, and over 2,800 town twinning projects (European Commission, 2015). The early results of this program encouraged the European Commission to offer a draft program to be included in the strategic funding framework 2007-2013. This program was called „Europe for Citizens".

EUROPE FOR CITIZENS (2007-2020)

The budget for the "Europe for Citizens" program was 215 million Euros. The stated purpose of the program was to increase active European citizenship. The assumed objectives were "to give citizens a greater role in constructing Europe, develop a sense of European identity, foster a sense of citizens' ownership in the EU and enhance tolerance and mutual understanding." (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2015, P. 3). Four categories of projects were specified that were to be financed through this fund: (a) Active citizens for Europe, (b) Active civil society in Europe, (c) Together for Europe and (d) Active European Remembrance.

Despite numerous positive results accounted for at the end of the 2007-2013 budget year, the final report highlights "The mismatch between the program's budget and ambition" (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2015, P. 60). In addition, the diversity of factors that impact the awareness of EU citizenship and civic engagement created difficulty in reaching the proposed targets.

In the next multiannual financial year (2014-2020), the Europe for Citizens program received a budget of 188 million Euros. This time, the program had two components: (1) European Remembrance and (2) Democratic engagement and civic participation. The program provided financial support for numerous projects and initiatives to facilitate the achievement of the general objective of bringing the Union closer to its citizens (EISELE, 2016). The major funding directions remained approximately the same: town twinning, civil society projects, networks of towns and European Remembrance.

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) has been entrusted with the direct management of EFC for the period spanning from 2014 to 2020, under the supervision of the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs of the European Union.

The impact of the EFC in the two multi-year financial years was defined as a successful one. For example, the "European Remembrance" section demonstrated that European civil society is deeply involved and interested in initiating and running projects that reflect EU common values and European cultural diversity. Only in 2019 were projects approved that had as their theme: (a) 1919 – Peace treaties bringing World War I to an end, (b) 1939 – End of Spanish civil war, (c) 1979 – European Parliament elections, (d) 1989 – Democratic revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe (EACEA, 2020).

For its part, the "Democratic Engagement and Civic Participation" component of the EFC Framework (2014-2020) supported the actions regarding town twinning, civil society projects, and networks of towns (EACEA, 2020).

CERV – CITIZENS, EQUALITY, RIGHTS AND VALUES (2021-2027)

In the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027, the „Europe for Citizens" Program became part of the „Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values" Program, along with Rights, Equality and Citizenship that operated in the 2014-2020 MFF.

The new CERV is included in the second Heading of the MFF („Cohesion, Resilience and Values") (see Table 2), where it benefits from a significant budget allocation (1.56 billion Euro). The components of this program are: (1) Equality, Rights and Gender Equality; (2) Citizens' engagement and participation; (3) Daphne; (4) Union values.

The merger of the two previous programs within the CERV can be argued by streamlining the multiannual budget expenditures and increasing the relevance of EU citizenship in the current geopolitical context that exploits the vulnerabilities of the Union. Eurobarometers of opinion from the last decade revealed a decrease in citizens' trust in the direction towards which the EU is heading, and a significant percentage believes that its voice is not heard in Brussels (see DUHALM, 2023; MIRONIUC, 2023; RÎNDAȘU, 2023). On this foundation, a platform is created to manifest Eurosceptic discourses, whose subliminal aim is to alienate citizens from understanding EU citizenship (STOICA, 2023; SĂLĂGEAN, 2023)

FINAL REMARKS

Through this exploration of how the EU institutions have promoted a budget that includes a significant part dedicated to EU citizenship, an awareness on the part of the political decision-makers of the Union of the importance of bringing citizens closer to the European integration process can be observed. In Maastricht (1992), the initial political approach created European citizenship as a compromise, just as the principle of subsidiarity was introduced. However, a decade later, the leaders of the member states began to understand the importance of the active participation of citizens to strengthen the democratic dimension of the Union.

In this sense, it can be seen from the reports drawn up by the European Commission that the funding programs mainly stimulated projects to strengthen the cultural dimension of EU citizenship. This is precisely the most difficult dimension to fulfil, and which remains essential to be able to stimulate the sense of belonging offered by European citizenship.

Finally, analysing the constant evolution of the European Union's Multiannual Financial Framework in relation to the objective of promoting EU citizenship, an increase in efforts to stimulate civic participation and

European awareness can be noted. The way in which the „Europe for Citizens" program evolved until the moment it was integrated into the CERV highlights the acute issue at the level of European society: the need for cohesion and the promotion of equality, rights and fundamental values.

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Part 2

Instrumentalizing
the European Union Citizenship

European Identity
in the Proximity of War.
Assessing Support for Eurosceptic
Populism in Romania

Mihnea S. STOICA

ABSTRACT. For many years, Romania has been considered to represent an exception in terms of support for Euroscepticism, given the constant high levels of popular enthusiasm with the EU. However, recent surveys show that the war in Ukraine has triggered approval for narratives that altered support for the European Union. We therefore firstly investigate the communication of the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR), a new populist party that now represents the fourth largest political force in the Romanian Parliament. We examine their identity-related narratives, which lie at the core of their political appeals against the European Union. Then, using data collected through an online political compass a few months after the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine, we identify which of these narratives weigh more in defining Eurosceptic attitudes. Our findings show that dissatisfaction with the European Union is mostly explained by the EU's enlargement perspectives, as well as the idea of conforming to an EU-style democracy. Such attitudes might be expressions of political anxieties that have been built over time by populist appeals, and exacerbated by the war. The study emphasises that Eurosceptic populism possesses an important potential in Romania, and comprehending public perceptions is essential to counteract the effectiveness of anti-EU narratives.

Keywords: European identity, Euroscepticism, populism, war, political compass.

INTRODUCTION

The war waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine on February 24th, 2022 has generated a swirl of political communication effects, among which strong Eurosceptic appeals, that have been primarily disseminated

by populist far right parties (LAHTI & PALONEN, 2023). Their rhetoric included condemning the European Union for supporting Kyiv's war efforts, criticising Brussels for its promise to include Ukraine in future enlargement waves, or even declaring outright admiration for Vladimir Putin's Russia - which actually represents an older, but revamped, political message (POLYAKOVA, 2014). Such practices were carried out by political actors in most of the European Union, and especially in Member States from Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, Romania was no exception. However, it stands out as a relevant case study, especially given the country's geographical proximity to the war (which only exacerbates political anxieties), but also in the context of the rather recent emergence of a new populist party, entitled the Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR). Not only is AUR a new-entry on the national political scene, but it also resembles a fully-fledged Eurosceptic populist party - thus developing a new strain of populism in Romania, which was considered to be absent in the country's long transition from communism to democracy (STOICA, 2021).

In terms of political communication, since the start of the war, AUR used the entire range of Eurosceptic messages that would appeal to the Romanian electorate. The underlying argument is that the European Union treats Bucharest as a colony, stripping Romania of its resources (STOICA, 2021). Much more than compared to its main predecessors, AUR points to the European Union as the main culprit for all of the shortcomings Romania is facing. However, much like other similar parties that have existed in Romania, the new populists also build their narratives on restorative nostalgia by endorsing sovereigntist positions (IANCU, 2023), and allowing identity politics to thrive (NOURY & ROLAND, 2020).

The current article starts by describing the political communication of AUR in Romania, especially since the start of the war in Ukraine, with a special focus on the communication frames that the party used in relation to identities. We refer to narratives on (a) multiculturalism, (b) ethnic and gender identity, and (c) political identities. Using data collected through an online political compass launched in 2022, we then test which of these identity-related narratives weighs more in shaping Eurosceptic attitudes in Romania. Finally, we analyse the results and discuss them in the broader context of the changing political landscape in Romania.

EUROSCEPTIC POPULISM. A DEFINITION

Exacerbated initially by the pandemic and subsequently the war in Ukraine, populism has evolved into one of today's main topics of research for a variety of academic fields, among which communication sciences, political sciences, security studies, sociology, philosophy, psychology etc. The success of this political phenomenon is related to the ability of certain politicians to present themselves as the main opponents of mainstream politics (MAZZOLENI, 2008). This attitude is thriving in the context of the falling trust in politics and democratic institutions, which only flourishes in times of crisis. Both earlier and more recent literature has many times pointed to the association between crises and the rise of populism (TAGGART, 2004; MUDDE, 2010), with some scholars even arguing that populism not only feeds on crises, but actually represents one of their main triggers (MOFFITT, 2015).

We will continue by looking into the main debates in the academic literature around populism and Euroscepticism, based on which we will conceptualise 'Eurosceptic populism' used for the purpose of the current paper. Defining populism has proven to be quite a difficult academic enterprise, given the fine line between over-stretching the concept on the one hand, and limiting it to only a few political manifestations on the other. The latter perspective would create the false perception that the communication strategy of politicians not labelled as populist are always and necessarily free of populist characteristics. The main academic debate that has taken centre stage is the one between academics who consider populism to be an ideology, and those who classify it as a discursive practice (ASLANIDIS, 2016). Given its ability to adapt to various national contexts, but also to grow around many times contradicting ideological political forces, we side with the perspective that views populism rather as a communication strategy (STOICA, 2021; STOICA, 2023), or even as a super-strategy (STOICA, 2017).

When it comes to Euroscepticism, it should be noted that academic literature refers to quite a number of typologies. Most of the existing scholarly work highlights the fact that Euroscepticism usually constructs opposition to institutions or ideology (KOPECKÝ & MUDDE, 2002). There is also the dichotomy between 'soft' and 'hard' Euroscepticism, which is used to distinguish

between parties that manifest overall opposition to the EU and those who criticise only some aspects related to how the EU functions (VAN KLINGEREN ET AL., 2013). There have also been theoretically conceptualised different strains of Euroscepticism, i.e. rejectionist, conditional, expansionist (KEITH, 2017), but also disobedient, which thus differentiate between a so-called 'Plan A' Euroscepticism - which questions the balance of power, and 'Plan B' Euroscepticism - which entails applying policies that go against the EU treaties (BORTUN, 2022).

For our study, we will limit to defining populism as a communication strategy that presents politics to be a struggle between the many but power-less and pure People against the few but powerful and corrupt elites (HAWKINS ET AL., 2018). This allows us to build our definition of Eurosceptic populism. It is very true that many times, populism and Euroscepticism have been used indiscriminately in the non-academic debate (HARMSEN, 2010; PIRRO ET AL., 2018). However, Euroscepticism is less broad of a concept, because it refers strictly to opposing the process of Europeanisation (CSEHI & ZGUT, 2021; STOICA, 2023). It is in this sense that we consider Eurosceptic populism to be a communication strategy that frames the European Union (understood in the broadest possible sense, i.e., elites, bureaucrats, top politicians, European institutions etc.) as working against those it should actually represent, i.e. the People.

Moreover, the current paper also adds to the academic consideration that Eurosceptic populist forces can mould their communication in relation to the crisis that the European Union is facing, strategically changing their narratives so that they can directly blame the EU for whatever the effects of the crisis (PIRRO & TAGGART, 2018).

THE COMMUNICATION OF AUR
SINCE THE START OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE

There is such a burgeoning literature on the rise of Eurosceptic populism in Romania (DOICIAR & CRETAN, 2021; DRAGOLEA, 2022; GHEORGHIU & PRAISLER, 2022; GRAPĂ & MOGOȘ, 2023; POPESCU & VESALON, 2023; DRAGOMIR & HOSU, 2023), that it almost gives the impression of striving to compensate for the

absence of Romania as a case study in many publications that have analysed populist forces in Europe before the pandemic. However, much like studying populism itself, the research on Eurosceptic populism is characterised by an important limitation: most frequently, scholars study this political phenomenon from its "supply" side (by looking at the sources of populism, such as politicians, journalists, influencers etc.), and less so from its "demand" side (by looking at public perceptions). This drastically limits the scientific endeavour of understanding Eurosceptic populism, because it does not allow researchers to understand the deep, underlying - many times identity-based - factors that contribute to the development of such a political phenomenon (GUISO ET AL., 2020). The current study seeks to bring a contribution to bridging this gap, by initially looking into the Eurosceptic discourse of AUR, and then into the perceptions of Romanians on the EU after the start of the war in Ukraine.

Ever since the start of the armed conflict in Romania's vicinity, the communication of AUR and its leader George Simion relied on the paramount idea that "this was not Romania's war" (IONITA, 2022). Very similar to the Finnish case (LAHTI & PALONEN, 2023), given Romania's difficult historical relations with Russia, the messages never explicitly supported the Russian Federation, but rather relied on attacks against Ukraine, which was described as anything but worthy of Romania's support. Inherently, there was a spill-over effect regarding AUR's attitude vis-a-vis the Ukrainian refugees. Just three days into the war and with a growing wave of Ukrainians refugees fleeing their own country, an AUR Member of Parliament declared that the refugees should not be accepted into Romania, because the latter was amidst challenging times, with skyrocketing inflation and social difficulties, so any support for the refugees would be too much of a burden for Bucharest (G4MEDIA, 2022). Much in the same vein, in December 2022, the leader of AUR condemned the financial support that the Romanian Government offered Ukrainian refugees, support which he considered to be in the detriment of many Romanians who live "under the threshold of poverty" (ANTENA3, 2022).

Rejecting those who belong to or represent other cultural identities is a common feature of AUR's discourse, as the party considers multiculturalism

to be an expression of the "neo-Marxist plague" (POPESCU & VESALON, 2023). Moreover, AUR explicitly opposes any policy that aims to combat discrimination, arguing that anything coming too close to political correctness is harmful because it restricts freedom of expression (BUTI & CONSTANTIN, 2021). As such, by far, gender ideology is one of the main enemies of AUR. In fact, in 2021, AUR initiated an anti-LGBTQ+ law in Parliament, explicitly praising the Hungarian Government for a similar policy that - according to the leader of AUR - was meant to "protect children in kindergartens and schools" from gender propaganda (MEDIAFAX, 2021). AUR's attitude towards Hungary is at least partly conflicting, because the party leadership seem to be in awe of Viktor Orban for his ultra-conservative stances, but at the same time AUR continues much of the same hardline ethnic nationalist discourse that has characterised Greater Romania Party (PRM), one of its main predecessors (ȚĂRANU, 2021). However, the Eurosceptic overtone of AUR is much stronger.

Far from cherrypicking its faultfinding against the European Union, AUR's criticism of the EU is all-encompassing, going beyond multiculturalism, either in general terms or by referring to ethnic and gender identities. Much more than that, the party criticises the very idea of a *European political identity* that would (re)define Romanians, as it would not only dissolve the national identity of their fellow citizens into the famous "melting pot" that the European identity represents (DELGADO-MOREIRA, 1997), but it would also subject them to "functioning" in the logic of a supranational European democracy, a system that - according to the leader of AUR - is lead by "sick-minded people" (SIMION, 2023).

As the examples above illustrate, AUR's political communication strongly resembles that of other Eurosceptic populist parties that have also scored high in elections everywhere around the European Union, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the success of populist parties has been considerable: *There is such A People* was a new entry on the national political scene of Bulgaria, *Forum voor Democratie* in the Netherlands has quadrupled its number of representatives in the Parliament, while *PiS* in Poland, *Rassememblent National* in France and *Five Star Movement* in Italy have remained significant political players in their own countries. As a

matter of fact, AUR promised to become part of their pan-European political family once elected to the European Parliament in 2024, so that they could join forces and embark on a sacred quest for the rediscovery and resurrection of the unique identity of Europe and its "Christian soul" (AUR, 2021).

RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to measure which of the identity-related narratives disseminated by AUR against the EU counted more for Eurosceptic attitudes in Romania, the current paper used a large-N non-probability dataset collected online between November-December 2022. The collection of the data fully complied with GDPR regulations and respected Babeş-Bolyai University's (UBB) ethical norms, as the political compass was part of a project developed by the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences within UBB and Europe Direct Cluj.

The variables included in the current analysis were collected as part of the political compass entitled "EU-RO-metru", which allowed users to assess their 'European identity'. Based on the answers they provided, the political compass offered respondents an answer related to whether they were 'Pro-European' or 'Eurosceptic'. Out of 11,123 answers, we used a sample of 4,920 respondents - given the fact that they provided answers to all of the variables included in our study. Using data from political compasses is considered by the literature to be especially relevant because, given their characteristics, such platforms can easily reach respondents that exhibit support for radical political ideas (HOOGHE & TEEPE, 2007).

To determine what triggers Eurosceptic attitudes, we developed three regression models (each with separate hypotheses) in order to assess and then compare their explanatory power. We also make use of a full model that comprises all of the variables simultaneously. As done for a previous study (STOICA & VOINA, 2023) the dependent variable, i.e., respondents' degree of Euroscepticism, was measured by adding together all the scores for each self-placement within the political compass. The result coded each respondent that was 'Eurosceptic' as "0" and 'Pro-European' as "1". All models include demographic control variables measuring respondents' background characteristics, i.e., age, gender, and education.

The regression models that we tested were the following:

(A) *Multiculturalism as a principle*. The first model (M) included only one hypothesis, namely the one which considers that citizens who manifest low support for multiculturalism as a general idea are more likely to exhibit Eurosceptic attitudes.

(B) *Ethnic and gender identity*. The second model comprised two submodels, each of them with its own hypothesis. We first (UKR) hypothesised that less support for Ukrainian refugees will lead to higher Euroscepticism. Secondly, we used the hypothesis which stated that opponents of gender identity are more likely to be Eurosceptic (LGBTQ+).

(C) *Political identity*. The third and last model also included two submodels, which read as follows: the first one (NEXT) hypothesised that opponents of an EU enlargement are prone to be Eurosceptic, whereas the second model (DEM) hypothesised that those who oppose the idea of a 'European democracy' are more likely to be Eurosceptic.

The overview of each model, with corresponding submodels and hypotheses is presented below:

Table 1. *Regression models, with submodels and hypotheses*

Model	Submodel	H	Hypotheses
(A) Multiculturalism as a principle	M	1	Citizens who are less supportive of multiculturalism are more likely to be Eurosceptic.
(B) Ethnic and gender identity	UKR	2	Citizens who are less supportive of Ukrainian refugees are more likely to be Eurosceptic.
	LGBTQ+	3	Opponents of LGBTQ+ rights are more likely to be Eurosceptic.
(C) Political identity	NEXT	4	Those who oppose EU enlargement are more likely to be Eurosceptic.
	DEM	5	Citizens who oppose the idea of European democracy are most likely to be Eurosceptic.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2 shows the results of the logistic regression from the three main models, as well as a full model that combines all three. The full model has the largest explanatory power (Nagelkerke R^2=0.62). However, once we

compare the three models, we see that the *Political identity* model has a superior explanatory power (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.50$), followed by the *Ethnic and gender identity* model (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.41$). By far, *Multiculturalism as a principle* model has the lowest explanatory power (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.01$).

The results are multifaceted and reveal noteworthy insights into the recent Eurosceptic attitudes in Romania, but need extensive explanations. Firstly, the findings indicate that opposition to multiculturalism as a general principle is not powerful enough to generate Eurosceptic attitudes. This might be related to the fact that Romanians have been accustomed to the idea of multiculturalism well before the country joined the European Union (ROGOBETE, 2006).

Table 2. *Regression coefficients for the three models and the combined full model*

	Multiculturalism as a principle	Ethnic and gender identity	Political identity	Full model
Female (male = 0)	0.40*	0.10	0.51**	0.17
	(0.17)	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.25)
Higher education	0.33	-0.27	-0.22	-0.23
	(0.17)	(0.15)	(0.16)	(0.26)
Support for multiculturalism (M)	0.18**			0.12
	(0.08)			(0.14)
Support for Ukrainian refugees (UKR)		1.25***		1.05***
		(0.07)		(0.16)
Support for gender identity (LGBTQ+)		1.00***		0.36***
		(0.09)		(0.10)
Support EU enlargement (NEXT)			0.94***	0.75***
			(0.07)	(0.12)
Support for EU-style democracy (DEM)			1.54***	1.44***
			(0.07)	(0.15)
Constant	2.40	2.02***	1.53***	0.59
	(0.17)	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.31)
Nagelkerke R2	0.01	0.45	0.50	0.62

*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$; standard errors in parentheses
Number of observations: 4,920

As such, it might very well be the case that multiculturalism is not associated with the EU, and therefore opposition to multiculturalism does not translate into hostility against the European Union. From the point of view

of Eurosceptic populism, multiculturalism might work rather as an "empty signifier", which needs content in order to generate support. However, recent scholarly work indicates that there is a reduction of the multicultural frames in political communication related to the European Union, which only confirms our findings (BOGADO ET AL., 2023).

Looking further into the results, we gain an insightful understanding of the fact that opposition to ethnic and gender identity do matter in building opposition to the EU, but compared to opposition to the more general, political EU identity, they occupy only the runner-up position. Our data also reveals the fact that EU support for Ukrainian refugees counts more than support for LGBTQ+ rights. This might offer a glimpse into the impact that the war in Ukraine has had on the Romanian public, and the attitude might be explained by the fact that the data was collected in the first ten months since the start of the war, which makes the topic much more timely for the public than the issue of gender identity. This finding is in line with previous academic work that underlined how the nativist agenda has gained centre stage for the populist rhetoric since the start of the war (JAKOBSON & KASEKAMP, 2023). However, especially for Eurosceptic populism in Eastern European countries, the issue of gender identity remains relevant and, at least from a political communication point of view, is inextricably connected to their EU accession (SLOOTMAECKERS & SIRCAR, 2018).

Our analysis indicates that, apart from the combined model, the primary predictor behind support for Euroscepticism in Romania is opposition against an EU *political identity*, which encompasses all of the ideals that keep the Member States together, and represents the very logic of European integration. Such an identity refers to commitment to democracy, cooperation, but also promotion of European values, which ultimately refers to the enlargement of the European Union. The EU political identity is considered to represent a *metacondition* for legitimising the European Union as a polity (CERUTTI, 2003), and it is a *precondition* for what is referred to as EU democracy (SCHARPF, 1999; SCHEUER & SCHMITT, 2009). A closer look into this model shows that dissatisfaction with what is perceived to be an EU-type *democracy* lies at the heart of Euroscepticism. Instead of understanding the European Union as an entity that seeks democratic integration - as explained by TULLY

(2007), those who tend to accept Eurosceptic populism might perceive the EU as an outsider that imposes an alien political framework only superficially called *democracy*. Compared to all submodels within all of the theoretical models proposed in the current paper, this submodel is the strongest predictor of Euroscepticism, therefore it needs a nuanced understanding.

The narrative according to which the European Union is arbitrarily imposing political rules upon Bucharest has been explored in Romania before, but our data shows that it has now grown into an idea that is very marketable from a political point of view. This is strongly connected to the Eurosceptic argument that ever since it has joined the European Union, Romania is nothing but a colony of Brussels (DRAGOMAN, 2022). Rather surprisingly, this narrative originated with the Social Democrat Party (PSD). The PSD was an unusual suspect in this regard because the social-democrats were known as prominent advocates of EU integration - especially since the early 2000's, when the PSD Government dedicated its efforts to successfully concluding negotiations with Brussels so that Romania could become an EU Member State on January 1st, 2007. However, between 2016-2019, under the leadership of Liviu Dragnea, the same party exhibited a reversal of its communication and constantly accused Brussels of meddling in the internal politics of Bucharest (ILIE, 2022). Ever since, this argument against the European Union has been wrapped in a grave concern for Romania's national sovereignty, a characteristic of Euroscepticism that the academic literature identified in other countries as well, such as Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, but also Czechia, Italy, and even France (MIȘCOIU, 2023).

After PSD tested this narrative to a breaking point and then resorted to its older pro-European stances, the same set of arguments was picked up and radicalised by AUR, who has also drawn the Eurosceptic electorate - which opinion polls show to have steadily grown in the last months (INSCOP, 2023). The anti-EU attitude of AUR reached unparalleled peaks in July 2023, when it accused the European Commission of "bringing" into Romania nothing but "inflation, poverty, and an invented pandemic [...]", all of this while the country "need[s] hospitals, roads, and half of Romania is buried in poverty". Moreover, he condemned the European Executive for its preoccupation with "gender identity, climate change [...], and new restrictions that will affect rights and fundamental freedoms" (SIMION, 2023).

Such statements are in line with presenting the EU as a sort of a modern coloniser of Romania. Therefore, the identities of the EU on the one side, and of Romania on the other, are deemed by AUR as incompatible. Moreover, AUR projects itself as acting exactly in opposition to their version of the European Union, by offering Romanians cultural and economic security, and by being capable of understanding the true concerns of citizens. The results of our analysis show that, in Romania, the Eurosceptic dimension of populism is growing into what could be considered to be its maturing phase.

CONCLUSIONS

The current study is an assessment of the main drivers behind the evolution of Eurosceptic populism in Romania since the start of the war in its immediate vicinity. It needs to be noted that attitudes of Romanians have broadly remained pro-European ever since the country's EU accession, and thus Euroscepticism appears to be - at least at this stage - assumed only vaguely and marginally outside the political sphere. However, Eurosceptic tendencies need to be further studied as they gain traction in the communication of certain political parties - most notably the Alliance for the Union of Romanians - and seem to have a latent potential (MIȘCOIU, 2023). Our study explores the relation between Euroscepticism and support for narratives disseminated by AUR, a new party which redefined the phenomenon of populism in Romania, adding a strong Eurosceptic dimension to it. We therefore started by looking into the latest communication topics of AUR and highlighted narratives that were identity-related. Based on our evaluation, as well as on previous studies that analysed the same political party, we concentrated our research on three main issues: multiculturalism, ethnic and gender identity, and EU political identity.

Given the fact that one of the main limits and criticism related to the study of populism (and Euroscepticism for that matter) is the fact that there is not enough evidence related to the "demand" side, we examined the relation between the main identity-related narratives of AUR and anti-EU sentiments. We did this by using a dataset collected in 2022, a few months after the beginning of the war in Ukraine - an event that had a significant political impact upon countries neighbouring Ukraine, amongst which Romania.

Our findings shed light on the complex phenomenon of Eurosceptic populism that seems to be steadily growing in a country that was for many years considered Euroenthusiast "by definition" (DURACH & BÂGRĂOANU, 2013). We employed three main regression models that refer to the main identity-related sources of Euroscepticism, especially in Eastern Europe. The results of our analysis show a configuration of ideas that might be concerning for future developments. Firstly, we understand that multiculturalism cannot transmute into an argument against the EU. There are many possible explanations, one of them related to the fact that this concept was extensively used before the accession of Romania to the EU, and has been successful to a large extent. Secondly, the results allow us to understand that the war in Ukraine has created a fertile ground for populism, as ideas put forward against the Ukrainian refugees are to a certain degree accepted by the respondents. In other words, communicating on the topic of supporting Ukrainian refugees might trigger public attitudes that are unfavourable to the EU.

The major finding of our research resides in the fact that the most successful narrative of Eurosceptic populism in Romania is related to the *EU political identity*. The narratives of EU enlargement and adhering to an EU-style democracy seem to be affecting support for the European Union in the context of the (ongoing) war in Ukraine. The latter might be the result of populist forces demonising the EU for quite a number of years now by framing it as "imposing" rules of political conduct upon Bucharest. The former should rather be understood as a risk-averse attitude, as the enlargement of the EU might be perceived as creating more hostility from the Russian Federation. However, future research should closer investigate whether these attitudes are the result of political anxiety that is historical in nature, or whether they are triggered by the war. Nevertheless, the study highlights that Eurosceptic populism has a significant potential to grow in Romania, and understanding public perceptions is key in counterbalancing the success of anti-EU narratives.

Acknowledgements

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The role of education
in activating European citizenship.
Activating European citizenship
through education

Malina RÎNDASU

ABSTRACT. *European citizenship* is a concept that has caused many debates among European researchers and dignitaries. The overlap and the determining relationship between it and national citizenship generated the challenge of defining distinct rights, which would offer the beneficiaries the premises of a common identity. The evolutions of the organization and the integration processes also required the constant evaluation of social perceptions. With the help of a tool called „Eurobarometer", the European Commission has analysed the fluctuations of citizens' trust in the Union, their own national institutions, and the desire for in-depth knowledge of rights biannually. With the help of data collected from Eurobarometers, this article examines two essential elements for European citizenship: knowledge of rights and a sense of belonging. We identify the potential factors that could impact the two variables, and eventually, we make some recommendations for action in the educational area.

Keywords: European citizenship, active citizenship, educational system, Romania

INTRODUCTION

The European Union is setting itself up as an important actor on the international stage thanks to the many prerogatives it assumes in relation to its own members. The gradual process of integration of the member states, but also its legitimacy, the reconfiguration of some norms deeply established in international law, as well as the impact of the organization on the dynamics

of the system were research subjects often approached by scholars (KOSTAKOPOULOU, 2007, P. 623). Their desires were represented by the understanding of the operating principles associated with this organization, the power relations between the actors, but also by the evolution of a new concept introduced by the Maastricht Treaty on February 7, 1992, entitled "Union citizenship" (PREUß, 2010, P. 267). The association of a great diversity of nationalities and cultures through a common point represented by EU citizenship reflected legal implications (PREUSS ET AL., 2003, P. 4). At the same time, the need to educate people about the new range of rights and freedoms offered to them in tandem with integrating their state into the construction of the European Union was also claimed. While some authors highlighted the double dependence of EU citizenship on the state's access to membership, but also on the possession of national citizenship (SHAW, 2019, P. 1), others debated the importance of its conceptual clarification and the association of rights that "could trigger a more active concept of citizenship" (PRENTOULIS, 2001, P. 198 cited by PREUSS ET AL., 2003, P. 5). The multiple implications of EU citizenship have highlighted the existence of a multifaceted concept, in a continuous ballistic.

Hitherto, the relationship between active EU citizenship and education has been treated in the literature in a general way. Member States still possess the internal competencies to shape educational systems directly related to the labour market dynamics. However, the literature often highlights the formative role of education in building the status of a European citizen, especially in the context of a world in the midst of globalization. This study aims to answer the research question, "How is the citizenship of the European Union influenced by the educational field at the level of the member states?" taking Romania as a case study. By using qualitative and quantitative data, the article aims to make an x-ray of the perceptions of Romanian citizens about the role of EU citizenship and, implicitly, to evaluate the specific contents in the educational area that impact the formation of new generations of EU citizens. The paper's relevance is rendered by the topicality of the research topic, emphasizing the evolutionary dynamics of the concept of "EU citizenship" in Romania, filling a gap in the literature about how Romanian citizens assume this individual status.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The dynamics of European Union citizenship as a concept and the implications of national educational sectors in its understanding represent the objectives of the first theoretical section. Therefore, to provide an overview of the existing approaches to the three terms, this chapter defines the key concepts, reviews the literature, and builds the analytical framework of this paper.

The first sub-section defines the concepts relevant to the study: EU citizenship, perceptions, and education system. The second theoretical direction aims to review the literature to connect the defined concepts, and the analytical framework operationalises the dimensions pursued within this paper.

EU citizenship

In literature, EU citizenship has been approached from several perspectives, some of which focused on the legal component and others which referred to the implications of the concept of national citizenship. Although the impact of European transnationalisation shaped a series of interactions between states and between them and their own citizens, the field of citizenship remained vaguely defined both at the level of the members and in the Union (DELANTY, 2007, P. 63). This reality was aggravated by people's mistrust of the European Union, the confluence with nationalism providing fertile ground for the emergence of Euroscepticism. The limits of research on the issue of EU citizenship have also brought the subject of national citizenship back into discussion. Studies in international relations note that citizenship has gradually developed in the literature according to several approaches that associate it with status, rights or the idea of identity (JOPPKE, 2007, P. 37). Other authors reinforce the importance of perceptions of otherness and common identification and emphasise that „Citizenship is not just a certain status, defined by a set of rights and responsibilities. It is also an identity, an expression of one's membership in a political community" (KYMLICKA & NORMAN, 1994, P. 369).

According to the approach of HABERMAS (1992), citizenship has been an often-invoked concept since Antiquity, a real landmark both for the Athenian Polis and the Roman Republic, which associated the quality of citizenship

with the possibility of participating in the decision-making process. The etymological development of the concept itself presents various particularities from one territorial area to another (TURNER, 1990, P. 189). The perspective of understanding citizenship is thus multisectoral, progressive and complex (MACINTYRE ET AL., 2022, P. 696). Some studies appeal to the citizens' understanding of citizenship, while others visualise an institutional, often legal, perspective. Marshall's approach to citizenship is associated with „a status that confers individuals with a specific set of universal rights, which are granted to them by the state." (MACINTYRE ET AL., 2022, P. 696). As he suggested in his works, citizenship represented a potential tool for limiting economic, social and political inequalities between people (TURNER, 1990, P. 191). Against the background of already existing theoretical debates about national citizenship, the European Union launched in 1992 the premises for the development of EU citizenship. With European identity as its epicentre, Union citizenship aimed to reduce the distance between supranational institutions and citizens, emphasising the civic dimension through the idea of „Europe of the people" (TEKINER, 2020, P. 3). Due to the growing prominence of globalisation, some scholars have approached the emergence of the concept of „global citizenship" defined from an educational perspective as „education for global citizenship enables pupils to develop the knowledge, skills, and values needed for securing a just and sustainable world in which all may fulfil their potential" (OXFAM, 2006, P. 1 cited by MARSHALL, 2009, P. 250). Starting from studies that have analysed the implications of citizenship at several levels (national, European, global), there are several questions of convergence for the development of this paper. „To what extent is there an overlap between global citizenship and EU citizenship?" (BANCHOFF & SMITH, 2005, P. 159), „Is identity enough to give citizens a sense of belonging?" (VASTA, 2013, P. 199) „What are the European Union's information levers on citizenship activation?" These were just some of the queries that generated a series of debates regarding the definition of the concept of „European citizenship" and its association with multiple rights and freedoms. The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union defines European citizenship and its relationship with national citizenship (Article 20 TFEU) and also describes some reference rights that citizens can acquire. Understanding the

complementary link between EU and national citizenship, theorists have attempted to approach citizenship from a multidimensional perspective and have described it as:

> „(…)a set of practices (cultural, symbolic and economic) and a bundle of rights and duties (civil, political and social) that define an individual's membership in a polity. It is important to recognise both aspects of citizenship – as practice and as status – while also recognizing that without the latter modern individuals cannot hold civil, political and social rights" (PAINTER, 2008, P. 8)

The diversity of the cultures and societies of the member states determined the cataloguing of EU citizenship as a supranational process, lasting and with a significant problem represented by the threat of political regionalism (PAINTER, 2008, PP. 5–6). The main argument in the social rejection of the benefits of EU citizenship was represented by multiculturalism and the split concerning common values that can be systematised at the European level (GHERGHINA ET AL., 2016, P. 13). The descriptive inconsistency of the concept of „European citizenship" was also exacerbated by the lack of shared experiences and identities that would provide members with a starting point towards cohesion and the assumption of European values (LEHNING, 2000, P.244). In the absence of these elements of congruence, EU citizenship was associated with two reference dimensions: on the one hand, the emphasis on rights and belonging; on the other hand, the intensity of the feeling of citizenship (FOX, 2005, P. 171). The primacy of rights in the definition of European Union citizenship was represented by a programmatic addition of their number to those already existing in the national constitutions (BÎRZEA & CHIFU, 2005, P. 56). However, rights and freedoms cannot highlight people's sense of belonging to a group or an organisation. TURNER (1993) proposed an empirical dimension of citizenship activation, emphasising the importance of practising it. Related to this idea, the functionality of EU citizenship can be defined by appealing to the legal consecration and, implicitly, to the deficiencies arising from its practice (DAVIES, 1998, P. 130). One of the leading institutions defending the non-discriminatory applicability of the rights deriving from EU citizenship is represented by the Court of Justice of the European Union. It assumed an active role in consolidating and expanding

rights as well as in delimiting the scope of applicability of national laws by reference to European law (ISIN & SAWARD, 2013, P. 10).

Although it is a topic often debated by specialists, EU citizenship and the totality of rights that derive from it through the treaties and the jurisprudence of the CJEU do not primarily define the concept. EU citizenship aimed to provide an identity to all the citizens of the member states, to supplement the range of national rights with some that are applicable throughout the territory of the European Union and, implicitly, to maximize the power of the principle of equality under the law (BESSON & UTZINGER, 2008, P. 186). Even if citizens represent the reference subject in the assumption of EU citizenship, the concept remains one with multisectoral implications for the direct beneficiaries of the rights and for the institutions and member states empowered to implement them. Based on the approaches identified in the literature, this article defines European citizenship as a body of rights and freedoms attributed to the nationals of the European Union member states without affecting their sovereignty. Activating these attributes, as well as knowing them, contributes significantly to the building of perceptions about the European Union.

Perceptions

Defined by the impact of information on people and the process of classifying, respectively, their cognitive interpretation (SHRUM, 2008, P. 1), *perceptions* are often used in the literature to test subjects' judgments and opinions about a specific field/subject. As some authors point out, perception has acquired a series of meanings over time, even if sometimes they are used as contradictory (HOCHBERG, 1956, P. 400). Multidisciplinary studies approach the definition of the concept of „perception" in order to evaluate people's cognitive contact with the world (EFRON, 1969, P. 137) in fields such as psychology, sociology or political science, often being used. Different theories in the field of psychology have highlighted divided opinions regarding the definition of the term (MCDONALD, 2012, P. 3). However, some authors state the importance of defining perception for several reasons, namely, to be able to delimit the attribution of specific characteristics, respectively, for „to distinguish between the immediate (primary) and less immediate (secondary)

functional determinants we assume to be underlying the overt discriminatory response" (Hochberg, 1956, p. 400). An initial taxonomy associated perception with the joint impact of sensations and images on humans (Hochberg, 1956).

Nowadays, perceptions shape beliefs and how people relate to the world through their behaviours (Molden & Dweck, 2006, p. 197). Social perceptions assume a particular interpretation. These refer to „processes by which man comes to know and to think about other persons, their characteristics, qualities, and inner states" (Tagiuri, 1969, p. 395 cited in Morrison and Bellack, 1981, p. 70). When we talk about social perceptions in relation to a particular subject, we also refer to the built intra-group relations, to the shared opinions and values that energise social relations. The processes of communication, validation and sharing of information can lead to the crystallisation of some perceptions or even to the labelling of some subjects in a unitary way. An example in this regard can be represented by the opinions of Eurosceptics who oppose the idea of European identity, forming, through speeches, negative perceptions about the European Union. Likewise, how the citizens of the member states relate to the integration process is a differentiated one, the most prominent distinction being made between „the original member-states – France, West Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg – and those that joined later" (Gabel, 1998, p. 345). In addition to this aspect, the European Union prioritises the attitudes identified at the level of the societies of the member states and tries to offer a collective identity, the idea of multiple communities that resonate through a common point. Although „it seems reasonable that the EU public would evaluate integration based upon economic criteria" (Gabel & Whitten, 1997, p. 81), Eurobarometer surveys in recent years identify a metamorphosis in the way citizens relate to the European Union, a deeper investment of trust in the organisation but also a greater openness towards knowing and activating the rights that derive from EU citizenship.

In social relationships, perceptions are structured on previous experiences. In this sense, „social perception is seen as a process of hypothesis testing, where prior assumptions about the other person are constantly tested against—and updated by —observed behaviour, across all levels of the hierarchy" (Bach and Schenke, 2017 p. 3). For researchers who want to highlight the constant realisation of social phenomena or people's attitudes

by an issue, the study of perceptions represents a starting point in testing research hypotheses, a reliable way to identify the opinions and beliefs of the studied groups. In the case of the European Union, the Eurobarometer surveys represent a good indicator of the perceptions of the citizens of the member states, as well as a concise way of visualising „various facets of public EU support - integration preferences, identity, voting behaviour, and solidarity" (REINL & BRAUN, 2023, P. 390).

Following the approaches identified in the literature, perception is defined in this paper as a psycho-social process that attributes certain defining characteristics to an individual, a community or a reference subject based on experience, informational background, and interaction.

Educational system

The educational system represents a set of institutions that coordinate, implement, and systematise the educational processes of information transmission. In addition to the transfer of knowledge, an educational system's legislative and factual regulations include the training and shaping of skills and abilities, preparing young people for future integration in the labour market and, in general, in society. Each state has its own educational system, structured, and based on existing cultural norms at the social level. However, education systems do not develop in a vacuum and are not decoupled from structural changes at the national and international levels (BALLANTINE ET AL., 2018, P. 175). People's perceptions of values are metamorphosed, group cohesion transcends specific dynamics, and all these changes are felt in education. According to the literature, a significant problem facing educational systems worldwide is the equitable access of individuals to education (AINSCOW, 2005, P. 109). It is essential to mention that the education-society relationship is bidirectional and refers to „the effects of society upon education and about the consequences of education for society" (ARCHER, 2014, P. 2).

In a global world, high-performing education systems are needed to transmit values and key skills to new generations to actively contribute to a global economy (OECD, 2022, P. 10). In this way, universal fundamental values are promoted regarding the integration of children from disadvantaged social sectors, people with disabilities, and those who did not have the opportunity

to complete certain education cycles. The educational system is seen as a whole, as a structure that associates competent institutions with current contextual developments. Some authors define the educational system as „a set of educational principles and strategies that relate to goals, content, methods, forms of education (teaching), as well as grading systems." (SIDNEVA ET AL., 2020, P. 34) and other approaches primarily focus on evaluating the impact of this system at the social level. Regardless of the approach, the increasingly visible prominence of communication technologies favours a redefinition of education and the main forms of teaching.

The correlation of education systems with European values is a recurring topic in literature. Not only can the system's structure determine labour market mobility (ALLMENDINGER, 1989, P. 231), but the norms transmitted within it can shape a civic and identity consciousness, acceptance of otherness, and coexistence in a multicultural world. At the theoretical level, education systems are categorised into standardised and stratified (ALLMENDINGER, 1989, P. 231). In the case of the first model, the aim is to provide an equal education to the beneficiaries. In contrast, the second pattern refers more to a selection to a differentiation based on skills. Regardless of the pattern existing at the level of a state, the transmission of minimalist values is influenced by the state's positioning in power relations and by its membership in certain regional or international organisations. In this paper, starting from the importance of a coherent educational system adapted to social development, I will use the term in correlation with the educational policies led by the European Union among the member states. These directions of action aimed at improving and integrating European values into national education paradigms, the awareness among the new generations of the rights and responsibilities arising from the assumption of EU citizenship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the literature regarding citizenship, several approaches are distinguished relating to the role of education in activating EU citizenship. The first sub-section brings to the fore an examination of specialist writings on EU citizenship activation. The second sub-section is dedicated to the changes in the educational sector of the member states of the European Union that

systematise the teaching of various subjects, elementary notions about citizenship and European rights. The last topic that will be the subject of the literature review is evaluating citizens' trust in European institutions, a priority for the European Union in defining communication channels. Summarizing, the section dedicated to the literature review aims to highlight the connection between the education perpetuated in the education systems (transmission of values, principles and knowledge) and individuals' activation of EU citizenship.

Activation of EU citizenship

In a world energized by multiple threats, EU citizenship becomes a point of convergence between citizens, states and the organization. Even though there has been massive progress regarding the social assumption of the European identity, the constitutional climate in certain states shows a rapid deterioration (CAMBIEN ET AL., 2020, P. 1). Since national citizenship is in a relationship of complementarity with the European one, the loss of the membership of a state is equivalent to the withdrawal of the rights enjoyed by the European citizens. The case of Brexit is relevant in this sense because it highlighted multiple problems in the withdrawal of the rights of British citizens (CAMBIEN ET AL., 2020). Confronted with United Kingdom's desire to withdraw from the Union, the institutions of the European Union had to bring back before public opinion the consistency of citizenship and, implicitly, the rights enjoyed by nationals. However, the activation of EU citizenship is understood differently in the literature. Some authors associate its activation with „under what circumstances a collective identity is to be activated" (KAINA & KAROLEWSKI, 2013, P. 21), while other approaches aim at the issue of civic involvement. According to studies published by the European Union, active citizenship means „acquisition and exercise of rights for civic and political participation" (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2023).

Initially, active citizenship was represented by two reference paradigms, republican and liberal, which discuss the balance between the rights and responsibilities associated with the citizen (BEE, 2017, P. 58). On the one hand, liberals encourage the passive behaviours of citizens to maximize freedoms. At the same time, Republicans have a perspective of balance

between rights and duties, an active citizen being, in their view, the one who constantly contributes to good social progress (BEE, 2017). The concept of active citizenship was initially defined as „preserving and promoting individual liberty by enhancing a sense of utilitarian responsibility toward the community." (BEE, 2017, P.59). As we can see, the initially promoted meaning relations associated active citizenship with civic participation and the opportunity to apply some rights. According to Bee (2017, PP. 60-61), the European Union has transformed Union citizenship into a public policy that supports „democratization, integration, participation in public policy-making and accountability". These transformations of meaning offer states and citizens a reference foundation for understanding and assuming the rights that the European Union enshrines in treaties and institutional practices.

In order to eliminate some of the public confusion regarding the perception of EU citizenship activation, some scholars have identified a tendency to equate the terms „active citizens" and „activist citizens" (ISIN & SAWARD, 2013, P. 41). Although both variations of the use of the terms are two different conceptions of citizenship, it is essential to draw the boundaries of using the concepts in various discursive acts. Thus, if „activist citizens" involve acts of mobilizing forms of social action, claiming and emphasising the importance of certain rights, the term „active citizen" denotes „understanding and activating the rights that citizens of member states already have outside or across national boundaries." (ISIN & SAWARD, 2013, P. 20). According to the efforts made by the European Union to define active citizenship, it can be represented by „participatory activities containing political action, participatory democracy and civil society and community support" (MANCA ET AL., 2009, P. 10). Active citizenship can be analysed through a wide range of indicators. Previous studies indicate multiple relationships between citizenship and education, socio-demographic elements, age or sources of income (MANCA ET AL., 2009, PP. 17–29). In order to promote the idea of active citizenship in the European Union, political factors from the member states encourage through speeches „the need to promote civic engagement and political participation is acknowledged as a policy response to a number of social problems" (BEE & GUERRINA, 2014, P. 2). In all this mixture of factors and indicators that shape the activation process of EU citizenship, education is configured as a primary element that reduces the distance between citizens

and the knowledge needed to activate rights. In order to have a significant impact on the societies of the member states, the European Union generates a series of direct communication channels, information campaigns, and dialogues with civil representatives. On the other hand, membership in the European Union produces important changes at the domestic level, in the educational sector, in transmitting values, principles and knowledge.

Corroborating the theoretical elements outlined in this section, we can assume that „EU citizenship came to play a role as an activator of EU law" (KOCHENOV, 2013A, P. 134), being influenced by the own ways in which states relate to citizens and the organization. The activation of EU citizenship offers the opportunity „citizens of any EU member state to have a vast set of rights and privileges across the territory of the Union - since EU citizenship is itself strictly derivative of national citizenship" (HOWARD, 2009, P. 6). At the same time, an essential component aimed at citizenship is also represented by the European identity, a value construct that goes beyond the boundaries of ethnocentric visions. The legal implications of the rights offered by the Union directly impact the scope at the national level. In this sense, „'the substance of rights' of EU citizenship is infringed by a Member State, EU law is bound to intervene" (KOCHENOV, 2013B, P. 507) in order to be able to defend both the idea of citizenship and its own principles of operation. The idea of active European citizenship continues to be promoted by European institutions as desirable within borders (COLDRON & ACKERS, 2009, P. 576). Following the motto „United in diversity", EU citizenship aimed to offer both a wide range of rights and a reference identity to form a binomial with national citizenship. Therefore, when citizens' perceptions of individual positioning concerning EU citizenship are evaluated, the dimensions of rights and identity are considered, in addition to the influences of external factors. Even if the Eurosceptic currents established after the 1990s relied on national cultural-identity funds (GHERGHINA ET AL., 2016, P. 11) and presented Europeanization as a form of uniformity, active EU citizenship achieves the transition from „national citizenship to European civil society" (MEEHAN, 1993, P. 186 cited by PREUß, 1996, P. 534). The understanding of EU citizenship does not follow the patterns of national citizenships. Its acquisition is not based on ius soli or ius sanguinis (PREUß, 1996, P. 549), presenting a new concept in accordance with the provisions of international law. The novelty,

the legislative implications, and the interference with national citizenship bring to the fore a series of legislative references, which regulate the applicability of citizenship, but less its definition in a static way.

Educational systems and practices for active European citizenship

Shaping Member States' citizens' perceptions of the multiple implications of EU citizenship is an ongoing process. Awareness campaigns alongside institutionalised educational processes converge towards a more profound knowledge of rights and, implicitly, how to activate them from a European perspective. However, as we defined in the conceptual framework, citizenship is not reduced to a simple transaction of rights in exchange for the recognition of legitimacy. This implies the reception of some values, some adapted behaviours and the capitalisation of some multicultural interactions generated by the increased mobility of people within and outside the Union borders. The literature indicates that the EU citizenship activation process involves „the acquisition of cognitive and communicative competence through the social and educational process" (FERNANDEZ, 2005, P. 62), the informational substrate being necessary for understanding the European citizen status.

The relationship between education and citizenship has been established since the 18th-19th century, when „the legitimacy of the nation-state and the education of citizens, particularly in Western societies" created a binomial between recognition and development (KEATING ET AL., 2009, P. 146). The first level of understanding associated with the state required a new configuration of priorities in the educational field with the imminence of globalisation. Along with the ambition to foster a joint identity, the process of accession of the states to the European Union involved diverse pints of clarifications concerning education for an informed, democratic Europe. In this context, the study groups at the level of the European Commission have developed, since 1998, numerous projects to bring the idea of „European citizenship" closer to its primary beneficiaries (IBÁÑEZ-MARTÍN & JOVER, 2011, P. 57). Among them, „Education for Democratic Citizenship" and the publication „Education and Active Citizenship in the European Union" are

just a few examples of proposals that focus on the primacy of education for the activation of EU citizenship.

In order to be able to provide a comprehensive information base about the goals of the European Union, national educational systems face real challenges regarding how to transmit knowledge, and adapting information to different age groups. In addition, the literature that approached the educational area from a European perspective emphasises that the teacher who has the competence to teach EU citizenship „must be prepared to overcome the obstacles presented by the ingrained sense of nationality and the weakness of any countervailing sense of Europeanism" (HEATER, 1992, P. 54). The educational challenges in conveying information about European architecture can be integrated into a wide range of educational plans, curricula and subjects. The need to accumulate knowledge (through formal and informal education) is associated with „developing people's critical faculties and their ability to make considered judgments through learning" about the various sources of information they access (FERNANDEZ, 2005, P. 62).

The primary reference dimensions identified in the literature addressing the relationship between education and EU citizenship aim in particular at the creation of educational policies, respectively, the systematisation of a „to construct a sense of community amid the diverse peoples of Europe" (KEATING, 2009, P. 135). Ethnocentrism in education at the national level has evolved over time towards a new approach based on the shared values that bind the citizens of the European Union (KEATING, 2009). To model EU citizenship from an individual membership perspective, the Eurobarometer Surveys have exemplified various questions that assess citizens' relationships and knowledge in relation to the organisation. KEATING (2009, P.135) showed that „EU citizens have low levels of knowledge about European integration and institutions"; the information delivered through educational systems is often superficial and lacks a practical component. The issue of education for knowledge of European institutions and the rights associated with citizenship has a two-dimensional character. On the one hand, we can discuss the institutionalised education targeting the youth which serves as the main conduit for disseminating knowledge via the educational systems of member states, and links to development opportunities (GEORGI, 2008, P. 107). On the

other hand, continuing education for people who no longer follow an institutionalised form of education involves a different kind of approach, centred both on a practical element (elections and voting) and on understanding the multiple rights and areas of competence of the Union in certain specific fields.

The activation of EU citizenship through educational strategies targets political engagement and a higher level of cohesion among citizens with different cultural backgrounds (GEORGI, 2008, P. 107). Many social philosophers who have studied the impact of EU citizenship on the socio-cultural relations between the citizens of the member states have brought to the fore the importance of defining common values. Among them, Habermas emphasized the complementarity between European identity and „opening up citizens to supranational processes of political reflection and decision making that will enable them to think in reciprocal and inclusive patterns" (GEORGI, 2008, P.107). The European Parliament initially translated the activation of EU citizenship from an educational perspective through the idea of „citizenship as a practice" (GEORGI, 2008). This desire set out to systematically achieve a „European literacy" through which citizens can learn, understand and get involved, both at the national and European levels, in realizing their own rights (GEORGI, 2008, P. 108). The role of education in this whole context is a primary one. The educational environment shapes youth's perceptions of what it means to activate EU citizenship through subjects such as history, geography or foreign languages and, additionally, from a practical perspective, brings to the fore the usefulness of exchanges of experience (GEORGI, 2008).

Educating youth to be active EU citizens has been an often-debated research topic in the literature. Some studies highlight the role of education „to prepare young people for living their European citizenship" (BYRAM, 1996, P. 66). This element also involves the many resources geared to provide students with a theoretical foundation. The imprint of national culture alongside other external (family, friend group, social positioning) or intrinsic (experiences, interactions, stereotypes) factors can significantly impact EU citizenship education. Shifting the emphasis from „citizenship-as-practice" to „citizenship-as-competence" is an element often illustrated in tandem with educational policies that give primacy to formal education (JORIS ET AL., 2022, P. 1). Even though the educational field was associated with the state's level of competence, in recent decades, a significant increase in „suprana-

tional policy formation at the level of the EU and its (related) institutions" has been observed (JORIS ET AL., 2022, P. 2). An increasingly visible inter-connectivity between member states) has turned citizenship education into a priority of the European Union. Since it is desirable for young people „to become active, engaged, informed and responsible citizens" (JORIS ET AL., 2022, P. 3), supranational educational policies, nowadays, offer a high level of mobility, cultural exchanges and experiences that strengthen positive perceptions towards otherness and the identification of shared values.

The relationship between formal education and EU citizenship has been institutionalized against the background of the importance of knowledge assimilation. The premise that „no one is born with what it takes to be a good citizen: we all need to learn how to become one" represented one of the initial starting points for national and later EU citizenship (JORIS ET AL., 2022). Along with the information bases promoted at the level of the member states' education systems, the launch of the Erasmus program in 1987 aimed to „promote a sense of European identity and citizenship among its participants" (VAN MOL, 2018, P. 449). Creating contacts at an international level, getting to know a new culture, and the increased frequency of interactions with European citizens from other member states has been associated, as European Commission representatives point out, with the development of a „sense of European citizenship and identity" (VAN MOL, 2018, P. 449). Shaping EU citizenship through education creates the prerequisites for its activation from a rights perspective and, simultaneously, provides an informational reference substrate. In order to be able to outline and implement coherent educational policies at the state and supranational level, a thorough x-ray of how people perceive citizenship is necessary. At the same time, capitalizing on the feeling of trust in the European Union, perceived distance from power and belonging to a multicultural society are reference elements that are the subject of specific surveys applied by the Union to the citizens of the member states.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In the previous literature review, we discerned multiple approaches regarding the relationship between education and the EU citizenship activation process. One such viewpoint underscores the importance of educational systems in

shaping active and informed European citizens. These individuals participate in debates on current issues, regardless of their national cultural background (FATKE & SCHNEIDER, 2004; FRANKLIN, 1994, PP. 43– 66 cited by GEORGI, 2008, P. 108). Within member states, promoting through education „the principles of democracy, social justice and respect for human rights" (RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL AND THE MINISTERS OF EDUCATION MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL, 1988 cited by WILLIAMS, 1996, P. 209) is a vital condition towards the formation of generations of citizens who embrace European values. Multiculturalism, diversity, and cohesion stand out as guiding principles towards a joint development. More importantly, these principles galvanize the states to collaboratively address issues that dominate the international agenda.

EU citizenship and its activation reveal different operationalisations in literature. On the one hand, it encompasses both the knowledge and practice of rights (PREUSS ET AL., 2003) as well as the aggregation of a common identity, regardless of the national borders. This research delves into the trends of Romanian citizens regarding active EU citizenship in the period 2012-2021 specifically examining its interplay with formal education at the pre-university level. The core objective of this paper is to discern how Romania's formal educational process influences the activation of EU citizenship.

The study will focus on two main directions that influence EU citizenship: the level of knowledge of rights and the sense of belonging from an individual perspective. The relevance of these factors is shown using Eurobarometer surveys regarding the evolution of the concept of „European citizenship" across member states. According to studies that analyse the fluctuations in the perception of Romanian citizens in relation to the investment of trust in the European Union, Romanians exhibit a positive attitude towards the European project and remain enthusiastic about its further developments (CHICIUDEAN & CORBU, 2015, P. 71). To pinpoint potential factors that would determine the activation of citizenship, this paper will consider three leading indicators that relate to this process: educational system, community size and age. In order to determine the educational system's role in the EU citizenship activation process, we intend to scrutinise existing school programs

and subjects that encompass knowledge about the European Union at the national scale.

Being an important factor in the process of activating EU citizenship, knowledge of the rights arising from the quality of European citizenship is a vital component in the activity of the European Union. In addition to the „materialization and formation of the nation-state", the emergence of the concept of „citizenship" involved the association of a range of legally regulated rights (MIGNOLO, 2006, P. 312). Although the European Union redefines the rules of international law regarding the transfer of sovereignty, it offers citizens a wide range of rights applicable within the member states. Framing citizenship via rights awareness and activation is familiar to citizenship studies. In initial research on the multidimensional understanding of the concept of „citizenship", JOPPKE (2007) points out that status, rights, and identity are the main dimensions of reference. Considering this approach and the implications from an array of reviewed scholarly sources, our focus will be on Romanian citizens' rights awareness from 2012 to 2021, as derived from EU citizenship. The hypothesis that will be tested in this regard is entitled:

> H1 – *Romanians have improved their level of knowledge of the rights of EU citizens, within a decade.*

The feeling of belonging to the European Union is one of the indicators constantly evaluated by the organization on samples of respondents from the member states. The reference tool, the Eurobarometer, wants to highlight European citizens' attachment and its potential fluctuations in relation to the temporal dimension. The efforts aim to deepen the relationship between the organization and European society. EU citizenship has often been criticized for supplementing national citizenship rights (BELLAMY, 2008, P. 597). However, the progressive identification of people with the status of European citizens indicates strong feelings of belonging and a constructive relationship between the authority of the Union and the defence of citizens' rights. Applied to the case study, the paper will test the hypothesis:

> H2 – *Romanians have a stronger sense of EU citizenship in 2021 compared to 2012.*

Education plays a significant role in informing and strengthening a common identity. Curricula and subjects referring to citizenship education are embedded in formal pre-university education. In order to be able to provide an informational background to all generations of citizens, both national and European institutions mediate the efforts to inform citizens correctly and in a timely manner, both about the ongoing political processes and the area of rights they benefit from. In accordance with this reality, both the level of education completed and age can be significant indicators for the existence of the sense of EU citizenship. Educational experiences, those in everyday life, can assume the tangent of individuals who feel like an EU citizen. Some experts confirm that age often explains the types of action of individuals „in a certain phase of their existence" (DURAND ET AL., 1990, P. 41), but also the assumption of particular meanings about the world. Age as a factor is used in studies on EU citizenship and, more specifically, in research that wants to highlight the feelings of belonging to the European Union at different generational milestones (AGIRDAG ET AL., 2012, P. 200). Therefore, another hypothesis that will be tested in this paper is entitled:

H3 – *Education level and age significantly explain the feeling of EU citizenship among Romanians.*

The size of the community and its dynamics shape how individuals relate to an in-depth knowledge of the rights that flow from EU citizenship. Researchers explain the importance of the community dimension through „the boundaries of belonging, marked by processes of exclusion and inclu-sion" and the relationship between environmental and social factors (MAHAR ET AL., 2013, P. 1028). In numerically limited communities in rural areas, collective activities are often associated with the local sphere, the great dis-tance from national or European leadership being felt acutely. This aspect influences the educational experiences of individuals and the way they relate to an exhaustive knowledge of the rights arising from EU citizenship. By starting from this issue, the paper will test a research hypothesis that capitalizes on the relationship between the size of the community of be-longing and the knowledge of the rights of citizens of the EU, entitled:

H4 – *The size of the community of which Romanians are a part significantly explains the knowledge of the rights of citizens of the EU.*

In conclusion, in the first chapter, I approached the research topic from a theoretical perspective, defining the main concepts, reviewing the literature and outlining the analytical dimensions that will be the subject of the analysis chapter. In the next chapter, methodological elements will be presented, more specifically, the case study selection, the data collection and the analysis method.
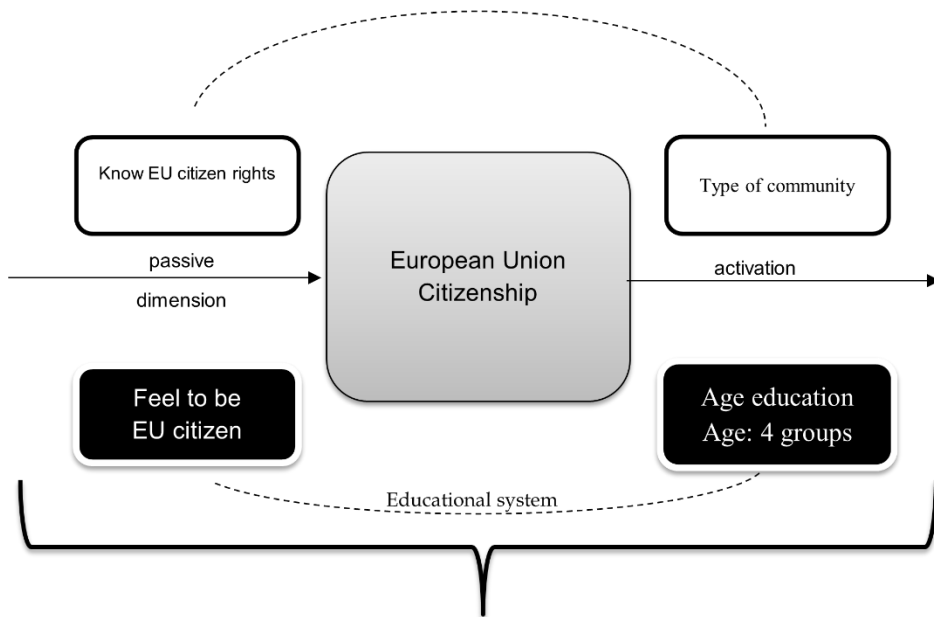
Figure 1: *Analytical Framework*

METHODOLOGY

Experts have always regarded qualitative or quantitative research as an essential tool that can shape the decisions of institutions, political leaders or other types of decision-making factors. In political science, both types of research approaches subscribe to a „unified logic" (KING ET AL., 1995, P. 454), each contributing to the knowledge of social realities. An inclusive approach to interweaving qualitative and quantitative methods is presented by ONWUEGBUZIE AND LEECH (2005, P.382), who support methodological pluralism and the flexibility of researchers in the studies they carry out. In agreement with them, LIEBER (2009, P. 219) appreciates the value of this type

of multiple approaches but also emphasizes the emergence of „effective strategies and tools available for doing so in efficient and effective ways". The number of studies using both quantitative and qualitative data has experienced a significant increase, raising questions related to the quality of the publications and the methodological standards followed (GHERGHINA & KATSANIDOU, 2013, PP. 333–334). To provide more transparency to data management and manipulation, the report formulated by the European Union, „The Riding the Wave", provides a reference framework for research infrastructure policies and the elimination of fragmentation (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2010, P. 4).

This section is dedicated to the research methodology used and is configured in three sub-sections: data collection, operationalization of the variables and the analysis method used. The work combines the qualitative approach with elements of a quantitative nature.

Data collection

The data were collected from nine Standard Eurobarometers (the spring ones) from 2012-2021. Although two Eurobarometers are published annually, we chose to analyse only the spring surveys because, in this study, the indicators have the role of charting a trend's evolution rather than analysing the results individually.

The selected Eurobarometer surveys denote the evolutions of perception over ten years when EU citizenship experienced transformations concerning social and institutional changes. Following the methodological specifications generated by the institution that manages the applicability of the surveys (European Commission), they were carried out face-to-face with samples of approximately 1000 people. The answers „don't know" and „no" were excluded from the analysis to show the positive developments of the valid answers.

The Eurobarometer-type opinion polls were created to provide European institutions with an annual x-ray of the evolution of citizens' perceptions about various topics on the agenda. The financing of these surveys and the European Commission's attributions in managing their realization wanted to highlight „the process of European unification, as reflected in the attitudes and beliefs of the people in the EU member states" (NISSEN, 2014,

P. 714). In terms of structure, the Eurobarometer survey integrates repetitive questions (to identify response fluctuations) and other types of recurring topics. The extracted data can be analysed longitudinally over time, at a singular level per state, and by comparison (NISSEN, 2014).

Previous studies that have analysed the impact of Eurobarometer surveys on social science research indicate that the scientific potential of the data is challenging to exhaust (VAN DER EIJK & SCHMITT, 1991, P. 257). Despite all the advantages of using these representative data sets, several critics have highlighted the issue of their validity (NISSEN, 2014). Starting from the sampling method of the respondents and up to the impact of the expansion of the number of Member States, the way of formulating the questions and the inadequacy of the back-translation method, the surveys receive a series of methodological criticisms that subscribe to the principles of data fidelity and validity (NISSEN, 2014, P. 719). However, the results of Eurobarometer surveys are used by the EU institutions for policy making (SCHMITT, 2003, P. 244) and by social researchers to assess the fluctuations of perception associated with European citizens.

Table 1 shows the variables selected according to the four research hypotheses described in the analytical framework. The first two research hypotheses use descriptive statistics to highlight the interpretations and will be accompanied in the analysis part by graphs and tables.

Table 1. *Variables selected for the research hypothesis*

	Dependent Variables	Independent Variables
H3	Feel to be EU citizen	Age education Age: 4 groups
H4	Know EU citizen rights	Type of community

Operationalization of variables

The variables mentioned above will be analysed through the quantitative method, using descriptive statistics for hypotheses H1 and H2 and multiple linear regression for H3 and H4. After highlighting the results in the analysis part of the article, it will be accompanied by a series of specific recom-

mendations for improving the knowledge of rights from the perspective of European citizenship.

The influence ratios of a set of regressors (independent variables) on a dependent variable represent one of the main purposes applied statistics highlights (GRÖMPING, 2015, P. 137). The regression models exemplified in the literature value the importance of the correct choice of the dependent variable and the representativeness of the regressors for the research subject (GRÖMPING, 2015, P. 137). Up to the point of data analysis, an important step is configured by summarizing them. In this article's statistics, tables, and diagrams, one will find an example of each category, all following the data collected from Eurobarometers.

Data analysis method

Social science research uses both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. Moreover, the mix between the two practices highlights a higher level of complexity and, implicitly, more types of data used.

In this study, the data extracted from the Eurobarometers are analysed using linear regression, the bivariate model. In quantitative research, linear regression operates with predictions and correlates several explanatory variables with response variables (TRANMER & ELLIOT, 2008, P. 6). The cause-effect relationship is the starting point in linear regression and, implicitly, in the subsequent prediction-making (UYANIK & GÜLER, 2013, P. 234). Often, a phenomenon cannot be explained only by a single factor. For this reason, using multivariate analysis allows a comparison of independent variables' impact and establishes the reliability of the explicit causal relationship (HALPERIN & HEATH, 2020, P. 451). Two main characteristics of multivariate analysis are relativity and multicausality. The first explains the „relative impact" of independent variables on the dependent one, while multicausality implies the existence of more causal factors analysed (HALPERIN & HEATH, 2020, P. 453).

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This section is dedicated to analysing the data collected according to the methodology described in the previous section. The first part will provide a

general presentation of Romanians' perceptions of active EU citizenship by referring to the results of the Eurobarometer surveys. The second part is dedicated to the recommendations for improving the knowledge of rights through educational efforts.

Overview

Changes in the security environment in recent years and the prominence of imminent threats to individual security have increased the relationship between states and their own citizens. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has limited mobility rights both domestically and at the European level, all in order to manage the impact of the spread of the virus more effectively. Known as the most valued right arising from the status of a European citizen, the right to free movement is often used by people who hold the national citizenship of a member state of the Union (MANTU, 2020, P.1). Although the EU's desires have been aggregated around forming a common European identity supplemented by a wide range of rights, some studies still demonstrate the discrepancies in treatment used by the states at the social level. In this sense, even if European citizenship is extremely attractive from the perspective of rights and status, „national citizenship that continues to outline the boundaries of full membership to the national community and the terms for distinguishing between natives and foreigners" (MCMAHON, 2012, P. 199).

EU citizenship and its activation can be associated with three types of approaches: citizens, member states and the Union itself. The citizens establish a pragmatic and ideational vision of law and identity. States view the notion from a perspective that interferes with the limits of their own sovereignty and authority. The European Union mediates, reinforces, and behaviourally shapes interactions between citizens and states by applying, recognising and testing the limits of European law. Taking as a starting point these three main ways of reporting towards active EU citizenship, this paper wants to highlight how Romanian citizens know, want to know or invest trust in the European Union and the rights provided for in the related legislation. In order to achieve this objective, I visualise, in the first instance, a theoretical

approach focused on the case study, and later, a quantitative approach is taken based on the Eurobarometer opinion polls.

Romania's accession to the European Union in 2007 was a progress of state development, gradual democratisation and the shaping of new models of social perception. This reality is highlighted by literature, which emphasises that Romanian citizens have presented a positive attitude regarding the directions of the evolution of the European Union and, implicitly, of Romania as a member state (DURACH & BÂRGĂOANU, 2013, P. 57). The Eurobarometer surveys carried out by the European Commission represented an important source of data for analysing the perceptions of Romanian citizens towards national and European issues. While some studies highlight the Eurosceptic implications of political discourses (GHERGHINA ET AL., 2016), others focus on the social assumption of European values through education on preserving democratic operating principles at the administrative level. The radiographs offered by Romanian and foreign researchers on the topic of EU citizenship offer a reference point for identifying some niches for both theoretical and empirical analysis.

Results

Figures 2 and 3 provide results for the first two hypotheses, H1 and H2. They bring to the fore the percentages of positive responses associated with the two questions selected from the Eurobarometers.
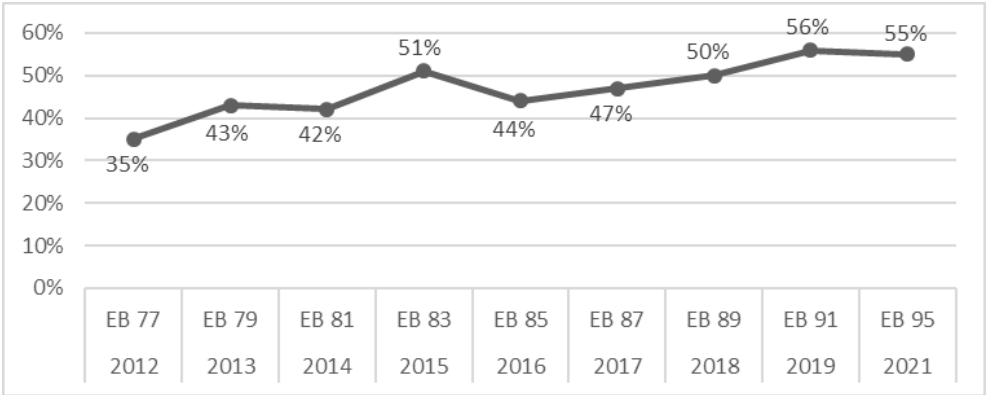
Figure 2. *Knowledge of the rights of EU citizens*
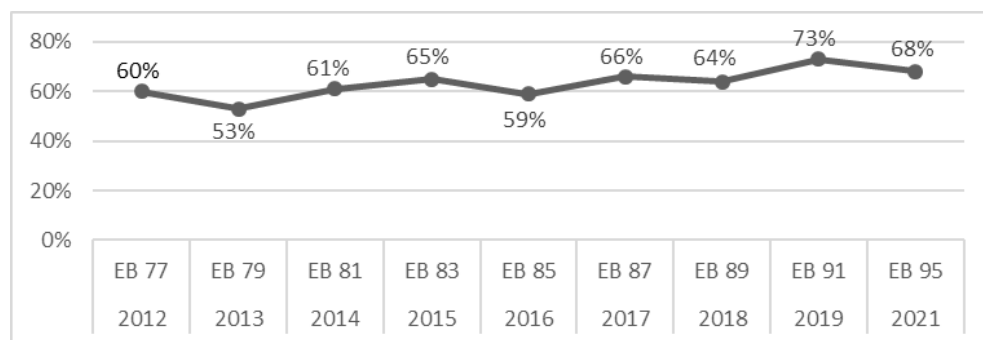
Figure 3. *The feeling of being an EU citizen*

It can be seen, in the case of Figure 2, that hypothesis H1 („Romanians have improved their level of knowledge of EU citizen rights, within a decade") has been confirmed. This fact can be explained through the accumulation of a prominent number of factors, from economic implications (for example, improving the standard of living through representative social services (CALU, 2023, P. 64)) and up to the actual experiences of citizens from the territories of other EU member states (travel, mobility, right of residence, etc.).

Knowing the rights deriving from the status of a European citizen is an important step towards an informed society. Specific social contexts can determine a greater tendency towards information and implicitly towards the activation of citizenship. A relevant example in this regard can be represented by the post-accession Romanian migration phenomenon recorded in 2008-2009. Even if the specified interval is not part of the period chosen for the analysis, specialists who researched the socio-economic implications of migration highlighted an increase in the activation of citizenship through „the right to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States to all its citizens" (SĂNDULEASA, 2016, P. 30).

In the case of Figure 3, we observe fluctuations regarding the feeling of EU citizenship in Romanians' answers. However, the results indicate high percentages compared to the citizens of other member states, the feeling of belonging and of assuming the status being an indestructible part of the identity of the European construction. The second research hypothesis („Romanians have a stronger sense of EU citizenship in 2021 compared to 2012") is confirmed, with the trust percentage 2021 indicating a higher coa-

lition of perceptions towards European values. The attention of political science researchers began to focus on the issue of identity by initiating projects regarding the European constitution (RISSE & GRABOWSKY, 2008, P. 1). Across Eurobarometer surveys, several questions tap into attachment to the union and invested personal trust. At the same time, numerous factors can explain this attachment and the assumption of EU citizenship. In Table 2, we have an example of the multiple linear regression results that have the role of explaining, at least partially, specific trends of the Eurobarometer surveys. Model 1 reflects the items considered under hypothesis 3 (H3), while Model 2 corresponds to hypothesis 4 (H4).

Table 2 presents the coefficients from running the regression for each model created around the stated hypotheses. This table's first observation highlights the extremely low power of the two models in the case of each analysed Eurobarometer survey. This aspect underlines that using only the individual predictors (years of education, age, and type of community) in the hypothesis analysis is insufficient and non-significant (R-squared <0.07). For this reason, we decided to build a consolidated model in which we considered the item „Feel to be a citizen of the EU" as a dependent variable, and all the other items were converted into independent variables.

Table 2 – *Identification of predictors for hypotheses 3 and 4*

EB	Model 1			Model 2	
	Age of education	Age	Adj. R-squared	Type of community	Adj. R-squared
May 2012	-0.035*** (0.006)	-0.042 (0.029)	0.030	-0.242*** (0.029)	0.062
May 2013	-0.023** (0.007)	0.057 (0.029)	0.020	-0.143*** (0.032)	0.018
May 2014	-0.008* (0.004)	0.041 (0.030)	0.008	-0.048 (0.034)	0.001
May 2015	-0.002 (0.004)	0.134*** (0.035)	0.023	-0.090* (0.037)	0.005
May 2016	-0.006 (0.005)	0.077* (0.034)	0.011	-0.044 (0.036)	0.001
May 2017	-0.001 (0.005)	-0.010 (0.029)	-0.002	-0.104** (0.035)	0.008
March 2018	-0.005	0.069*	0.009	-0.067*	0.004

	(0.005)	(0.030)		(0.031)	
June 2019	-0.005	0.104**	0.016	-0.006	-0.001
	(0.004)	(0.032)		(0.034)	
July 2020	0.012**	0.013***	0.051	-0.075*	0.004
	(0.004)	(0.002)		(0.032)	
June 2021	-0.003	0.184***	0.048	-0.098**	0.007
	(0.004)	(0.030)		(0.034)	

$p < 0.001***$; $p < 0.01**$; $p < 0.05*$
Source: EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2022)

Table 3 shows the results of a multiple linear regression analysis, where the dependent variable is "Do you feel like an EU citizen?". The independent or predictor variables are "Do you know your rights as an EU citizen?", "Age when you finished your education", "Age", and "Community Type." The value in each cell represents the regression coefficients, which describe how much each independent variable influences the dependent variable.

Table 3 – *The consolidated model of the predictors*
that define the feeling of being an EU citizen

EB	Do you know your EU citizen rights	Age of education	Age	Type of community	R squared
May 2012	0.536***	-0.013*	-0.026	0.023	0.28
May 2013	0.494***	-0.009	0.052	0.033	0.23
May 2014	0.426***	-0.002	0.029	0.060	0.14
May 2015	0.546***	0.003	0.097**	0.031	0.30
May 2016	0.583***	-0.002	0.011	0.019	0.30
May 2017	0.438***	0.002	-0.008	-0.015	0.20
March 2018	0.316***	-0.006	0.037	0.043	0.097
June 2019	0.520***	-0.001	0.040	-0.057	0.26
August 2020	0.575***	0.013***	0.006***	-0.037	0.33
June 2021	0.419***	-0.003	0.008***	-0.007**	0.25

$p < 0.001***$; $p < 0.01**$; $p < 0.05*$
Source: EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2022)

The coefficient of the independent variable "Do you know your rights as an EU citizen?" is a positive and significant one for each analysed year. We determine from this evidence that the level of knowledge of EU citizen rights strongly, significantly and positively influences the feeling of citizenship. The second analysed coefficient, "Age at which you finished your studies", shows negative values, indicating that people who finished their studies at a younger age are less likely to feel like EU citizens. "Age" configures a positive coefficient, indicating that older people are more likely to consider themselves EU citizens. The significance of the coefficient is noticeable in the years 2015 and 2021.

The last coefficient analysed, "Community Type", is usually positive but not significant for any year. People from larger communities may be likelier to feel EU citizens than those from smaller groups. The variation in the EU citizen's sense of belonging is also shaped by other factors not included in the analysis grid. The table's last column, titled "R squared", indicates (from 0 to 1) the degree of determination of the independent variable on the dependent one. As we can see, the small values of the associated coefficients signal the presence of other factors that can be included in the regression model. Their identification can be the subject of future research that will complement the results stated in this article.

Recommendations for increasing awareness of EU citizen rights

EU citizenship offers the primary beneficiaries (citizens) a diverse range of rights, a shared identity, and a legislative framework permanently adapted to new social metamorphoses. Even if borders, values and collective identities are not historically linked to the point of convergence, the European Union systematised a decision-making forum that shaped the action of the states like a common body. Education for European citizenship is an element configured at the internal level of the states. The indications viewed at the level of literature highlight that "Education systems should help to prepare young people for this experience, not of crossing boundaries but of being located on them, by the teaching of foreign languages" (BYRAM, 1996, P. 62). The new young European citizens benefit from the experience exchange programs for an intercultural dialogue specific to developing and

activating rights at a young age compared to previous generations. Also, the educational spectrum forms a European civic spirit, a basic information fund for understanding active EU citizenship. Literature highlights that "educated mobile young people possess multiple identities, including a European one", an element that capitalises on rapid social inclusion processes and opens collective identities (UDREA, 2012, P. 21). If, at the internal level, the subjects and information taught create a reference foundation for understanding EU citizenship, the institution of the union has also thought of practical elements in this sense. The Erasmus program is a true example in this regard, currently combining both the educational and the social and cultural areas at the level of youth mobility (UDREA, 2012, P. 24).

EU citizenship in Romania, from an educational perspective, can be described through the prism of the amplitude and coherence of the teaching materials used in the school programs that guide learning. The way in which European values are transmitted in the educational environment The studies that analysed this area of knowledge from the perspective of the teaching staff indicate that EU citizenship is understood both from the perspective of its activation and activism. A comparative study on citizenship education in Romania and the United Kingdom analyses teachers' perceptions of what it means to „be a citizen" (CRAWFORD & FOSTER, 2000, P. 176). The results indicate that both analysed samples generated answers that involve the appeal to values, the knowledge of rights, and the commitment „to be an engaged and participating member of society" (CRAWFORD AND FOSTER, 2000). In 2013, the European Year of Citizens, perspectives on education for active citizenship took a new shape at the level of European institutions (BARNA, 2013, P. 217). Since 2007, European Union reports highlight that „active citizenship refers not only to the exercise of civil rights and to democracy" (BARNA, 2013, P. 218). Education for active European citizenship must aim at socio-cultural elements of inclusion of minorities and newcomers, coalesce social representativeness for groups, and implicitly offer „participation, interaction, accountability and leadership" (BARNA, 2013).

From the perspective of educational resources in Romania that have the role of shaping active EU citizenship, we highlight the existence of a wide range of disciplines that work together to acquire the necessary information

for understanding democracy and related rights. Starting from the primary aim of education, that of capitalizing on good preparation for life and society (BARNA, 2013, P. 219), we highlight some findings from brief research on the contents.

The reference dimensions followed in the school programs associated with the discipline „history" refer to the understanding of the founding processes of the European Union, its impact on the dynamics of international relations and, in particular, Romania's pre-accession events. European identity is also prioritized in the school curriculum for the twelfth grade. One of the explanations for modelling knowledge about this in the upper cycle of high school is represented by the understanding of the voting behaviours of young people and the preparation of citizens for the activation of political rights. In all democratic countries, citizens assume „a social and political role" shaped by educational policies (EDUCATION, AUDIOVISUAL AND CULTURE EXECUTIVE AGENCY., 2018, P. 4). History is one of the basic subjects for any high school profile, followed by young people. It plays a primary role in understanding national and European identity, the assumption of a national historical past and the valorisation of social activism.

Furthermore, the discipline „Geography" has a priority role in understanding geopolitical implications and relating to them. Most of the contents focus on a multilateral knowledge of the Romanian and European spaces, the process of Romania's integration into the European Union and the claim of multiculturalism. The contents are focused on the spatial identification of national borders and the understanding of imminent processes such as globalization. The complementarity between the European and the national perspective implies the generation of analytical skills, argumentation and individual reporting to a constantly changing environment. Last but not least, Social Sciences, a subject taught by sector only at high schools with a theoretical or vocational track, brings to the fore a differentiated approach regarding national and European citizenship. On the one hand, through the specific contents, a theoretical intrusion is made into the evolution of the „citizenship" concept, social, political and legal dimensions are operationalized, and individual attitudes are presented. On the other hand, EU citizenship and its benchmarks are treated qualitatively, not quantitatively.

Corroborating the totality of the elements highlighted in this section, we observe how education, viewed from the perspective of the contents delivered to the human resource, has a defining role in shaping key behaviours and attitudes. Education for active EU citizenship is not just about the idea of specific contents; it is more than that. It involves the „student/adult-centred type of instruction" and not a programmatic, passive learning of some knowledge (BARNA, 2013). Education can be one of the vital sectors to shape a deeper knowledge of the rights that flow from EU citizenship. As we highlighted in the section dedicated to the results of the multiple linear regression, the knowledge of rights is found in a strong relationship of determination with the stronger feeling of European citizenship.

CONCLUSIONS

This study wanted to analyse how certain factors are in a causal relationship with the sense of citizenship, answering the research question, „How does the educational field influence EU citizenship at the level of the Member States?". Using the data collected with the help of Eurobarometer surveys from 2012-2021 as well as supporting documents for the school programs of the subjects that address the subject of the European Union, we analysed both some of the factors that impact the feeling of citizenship, as well as how Romanian citizens activate their EU citizenship. The findings reveal that in the period 2012-2021, the samples of Romanian citizens surveyed within the Eurobarometers register upward trends regarding the knowledge of rights and the desire to deepen their implications. At the same time, from an identity perspective, Romanians are highly enthusiastic about the personal association with the status of a citizen of the European Union, and implicitly, they invest much trust in the activity of this international organization.

The analysis part of the paper is limited by the periods of reference but also by the existence of external factors that can shape both people's perceptions and their individual way of reporting on various subjects. The mix of methods used provides a broad view of the research topic. It corresponds to the acute need in social sciences to accompany specific findings

with recommendations or sectorial analyses. The following research in this area could involve a comparative analysis between Romania and other member states of the European Union that have similarities from the perspective of the integration process. This desire would imply an increased rigour in the collection and analysis of data comparatively but also the niche of the reference time interval. In conclusion, such a direction of research would more concretely establish the similarities and differences of perception between the citizens of the European Union, both from the perspective of EU citizenship and of the exploitation of the knowledge of the associated rights.

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French citizens' ambivalence regarding European citizenship – pro or anti-European?

Emilia MIRONIUC

ABSTRACT. This paper aims to analyse how French citizens perceive European Union citizenship. In order to explore the evolution of the phenomenon and the most significant nuances, it was considered necessary to choose a deviant case, namely France, which presents low percentages in the Eurobarometers regarding knowledge of EU rights and attachment to them. The analysis is based on Euro-barometer data from 2012 to spring 2022. Predictors that can influence how the French perceive EU citizenship have been identified. Based on the results obtained from this analysis, new research directions can be outlined to explore the depth of the context that favours the ambivalence of the French.

Keywords: European citizenship, France, Eurobarometer, ambivalence

INTRODUCTION

The European Union represents a global pillar through the principles of peace, respect for the rights and freedoms of citizens, and the promotion of the rule of law and democracy (EUROPEAN UNION, 1957). The notion of „being European" is mainly understood in an abstract sense rather than as a „strong sense of identity and shared belonging" (JAMIESON, 2002, PP. 44-45). Precisely for this reason, it wants to draw guidelines between being European and feeling European, knowing the rights and activating European citizenship. Analysing a series of Eurobatrometers from 2012-2022, we note that France registers low percentages regarding citizenship. The positioning of France, a founding state of the European Communities, at the „tail" of the ranking regarding the perceptions of French citizens towards European Union

citizenship raises questions. While the other founding states, except Italy, show lower percentages than France, in some places, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Germany are in a superior position, as seen in Figure 1.
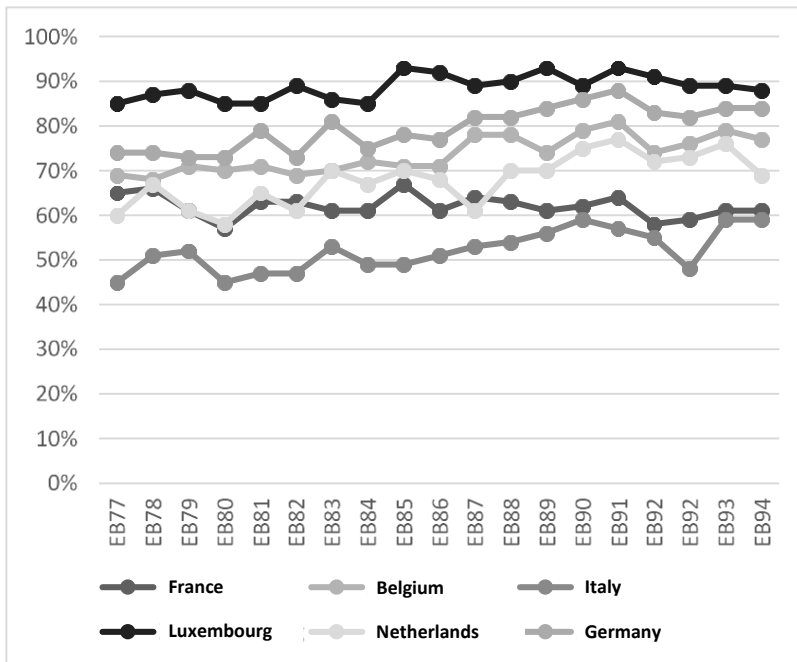

Figure 1. *"Do you feel a citizen of the European Union?"*

The paper aims to identify the reasons why French nationals have this low level of assumption of European Union citizenship. Looking at the recent jurisprudential developments and institutional changes, the identification of positioning France in the last position in the ranking regarding how European citizens feel is a subject that arouses curiosity. In this case, the way European citizenship is perceived, its benefits, and the attachment to the institution represent the research's quintessence. The previously identified reference foundations are amplified by the fact that, like the statement in the incipit, France is among the founding states of the European Union. „Do you feel that you are EU citizens (%)?". The motivation for choosing this question represents its complexity, not being perhaps the most niche form of addressing, however for the incipit, we need to know the general

issues, this being an indicated way by which we can observe the affinities of the citizens, their feelings, but also some emotional side.

Looking at any type of work as an ensemble is beneficial and necessary at the same time, so structuring it into well-defined sections is a strong point. In the first part, the paper's first chapter, „Theoretical Chapter", highlights the theoretical framework and the theories regarding the concepts used. The literature review reveals what other authors have written about the research topic, the dynamics around the concepts, the processes they go through and the activation, in particular. The analytical framework is also part of the theoretical chapter to draw the directions regarding what is analysed in the paper. This first stage represents the more technical part of the work and the starting point in systematically conducted research. The second chapter of the work is the „Methodological" one, explaining the selection of cases and why France was chosen as the case study. Mixed data collection methods, in this case, the Eurobarometer and presidential candidate speeches, and data analysis methods, multiple regression analysis and discourse analysis are key points throughout the research. They contribute to an easier under-standing of how we collect the data and their analysis and make the con-nection between the theoretical and the empirical part of the study.

„Analysis" represents the paper's last section, addressing French citi-zens' perception regarding European citizenship. This analysis is done based on the presentation of the data, the results and interpretation of the data, and the perceptions of the surveyed employees regarding the leadership style they have identified in their institution. In addition to these delimited sections, emergent „Conclusions", research limits, and future research di-rections can be found at the end of the paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1998, Joseph H. H. Weiler remarked that the citizenship provision in the TEU appears to be merely a superficial effort aimed at public image. Addition-ally, he noted that the legal interpretations of European citizenship have been slammed for overly interfering with domestic politics. European citizenship was shown to be a concept understood in beneficial terms, but it was also catalogued as a „threat to national well-being and sovereignty" (EIJKEN, 2015).

Analysing the case of France, a founding state of the European Communities, we notice that it is among the countries with the lowest level of attachment to the Union and EU citizenship, which has raised many question marks. However, from the perspective of interviews and Eurobarometer questionnaires, it cannot be stated that French citizens are Eurosceptic. For this reason, this study will analyse the relationship between citizens' attachment to the EU, the assumption of Union values and their identification as European citizens. In addition, it will be analysed whether the identity of the French as EU citizens is also determined by the knowledge of the rights offered by it, as well as how people perceive the effectiveness of the Union.

After consulting some data found in a Think Tank in France, called the Jacques Delors Institute or „Notre Europe", it can be noted that the perceptions are among the most diffuse. While 53% of French citizens say they are attached to Europe, „out of the 27 member states, France ranks last in terms of trust in Europe" (CAUTRÈS ET AL., 2020). A percentage of 57% of them consider that the European Union is „at a distance" and that creating a direct dialogue with it is impossible. At the same time, 65% of French citizens believe that the Union is not „effective", compared to 49% representing the total public opinion in the member states (CAUTRÈS ET AL., 2020). These surveys are also reinforced by the fact that France, according to the literature, is defined as an „opportunistic state" (CAUTRÈS ET AL., 2020).

On the one hand, citizens find themselves in the values and norms promoted by the Union and feel attached to Europe. On the other hand, they take an opposite position regarding several European issues with which they do not resonate. Although the French state is among the states where „Eurosceptic perceptions are common, French citizens understand the utility European Union and contribute to solving certain problems at the level of Europe" (CAUTRÈS ET AL., 2020).

Eurobarometer 67, carried out in the spring of 2007, shows several gaps that French citizens consider to be defining points that lead to institutional inefficiency (CAUTRÈS, 2007). They state that the information is not good and the relationship with the EU is quite distant. Only 18% of respondents consider themselves „very well" or „fairly well" informed about European political affairs, while 80% of them state that they are „not very

well" or „not at all" (CAUTRÈS, 2007). If we go back in time, the dates were different a few weeks before the referendum for the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, precisely in the spring of 1992. At the time, 33% of French citizens declared they felt „well" or „very well" informed. In this case, it can be stated that the period of ratification of the Maastricht Treaty represented a moment that produced social division in the post-1992 period and significant politicisation (CAUTRÈS, 2007).

The research question of this study is: „What factors influence French nationals' perceptions of EU citizenship?" Until now, the French are Europhiles when they identify with an EU value or perceive the benefits of some rights offered by the Union. On the other hand, they are Eurosceptic when they disagree with an event or a specific topic on the European construction agenda. One of the most significant statements in the literature consulted during the research would be the following: „Europe isn't a larger version of France" (CAUTRÈS ET AL., 2020). The nationalist factor was and still is firmly rooted in the perceptions of French citizens (CAUTRÈS ET AL., 2020). In this case, there is a promotion of French national values and a lack of desire to accept an extinct Union, which since its formation, has also accepted other states. Along with this, we can find a series of statements that the literature offers us, including one that belongs to Isabella Jégouzo, the head of representation of the European Commission in France. She declared that „The French show a certain maturity in the way they view the EU" (CAUTRÈS ET AL., 2020).

Director of international polling and political consulting Emmanuel Rivière, conducted an analysis on attachment to the EU and perceptions of the intuition of the European Union. He reached the following conclusion: „Being for or against Europe is a theoretical position conveyed by the political debate. The French are less clear, with a third of the population taking an ambivalent position" (CAUTRÈS ET AL., 2020). Moreover, following the interpretation of the data, he claims that „62% of the French declared that are citizens of the European Union, while only 59% stated that they are „attached" to the EU". From this case, a somewhat uncertain position, but ambivalent simultaneously, can be observed. The causes of these positionings would represent the research's key point, and identifying the mechanisms for achieving and implementing the internal policy would be necessary.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Before theorizing the concept of „European citizenship" beyond the borders of a nation-state, it is to clarify the meaning of the concept of „citizenship" within the borders of a nation-state. Throughout the ages, the concept of „citizenship" has been defined according to the history and politics of the respective context; however, despite the differences, there are unanimously accepted perspectives (ENGIN, 2013). Citizenship is a status granted to full community members who participate in a social contract between themselves and the state and abide by its rules (MARSHALL, 1950, PP. 28-29). „All holders of the status are equal in terms of the rights and duties with which the status is endowed" (MARSHALL, 1950, PP. 28-29). According to Article 9 of the EU Treaty and Article 20 of the TFEU, „a citizen of the Union is any person who has the citizenship of a Member State, which derives from the application of the specific provisions of this State" (TFEU, 2012). In the early 1970s, the concept of European citizenship was viewed from the perspective of a „People's Europe", being promoted by politicians, intellectuals and bureaucrats of the European Community (SHORE & BLACK, 1994). From a legal point of view, on February 7, 1992, the Treaty on the European Union was signed in Maastricht, establishing „citizenship of the union". This concept also appears in the Treaty of Lisbon (2009), which proclaims that a relationship of interdependence between the peoples of Europe is necessary (EIJKEN, 2015).

Active citizenship is a concept encountered in different circumstances in literature. „The democratic crisis of 2005 led to active citizenship formation processes that were stimulated by the EU through public policies" (EIJKEN, 2015). These are the effects of participatory behaviours through the lens of civil society activists, their voice being increasingly powerful (EIJKEN, 2015). Marshall goes beyond citizenship as a legal concept and catalogues it as a sociological one. In his perception, citizenship can be seen as an ideal „against which achievements can be measured and towards which aspirations can be directed" (COHEN, 2010). Based on a pluralist-liberal view, Marshall develops a series of theorizations and main features. The first feature highlights citizenship as the result of factors present in 19th-century society. Marshall systematized civil, political and social citizenship as an evolutionary sequence. Civil citizenship came first and strengthened the rule of law and equality

before the law. Political citizenship began to gain particular importance at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century through universal suffrage and the possibility for workers and women to vote. During this time, social citizenship also refers to a minimum of well-being and security up to the right to fully share the social heritage and live the life of a civilized being according to the dominant standards in society (COHEN, 2010).

European citizenship represents a cross-border type of citizenship in the European Union. While it draws upon well-known principles, it also introduces a new concept within EU law (EIJKEN, 2015). The EU Court of Justice proclaimed that European citizenship is „intended to be the fundamental status of nationals of the Member State" (CASE GRZELCZYK V CENTRE PUBLIC D'AIDE SOCIALE D'OTTIGNES-LOUVAIN-LA-NEUVE, C-184/99). The citizenship of the Union comes through the fiat of the primary norm, of the being conferred directly on the individual, who from now on is officially recognized as a subject of law who acquires and loses it together with the citizenship of the national state to which it belongs and in no other way (EIJKEN, 2015). Referring to the Treaty and the Fundamental Charter of Rights of the European Union (Charter), we note that the individual is placed at the centre of the Union's activities regarding Union citizenship and creating the „space of freedom, security and justice", a notion of European citizenship can be inferred from the original case law, in Van Gend & Loos. With the establishment of direct effect and supremacy, the „people of Europe" were directly affected and involved in the Community legal order. Some authors consider the EU citizenship a miracle lying in its dual function: it deepens our connection with our states, while simultaneously emancipating us from them, allowing us to be citizens beyond our national boundaries. (KOCHENOV, 2010). In this context, one can observe the symbiosis between supranationalism and intergovernmentalism regarding the status of the European Union, its member states and its citizens.

„European Union citizenship denotes a relationship between the citizen and the Union characterized by rights, duties and participation in political life" (TFEU, 2012). A primary thing in the definition of this concept is that, according to Article 9 of the TEU, Union citizenship does not replace national citizenship; it is added to it. Obviously, „citizenship of the union" does not

replace the nationality of individuals, i.e. their status as members of their nation-states (PREUß, 1995, P.270). Citizenship is of major importance within national politics, and sharing it externally through the introduction of European citizenship in the EU Treaty in 1992 has led to new directions in the social-political sphere, and not only that. Since the late 1980s, the Union has been considered to be going through a period in which the democratic deficit is visible. This deficit has often been attributed to the lack of a European demonstration that manifests through an efficient participatory and representative democracy and shares a common identity. EU citizenship was therefore considered the most appropriate mechanism to improve the „legitimacy crisis in the EU". At first, however, the catalogue of Union citizenship rights. The tangible process of creating citizenship within the Union was primarily focused on bolstering the defence of the rights and interests of the citizens belonging to the member states. (JAMIESON, 2002).

The foundation of freedom is built by respecting all the rights and liberties of citizens, and the ultimate aspiration, after long periods of insecurity, derives into well-being, tranquillity and the exercise of freedom in all its forms. The "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", adopted on December 10, 1948, in Paris, represents precisely that legal framework I mentioned earlier, which highlights the protection of rights and freedoms at a universal level (UNITED NATIONS, 1948). „Everyone has the right to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this declaration can be fully realized" (UNITED NATIONS, 1948). The binomial that emerges based on this assumption is that „the rights and freedoms of citizens are preceded by duties and responsibilities" (MATOSE & LANPHIER, 2020, P. 170).

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

This section will highlight the frame of reference for what we propose to analyse in the paper. More precisely, attention is focused on analysing the process through which we observe the positioning of French citizens. In this sense, we will focus on identifying and explaining the hypotheses generated from the Eurobarometer study using multiple linear regression. The

dependent variable found is Y: Do you feel like an EU citizen (%)?, X1: Do you know your rights as an EU citizen (%)?, X2: Would you like to know more (%)?, X3: Do you feel attached to the EU (%)?, X4: Does my voice matter in the EU (%)? There is a positive relationship between the level of knowledge of EU citizens' rights and the desire to know more about them. Once a low percentage of knowledge is found, a high percentage of wanting to learn more is identified. A directly proportional relationship between knowledge of EU citizen rights and attachment to the EU can be identified. Thus, depending on how much trust there is in the EU institutions, closeness to them and knowledge of their mechanisms, there will also be a higher level of knowledge regarding rights. At the same time, a positive relationship is established between knowledge of EU citizens' rights and how much the citizens' voice matters in the EU. The possibility to express yourself, to feel that your opinion matters, the implementation of policies from the bottom up by consulting civil society and the importance of citizen activism led to a knowledge of rights.

METHODOLOGY

Data collection

The selected Eurobarometers cover the period 2012-2022, EB77-EB97. In the context of highlighting the perceptions of European citizenship by French citizens, four feasible questions were identified. In order to highlight the connection between them and the determining factor/factors, a dependent variable and three independent variables were identified, according to the regression model, a method that will be found in the analysis. Denoted by X and Y, where Y represents the dependent variable and X the independent variables, we will shade the questions as such. Y: Do you feel like a citizen of the European Union (%)?, X1: Do you know your rights as an EU citizen (%)?, X2: Would you like to know more about your rights as an EU citizen (%)? , X3: How attached are you to the European Union(%)?, X4: Does my voice count in the European Union? (%).

The relationship between the factor that determines and the one that is determined is highlighted to be complex and interdependent in terms of

the method of collection, but especially of data analysis. Thus, to begin with, it is imperative to draw a range of specific indicators to understand better the mechanism used in this research study. A series of relevant information captures the state on which we chose to place the magnifying glass of the research, namely France, and the period on which we will reflect includes ten years, the interval being previously predicted. The first question we identified in the Eurobarometers and considered relevant to the context is the following Y: Do you feel a citizen of the European Union (%)?. I have chosen this question to be Y, that is, the factor that is determined because it represents a general index, on which the other particular questions that we can generically call causes to fall. Its fluctuation is not very significant, varying between 59% and 67%; however, the question that follows and the differences between it is significant.

The first independent variable we identify is the following X1: Do you know what your rights are as an EU citizen (%)?. If in the Eurobarometer carried out in the spring of 2012, 68% of citizens declared that they knew their rights; in the fall of 2012, only 33% supported this. Thus we observe a significant difference, which requires finding out some determining factors. Since 2013, this downward trend regarding knowledge of rights has continued, reaching even 29%, fluctuating with a slight increase in 2014 to 37% and maintaining until 2021 with a maximum percentage of 40%. Interestingly, although they claim not to know their rights, French citizens say they feel like EU citizens, yet we do not know whether they are referring to active or passive citizenship. In this context, it is necessary to analyse why, even if the percentage regarding knowledge of rights decreases or remains at the same level, the percentage regarding EU citizenship is much higher, varying between 59% and 66%.

Next, the thread of data collection remains in the context of the discussion about rights, thus, it is considered necessary to find out how many of the citizens would like to know their rights, so we identified an X2: „You would like to know more about your rights as EU citizen (%)?". This question helps to draw some guidelines regarding the interests and values of the citizens, to know the way in which we position ourselves towards this people and the needs they present. After some visualizations, it can be

identified that the trend is upward, with the percentages having values between 60% and 70%. This represents the fact that they want more knowledge and information, the biggest difference being again between the spring and autumn of 2012.

Starting with a leverage system, after an overall visualization of the „feeling" and perception regarding citizenship, the indicators regarding citizens' rights and the desire to learn more about them were drawn. It is important to also reflect on what the European Union means as an institution and international actor in relation to citizens. The feeling of attachment is very strong and deep, especially when we talk about national values or institutions. X3: Please say how attached you feel to the European Union (%)? After studying the answers, I noticed no strong gaps, the percentages being between 51% and 57%. At first glance, we could say that things are fine. However, a percentage between 49% and 43%, respectively, shows that citizens do not feel an attachment to the EU, which is quite ambiguous for France, a founding country, and the phenomenon is worth studying.

All the previously identified elements will be analysed at the level of EU policies, but also of the French national policy in order to understand the functioning mechanisms. However, a key factor is needed to position it in relation to these questions. Thus, we identified an X4: Does my voice matter in the European Union (%)?. This question concerns how French citizens position themselves regarding the importance assigned to them at the level of the European institutions. First, the answer to this question determines the degree of knowledge of rights, if they benefit from active European citizenship and know their rights. Secondly, the lack of a high percentage for this independent variable determines either the lack of knowledge of rights, including that of free expiration, or the fact that they really do not feel like a main pillar when they express their opinion but are not a decision-making party.

Data analysis method

Using a quantitative analysis method using the Eurobarometer is necessary to carry out an exhaustive and complex analysis. The purpose of its use is to understand the analysed phenomena, the differences encountered in different periods in Eurobarometers and to detail the information provided by

the respondents, looking beyond some numbers. Once the quantitative data are collected, which are numerically represented by a series of percentages, a series of correspondences with the political events at the level of interest is added to them.

RESULTS

On the other hand, in addition to this, the fact that French citizens state in a very low percentage, an average of 35%, that they do not know their rights amplifies the existing problems. In this case, the way in which European citizenship is perceived, the benefits it brings, and the attachment to the institution represent the research's quintessence. Concretely, it is required to identify the motivations that are the basis of some percentages that highlight the lack of knowledge of attachment rights. Added to this is a low percentage regarding the importance of the voice of French citizens, more precisely if they consider that their voice is heard at the level of the European Union.

Table 1. *Main predictors of French ambivalence*

Eurobarometer	Do you know your EU citizen rights (1)	Do you want to know more (2)	How attached are you to the EU (3)	My voice counts in the EU (4)	R squared
May 2012	0.194***	0.126***	0.497***	0.150**	0.48
May 2013	0.231***	0.120***	0.601***	0.059*	0.52
May 2014	0.210***	0.205***	0.554***	0.160***	0.55
May 2015	0.250***	0.101***	0.573***	0.128***	0.56
May 2016	0.233***	0.139***	0.577***	0.111**	0.52
May 2017	0.240***	0.176***	0.521***	0.171***	0.58
March 2018	0.272***	0.142***	0.547***	0.143***	0.57
June 2019	0.223***	0.140***	0.490***	0.104***	0.48
July 2020	0.288***	0.124***	0.503***	0.096***	0.47

$p < 0.001$***; $p < 0.01$** ; $p < 0.05$*
Source: EUROPEAN COMMISSION (2022)

At first glance, the multiple linear regression captures the value of the three independent variables decreasingly, with the most significant coefficient being „How attached are you to the EU". „R squared" indicates the quality of the

model fit. In this situation, the values from 0.47 to 0.58 indicate that the model explains between 47% and 58% of the variation in the sense of belonging to the EU. In this case, the desire to know the rights leads to the assimilation of more information about it, an empirical and logical thing in the reasoning carried out on the dependent and independent variables. Once the level of desire for knowledge increases, the level of knowledge gradually increases. The difference between the specificity of question "Do you know your EU citizen rights?" and that of questions "Do you to know more?" and "How attached are you to the EU?" is represented by the anticipation of the answers. While for the first independent variable, an affirmative answer is predicted/anticipated by any nation; things are categorised differently for the other two variables. Thus, in the first case, we analyse the affirmative/positive answers, while in the others, the negative ones.
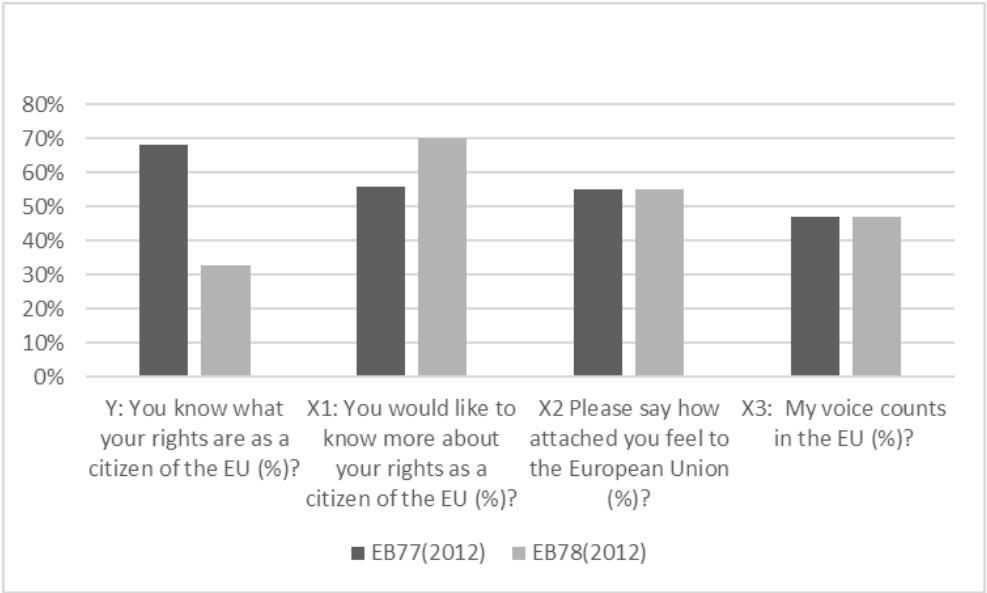

Figure 2. *Ther gaps of 2012*

The year 2012 represents the beginning of the research within the selected Eurobarometers, which includes a significant gap captured by two visibly different percentages regarding the independent variables (1) and (2). If, in the spring of 2012, 68% of the respondents affirmed that they knew

their rights as European citizens, in the autumn of the same year, only 33% still confirmed it. At the same time, differences are also observed in the case of the desire to know the rights, from 56% to 70%, a justifiable phenomenon since the lack of knowledge leads to the desire for knowledge.

In order to identify the problem of the discrepancy, it is imperative to return to what the year 2011 would mean in French domestic politics. In order to also have a term of comparison, methodologically speaking, it is necessary to create this bridge of connection with an element from the past to observe the dynamics and the comparison more clearly. The year 2011 still has Nicolas Sarkozy, the leader of the „Union pour un Mouvement Populaire" party, at the „helm" of France. „Its ideology includes aspects that highlight political pluralism, democracy and decentralization of power" (UMP, 2002). This right-wing party features elements of „conservative liberalism, Gaullism, Christian democracy and social liberalism", partly presenting both conservative and liberal views (UMP, 2002).

The end of Sarkozy's term in 2012 and the start of Hollande's term in May captured a 35% drop in French awareness of their rights as European citizens. The coming to power of a left-wing or even centre-left party, namely „Socialist Parties", brings with it a change in citizens' political vision and perception. At the ideological level, the party presents a series of values in the service of human dignity and progress in all its dimensions. Among them are „individual emancipation, redistribution of wealth, ecological conservation, democratic sovereignty or the conquest of new rights" (PS).

Throughout the mandate of François Hollande, moderate changes in citizens' perceptions can be observed. However, a significant discrepancy concerns the transition from 2013 to 2014, when changes are registered in the case of knowledge of rights, the desire to know more and whether their voice is heard. If in the fall of 2013, a percentage of 29% supported the fact that they know their rights as European citizens, in the spring of 2014, 34% supported this, so we register an increase of 5%. At the same time, the desire to know more increased from 68% to 72%, and their voice was heard more in 2014 when it presents a percentage of 54%, compared to 2013, only 36%, which means an increase of 16 %. We seek to identify some causes of these significant changes by checking the internal environment. In concrete terms,

we need to identify why they believe they know their rights better, show the desire to continue doing so and, even more, feel that their voice is heard.
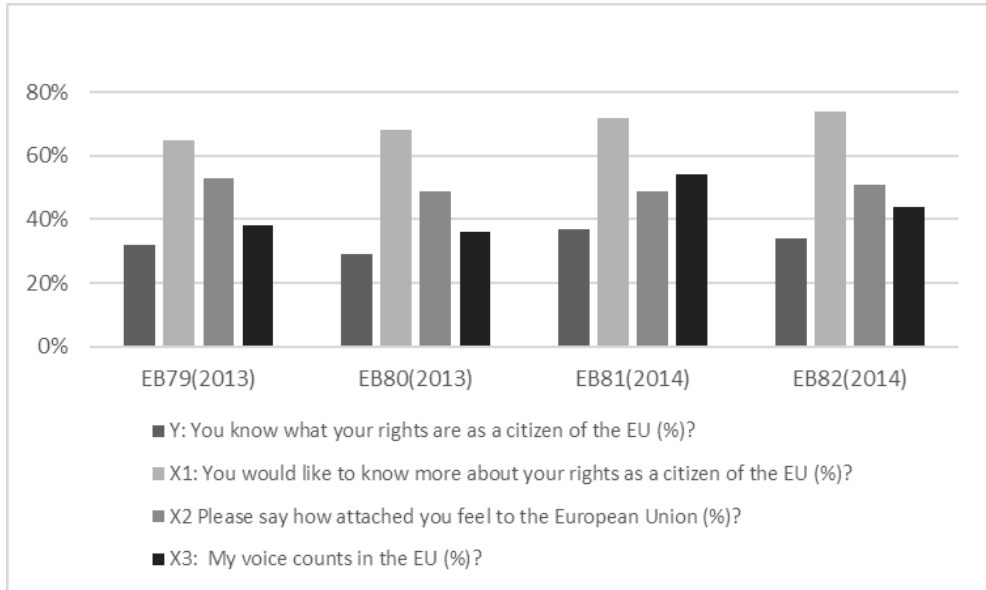

Figure 3. *The 2013-2014 gap in rights and the voice of citizens*

If we were to consult the internal politics of 2013-2014 in France, we see massive changes regarding the state of minorities. „In 2013 France expelled around 20,000 Roma from their camps" is the headline of a famous French newspaper, „Les Echos". „These forced evictions are the expression of a policy of rejection" of the Roma, which has „worsened" under the left. If we were to refer to the position adopted by President Holland, promoter of the respect of rights in the speeches held during the campaign, speeches to be analysed in the next section, it raised many question marks. Asking himself a rhetorical question, „Are we ashamed of everything we've done?", he answered with „No". Moreover, it claims to be the promoter of a „policy of numbers", being in accordance with the principle of „respecting rights" (HOLLANDE, 2014).

Implementing this policy could represent a cause of the position assigned by the citizens who presented themselves over time as being reviled by the presence of the Roma minority. Now, observing the change and the

implementation of the measures, their voice has been heard, European citizenship has been activated, and the desire to know grows with it. However, they forgot in some places the very principle of „non-discrimination", strongly amplified by the other member states, both at the institutional and social level. The right not to be discriminated against because of nationality is one of the rights of European citizenship, so we ask ourselves, have French citizens known this right of minorities or not? So how does one justify the increase in knowledge and yet violate them?
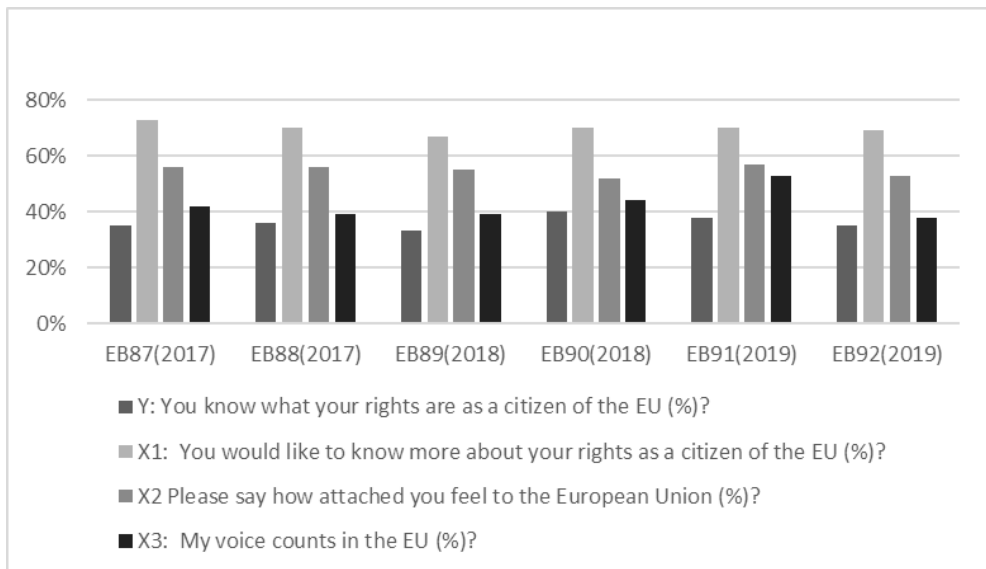

Figure 4. *Balance recorded between 2017-2019*

The start of Macron's term in 2017 has remained the same regarding French citizens' perceptions of European citizenship. We see an increase of 2%-4% regarding knowledge of rights, desire to learn more and if they feel that their voice is heard at the EU level. This means that the ruling left-wing party, La Republique en Marche!, and the liberal, EU-opening vision of President Macron do not strike a different chord with the French. The same thing is maintained during the following years, 2018-2019, the percentages being visibly close.

The analysis of the years 2020-22 does not bring anything new to citizens' perceptions, despite the European projects presented by President

Macron. Then we ask ourselves the rhetorical question: „Isn't internal politics to blame for the lack of information on European citizenship rights?"
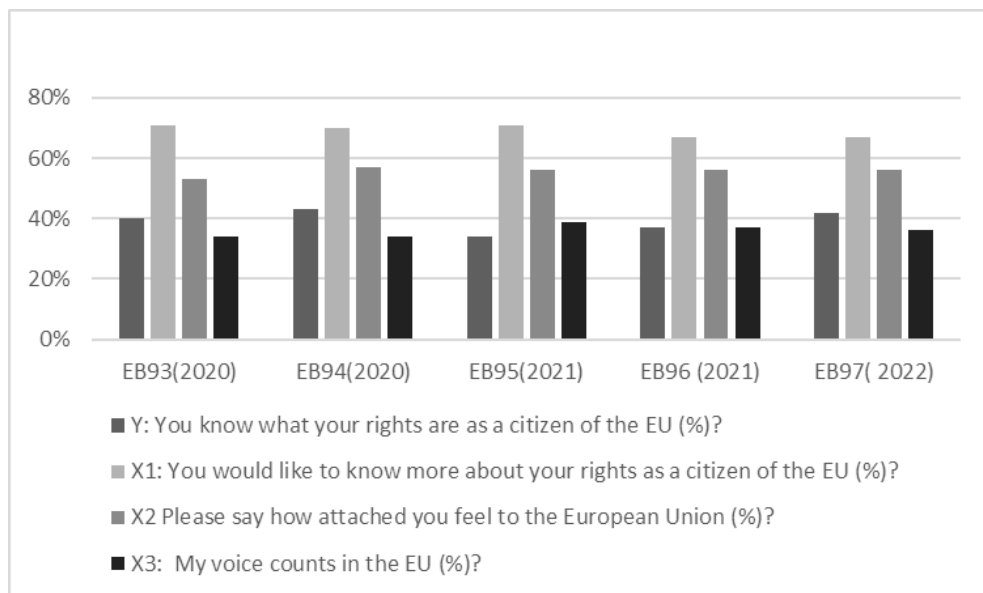
Figure 5. *Lack of change despite European projects*

CONCLUSIONS

All four independent variables significantly influence the sense of belonging to the EU. However, the coefficient of the variable „How attached are you to the EU?" is the highest each year, suggesting that this factor may have the most significant influence on the sense of belonging to the EU. French citizens present a dose of Euroscepticism. First of all, through the prism of the lack of feeling of belonging to the European Union, they do not fully share the values and principles of the Union. Second, all the other variables regarding the knowledge of rights and how much their voice matters reinforce the previously stated percentages proving this. Therefore, depending on the degree of attachment to the EU institutions, closeness, trust in them, knowledge of rights and the ability to influence as a citizen on decision-making factors can be defined if the French feel they are citizens of the European Union.

Following the previously stated conclusions, we identify a series of limits of the work that were not noticed during the research, referring to the elements that were not extensively analysed. One limitation is the lack of data on EU policies that have a repercussion on civil society, at least at the level of France, to see exactly what bothers them or how they position themselves regarding some European policies. The measurement of the degree of knowledge of the perception of European citizenship was carried out only from the perspective of Eurobarometers, which sometimes transmitted percentage differences or their gradual maintenance. In addition, the speeches of individual actors did not consistently include information regarding EU policies and their impact on French citizens. Thus, identifying sources that would provide us with data through which we can interpret the perceptions of the French represented a tortuous process.

However, all these gaps represent future research directions, the resumption of data collection and analysis processes in France on a larger scale. In this case, the research could be extended to a comparative study between France and a founding country of the European Union, which registers a high percentage in the Eurobarometers, for example, Luxembourg. Such research could highlight the strengths of the interdependent relationship between Luxembourg or any other founding state that presents values more profound than those of France and the EU. In addition, analysing the state's internal politics, the positioning of the political class, the ruling parties and the social contract between the state and citizens would represent important data sources that can later be analysed.

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A British paradox.
Citizens feel part of the European Union by voting for Brexit

Arsenia DUHALM

ABSTRACT. Citizenship of the European Union was a concept that had a special meaning for Great Britain. This concept touched the country's pride, making it feel threatened at the level of state sovereignty. The relationship between the European Union and Great Britain has been based on controversial feelings of dissatisfaction since the accession attempt. These relations led to creation of two camps, the pro-European and the Eurosceptic, designated by the Labour Party, the Conservative Party and later the United Kingdom Independence Party. This paper aims to discover the factors that influence the perception of the British about the citizenship of the European Union in the period 2012-2018. In order to analyse these data, the data published in the Standard Eurobarometer of Opinion from 2012-2018 will be used. The tracked data refer to citizens' trust in national institutions and feelings of belonging to the European Union.

Keywords: European citizenship, United Kingdom, Brexit, perception

INTRODUCTION

European Union citizenship was adopted by the Maastricht Treaty to strengthen the relationship between member states and bring people closer to the European Union. Then, in order to strengthen the concept of European citizenship, new aspects were established in the Treaty of Lisbon that offered more power of action to the European Union but also to the citizens. The importance of studying British nationals' perception of EU citizenship lies in the paradox that this case study represents. The citizens of the United Kingdom have a favourable opinion about what the European

Union represents, this aspect being noticed in the answers in the Eurobarometers, but they vote to leave the Union. The research question from which this analysis starts is: How has European Union citizenship influenced the paradox behind Brexit?

This study consists of five comprehensive chapters. The first section of this research aims to describe the most important concepts of this work. These terms largely guide the perceptions of UK nationals. Perceptions ultimately led to the exit of the state from the European Union based on the 2016 referendum.

Concepts such as EU citizenship, the relationship between the UK and the EU, Brexit and the media have the power to shape or even change citizens' perceptions. Around each concept, a connection is made with the representative political parties because, being put in charge by the will of the citizen, expressed by voting, they have the power to influence. The second section, *Background*, aims to outline an overview of the relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union, the relationship between European identity and citizens' support for the European Union, the influence of political parties, the social and cultural factors of Brexit, but also immigration and attitudes against the European Union.

The third section, *Analytical Framework*, consists of a series of research hypotheses that aim to provide an answer to the research question. The fourth section of this paper consists of the Research methodology. The Standard Eurobarometers of Opinion applied both in the spring and autumn from 2012 to 2018 were used, the reference country being the United Kingdom. This time frame was chosen because 2012 is a year in which the countries of the European Union feel the economic crisis triggered in 2008. In the following years, various events took place, which for the British represented an alarm signal regarding membership in the European Union. The year 2016 is relevant because it is when the United Kingdom made public its desire to be a member of the European Union no longer. The period of 2017 and 2018 is important due to the negotiation process between the UK and the EU.

BACKGROUND

The context of Great Britain's accession to the European Economic Community

The United Kingdom was sceptical about establishing an institution to manage the economic resources of the member states. Because of this, in the early 1950s, the UK declined the invitation to participate in the Coal and Steel Economic Community project. The British refused the invitation because membership in the CEEC presented more disadvantages than advantages (HOBER, 2006; GOWLAND & TURNER, 2012). A few years later, in 1962, the UK made visible its intention to enter the Common Market. An important moment in the relationship of the United Kingdom with the Union is the very attempt to become a member of the European Economic Community (EEC). The United Kingdom's accession to the EEC took place twelve years after the first application due to the opposition of France. The UK saw it as a double affront to reject its candidacy, as it relied on its tradition of success in negotiations and its international status (WILKES, 1997; SUTTON, 2011). The negotiation was carried out by the Conservative Party, and at the time of accession, the government was led by the Labour Party. The Labour Party tried to reopen the negotiation, being dissatisfied with the taxes, the price increase, and the funding of the community budget (WALL, 2018). Thus, in the contents of the Labour Party Manifesto from 1974, the way of negotiation of the Conservatives was blamed. "Britain is a European nation, and a Labour Britain would always seek wider co-operation between the peoples of Europe. A profound political mistake made by the Conservative government was to accept the terms of entry into the Common Market and to accept us without the consent of the British people" ("FEBRUARY 1974 LABOUR PARTY MANIFESTO"). In this manifesto, the idea of a referendum was introduced through which the population was consulted on the status of the UK, whether to continue in the EEC or to withdraw.

In literature, it is emphasized that the UK has been Eurosceptic since the beginning of the formation of the European Union. However, at that time, it was seen as a kind of "conventional wisdom among British political elites" (SZCZERBIAK & TAGGART, 2008, P. 94). This country continued in this direction

by renegotiating the membership terms and holding the referendum in 1975. The referendum's result for the UK to continue within the EEC recorded a percentage of 67%. Then, "the evolution of Euroscepticism took place in parallel with the efforts of political decision-makers to achieve a closer political integration within the EU and appeared as a reaction to these actions, categorized as destabilizing the nation and the sovereignty of the states" (SZCZERBIAK & TAGGART, 2008, P. 95)

A new stage in the relationship between Brussels and London was the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty on the European Union in 1992. Two crucial provisions in the treaty referred to the implementation of the single currency and to European citizenship that overlapped with the sovereignty of the states. The "UK Independence Party" was founded as an adverse reaction to this treaty, promoting a Eurosceptic agenda. The signing of the Maastricht Treaty coincided with the breakup of the Soviet Union. This fact creates the context for the expansion of the European Union towards Eastern Europe (WALL, 2018).

Brexit is not a surprise, looking at the past relationship between the UK and the EU. Shortly after the treaty of accession to the Union was signed, it asked to renegotiate the dissatisfied conditions and requested the public opinion to stay or leave. An insignificant step for some, but extremely important for the United Kingdom, is introducing Article 50 in the European Union Treaty in 2007. This Article stipulates that "Any member state may decide, in accordance with its constitutional norms, to withdraw from the Union" (CONSOLIDATED VERSION OF THE TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION, 2012).

The negotiations regarding the exit of the UK from the European Union, following the result of the referendum, concerned different areas of interest. The focus fell on the economic relations that would exist after the official exit from the Union, aspects related to the rights of European citizens on British territory, the border of Northern Ireland, and the transfer of European institutions/agencies. Given the situation in which no other state has left the European Union, the negotiations were long-lasting. ("TIMELINE – EU-UK WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT," 2023).

The period selected for analysis, 2012-2018, was full of challenges. Given the events that took place during this period, the effectiveness of the

European Union from the perspective of the United Kingdom was called into question. During this period, the discourse on the European Union is being built, a discourse whose purpose is Brexit. The two general elections majorly influenced the period analysed in 2012 and 2015. In 2012, the effects of the economic crisis of 2008 were still being felt (EMMERSON & TETLOW, 2015), and the British government had to face a series of a wide range of economic challenges (MULLIGAN & ZIEBA, 2020), the context created by the immigrant crisis of 2015 (PESHKOPIA ET AL., 2022) or terrorist attacks (PANTUCCI, 2014)

The referendum to leave the European Union in 2016 marked a turning point in the relationship between the UK and the EU. Despite voting to leave the European Union, British citizens have shown increasing confidence in EU citizenship. This literature review aims to explain this paradox. The following aspects will be examined, which will form the basis of the analysis of this study.

The relationship between European identity and citizens' support for the European Union

The Maastricht Treaty first shaped the idea of European citizenship, giving Europeans a sense of exclusivity and belonging to a common good. Regarding citizenship, the Treaty stipulates a series of fundamental rights, such as diplomatic protection and the right to vote, to which are added the right to free movement and the right to petition (BOCQUET, 1994). Citizenship symbolises equality, non-discrimination, and the rights of nationals of member countries and offers the Union's perspective (CAMBIEN ET AL., 2020). According to (Bocquet, 1994), European citizenship is viewed differently according to age, the young being the ones who activate the benefits of citizenship. Union citizenship is the determining factor in the European integration process. Precisely for this reason, in the context of the negotiations between the United Kingdom and the European Union, EU citizenship was a priority on the European agenda. This negotiation surprised the attitude of British officials who wanted to limit the rights of European Union citizens (CAMBIEN ET AL., 2020).

The more EU citizens identify with Europe, the stronger their collective European identity is (BERGBAUER, 2018, P.25). This statement can be explained through the two theories AGIRDAG ET AL. (2012) stated. The theory of social

identity refers to an individual's belonging to a certain social group. In contrast, the self-categorisation theory offers the possibility of materialising collective identity. Collective identity comprises several elements, such as the feeling of belonging, trust, sharing of shared values, and solidarity towards the group an individual is a part of. According to BERGBAUER (2018), citizens' perception of the European Union is established based on accumulated information or their own experience. Political leaders propagate the information and have a high impact on citizens' identification with the European Union and the assumption of Union citizenship. The experience is accumulated when the benefits that come back from assuming the citizenship of the European Union are activated. Britain interpreted this European collective identity as a threat to the integrity and sovereignty of the state (BRUBAKER, 1992). MENON AND WAGER (2020) bring to attention the idea of an identity crisis because British citizenship loses its essence with the assumption of Union citizenship. According to SPIERING (2015), the vote to leave the Union raised deep emotions about group identity.

The positions of the political parties regarding the membership of the European Union

The United Kingdom held general elections in 2010 and 2015, and the analysis period for this research is 2012-2018. They are relevant because they set the developments internally and externally. These elections significantly impacted the country's future in terms of membership in the European Union. Each political party draws up a political manifesto expressing its vision, political strategy and commitment to voters. In the 2015 Conservative Party manifesto, the vision of the European Union does not differ much from that of 2010 („CONSERVATIVE MANIFESTO, 2015"). In 2010, the Conservative Party adopted a critical attitude regarding the control the Union wanted to exercise over the member states. In these documents, the idea of a referendum is invoked, along with stressing the importance of British people being involved in decision-making. In 2015, the Conservative Party ensured its victory in the elections by initiating the referendum („THE CONSERVATIVE MANIFESTO", 2010).

The 2010 Labour Party Manifesto and its political vision were built in response to the Conservative Party's vision („THE LABOUR PARTY MANIFESTO, 2010"). The perspective of this party regarding the European Union implies a plan of collaboration in solving some international challenges. In 2015, the same vision was kept, but the novelty comes from the fact that, at the end of the lecture, the consultation of public opinion through a referendum is mentioned („LABOUR PARTY MANIFESTO, 2015").

The manifesto of the Liberal Democratic Party and the perception of the European Union remain constant. The European Union is presented as essential in the development of the UK and the process of maintaining its great power status („LIBERAL DEMOCRAT MANIFESTO 2010"). This manifesto mentions the referendum but to emphasize that change comes from the citizens. The reference to the referendum creates the perfect framework to highlight the benefits that Britain derives from this collaboration. („LIBERAL DEMOCRAT GENERAL ELECTION MANIFESTO 2015").

The manifestos from 2010 and 2015 of the Party for the Independence of the United Kingdom have as their central subject the exit of the country from the European Union („UKIP PARTY MANIFESTO 2010"). They address sensitive economic, social and political topics for citizens. The disadvantages of membership in the Union („UKIP MANIFESTO 2015") are highlighted by facts. The negative image created around the Union attracted a large number of followers, given the number of votes obtained in the general election (HAWKINS ET AL., 2015).

Each manifesto begins with a representative slogan, where the idea of „we" is emphasized (GREEN & PROSSER, 2016), a political party that operates based on the people's decision. Also, in the eight political manifestos analysed, it is noted that each political party refers to the referendum in the context of the relationship with the Union. Some parties are more vocal about leaving the European Union, while others vaguely mention this goal. Once the party is elected, the manifesto becomes the document based on which the government is carried out (ORMROD & HENNEBERG, 2009). In 2010, the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats formed a coalition to form the government because no party obtained a majority of the votes. In 2015, the election winners were the Conservatives assuming the start of the referendum. In

the 2015 election campaign, the Conservative Party adopted the same strategy as the Labor Party in 1975. It promised to renegotiate the terms of accession to the European Union. After winning the elections, the party submitted a request for negotiation to the European Union. In order to withdraw a state from the Union, the state had to notify the European Council. In order to convince the UK to abandon its exit from the European Union, the European Council launched "A New Settlement for the United Kingdom in the European Union", a document full of significant concessions (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2016). Despite this attempt, the result of the referendum was decisive; 52% voted for Britain to leave the European Union (SCHÜTZE, 2022).

The Social and Cultural Factors of Brexit

The percentage that made the difference between leaving or staying in the European Union was tiny. The literature cites several reasons for this difference and the motivation behind the decision to leave the European Union—the existence of a set of economic problems, immigration, legislation, and voter subjectivity. CHAN ET AL. (2020) offer two theoretical perspectives to explain this phenomenon. The first premise refers to the lack of well-being of the citizen in economically disadvantaged areas; the floor of votes was higher for the achievement of Brexit. The second premise encompasses cultural difficulties and national identity. The UK is home to great cultural diversity, which CHAN AND TURNER (2017) presented in three categories of cultural consumers: cultural omnivores, cultural univores and cultural piscivores. Cultural omnivores describe an elitist, wise category of people with high popularity. The second category, cultural univor, represents those without financial stability, whose resources are limited, and whose evolution is slowed down. The third category is in the middle between omnivores and cultural univores. Through this cultural delimitation, the authors emphasize that people from the omnivorous category are more open to the European Union and its diversity (CHAN & GOLDTHORPE, 2007).

Given these categories, cultural omnivores or elites had a significant impact in shaping the outcome of the 1975 referendum. They influenced citizens' perception of the Common Market and created the 'follow the leader'

effect. Regarding the 2016 referendum, voters were subjective and influenced by their own difficulties (CLARKE ET AL., 2021).

Immigration and attitudes towards the European Union

The evolution of Euroscepticism took place in parallel with the efforts of political decision-makers to achieve closer political integration within the EU. It appeared as a reaction to these actions, categorized as destabilizing the nation and state sovereignty (SZCZERBIAK & TAGGART, 2008). Euroscepticism is also because the European Union is perceived as threatening state resources and policies (STOCKEMER ET AL., 2018). The Maastricht Treaty provides for the right to free movement, favouring the increase in the number of immigrants. Immigration has been used as a strategic tool to manipulate workers by the political elite and the media (HELBLING, 2014). The economic factors for which a particular country is chosen determine the nature of the conflict between immigrants and citizens. These factors include contact between groups, competition for resources, and even elements of identity (GOODMAN, 2021). Citizens, under the pressure felt by immigrants, invoke national principles of belonging and devotion to the country, and at the same time, interest in political activity increases (GOODMAN, 2021). The European Union is to blame for this uncontrolled flow of immigrants because it promotes cultural diversity, European integration and free movement. DE VREESE AND BOOMGAARDEN (2005, P 64) argue that European integration „brings together people from different countries, regions and cultures, and perhaps of different religions and ethnicities". This desire to bring together people from different cultures was perceived as a forced European integration.

The manifesto of the United Kingdom Independence Party advocated withdrawing from the European Union to restore the national economy as it should not contribute to the EU budget, aiming to become an important economic and political actor globally. By leaving the Union, the flow of immigrants can be controlled and even limited, depending on the citizens' desire and the state's need („UKIP MANIFESTO 2015").

The literature confirms that behind Brexit are numerous causes that led to this stage in the relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union. Social, cultural, and economic factors, the relationship

between the citizen with political parties or with the European Union, and immigration are the basic pawns for the analysis to be carried out.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

The previous section allowed the outline of a perspective regarding the research topic. In what follows, some research hypotheses will be analysed.

Brexit represents a cultural backlash against the progressive value shift of recent decades (CHAN ET AL., 2020). The same author divided cultural consumers into three categories, where he specified that those who are part of the omnivores category are open to new opportunities and take advantage of the rights proposed by the European Union. At the same time, the rest of the categories of cultural consumers have an isolationist perspective justified by their devotion to the homeland. In this case, according to H1, the elites are those who can identify themselves as citizens of the Union and have a positive image of the European Union.

H1: *British citizens who identify more strongly as citizens of the European Union are more likely to have a positive image of the EU*

If we consider H1, there is a debate about European identity and attitudes towards the European Union in the literature. Some studies have focused precisely on the attitudes of the British towards the EU in the context of Brexit. They confirmed that age and education played a fundamental role in the referendum. The young and the well-educated want to stay in the European Union. Also, those who belong to an advantageous social class with a high social status are Remainers (CHAN ET AL., 2020).

H2: *British citizens who believe the UK would be better off outside the European Union are less likely to consider themselves EU citizens*

From the information gathered up to this point, the citizens who have positioned themselves in the Leave camp present characteristics of a multidimensional nature. The policies regarding the economy, security, immigration, and the intrusion of the European Union into internal affairs are the elements on the basis of which the Leave camp supports its cause. Those who support hypothesis H2 are those who promote nationalist and belonging

feelings. According to KAUFMANN (2016), the British support the insular approach to the European Union and find Brexit a great opportunity to regulate social inequities. According to the authors MENON AND WAGER (2020), the historical baggage of the United Kingdom is a determining factor in the Brexit story. From a great colonial power, the UK has become just a mere member of an organization. The same authors bring to attention the idea of an identity crisis, in the sense that British citizenship loses its essence with the assumption of European Union citizenship. This perspective is propagated by opinion leaders and appropriated by the target audience.

H3: *Trust in political parties is positively associated with a stronger identification as an EU citizen for the British*

In the literature, we have identified two approaches aimed at European identity; the first refers to a society-based approach, and the second to the institutional approach (VERHAEGEN ET AL., 2015). The society-based approach refers to European citizens' trust in each other and how they identify to build a community. The political elite, who managed to influence public opinion, launched this process of building a European community. Trust in political institutions is directly proportional to citizens' trust in the institutions of the European Union (MUÑOZ ET AL., 2011). The perception is the same regarding efficiency and keeping promises. Through the trust offered in the institutions, the citizen expects a fair partnership and respect for his interests (COOK, 2001). The way the European integration process takes place is managed at the local level, which means that the way the relationship with the European Union is perceived is directly influenced by the institutions and the people in leadership positions (LOVELESS & ROHRSCHNEIDER, 2011).

H4: *British people's trust in media channels influences the feeling of belonging to the European Union*

European citizenship is a political concept based on European values and applied to the territory of the member countries (DELANTY & RUMFORD, 2013). The meaning given to European citizenship has a great connection with the communication strategy that the European Union adopts (H4). In the sense that through the prism of communication, the Union builds its image on a regional, national level. Thus, the literature mentions the factors

that contribute to the crystallization of public opinion regarding the citizenship of the European Union. Union citizenship is built around factors such as the European Union, the media, the citizen himself and interest groups. The connection between the European Union and mass media is made through the prism of public relations and communications. Between the mass media and the citizen, there is a fixed agenda of information to be disseminated. The citizen then comes with his influence and designates the person he wants to represent, thus creating the interest group. Based on an agenda and public issues, the interest group connects with the European Union. These relationships are what build the identity of Union citizenship (REBEL, 2013, PP. 53-60)

Research methodology and data analysis

In what follows, the main purpose is to present the selection of cases, the method used and the data analysis.

Case selection

This paper focuses on the case of the United Kingdom, particularly on the perception of European Union citizenship among nationals. The UK was chosen as a case study because it represents a special situation, the relations had throughout the collaboration with the European Union were complex and at the same time complicated. With this information at hand, I want to make a correlation with the perception of the British about what citizenship of the European Union means to them. The analysed period starts from the spring of 2012 to the fall of 2018. This interval has been chosen because, in 2012, the effects of the economic crisis were still being felt, followed by other events, culminating in 2016, with the holding of the referendum.

Data collection method

This work also aims to identify citizens' perceptions of European Union citizenship. The research question from which this analysis starts is: *How has European Union citizenship influenced the paradox behind Brexit?*

Thus, in the research of this paper, the quantitative approach has been used because this method allows the researcher „to study specific problems by examining data that were originally collected for other purposes" (SMITH, 2006, P. 3). Quantitative analysis allows the researcher to investigate a broader

sector of the population (DALE ET AL., 2012). This approach starts from theory to specific hypotheses that are analysed quantitatively. For quantitative research to be accurate, five steps must be followed. The first step refers to identifying the basic questions. The participants are determined, the methods necessary to answer the questions are selected, the analysis tools are selected, and finally, the understanding and interpretation of the results (SWANSON & HOLTON, 2005, P. 29). Most researchers rely on Eurobarometer surveys, as they are the only data source that allows cross-national and longitudinal comparisons (HOBOLT & DE VRIES, 2016, PP. 415–417). Eurobarometers represent a source of public data that allows the researcher to assess some information that would otherwise have been difficult to collect (DALE ET AL., 2012). According to KAASE & SARIS (1997), Eurobarometers are helpful because they allow the researcher to compare the present with the past and compare different countries. The Eurobarometers are applied to the member states and those candidates for the European Union. The survey is applied to residents with an average knowledge of the national language to answer the questions. A randomly selected sample is selected in each country, directly proportional to the population size. Regional administrative units were established to collect the data. Respondents were randomly selected and participated in face-to-face, telephone or web-based interviews in their mother tongue (Europa.eu). The Eurobarometer measures citizens' attitudes towards various aspects of the European Union and the state they belong to (NISSEN, 2014).

The data were collected from the Standard Eurobarometers of Opinion: EB 77.3, EB 78.1, EB 79.3, EB 80.1, EB 81.4, EB 82.3, EB 83.3, EB 84.3, EB 85.2, EB 86.2, EB 87.3, EB 88.3, EB 89.1, EB 90.3.

From these Eurobarometers, the questions that directly refer to or refer to the concept of European Union citizenship were selected. Thus, from each Eurobarometer, we selected the questions: „Do you feel like a citizen of the EU", „In general, does the EU evoke a very positive, quite positive, neutral, quite negative or very negative image for you?", „Our country could cope better with the future outside the EU", „I would like to ask you a question about how much you trust a certain institution, for each of the following institutions please tell me if you tend to trust or not in the institution". These questions were selected because they highlight the perception of British

citizens towards the European Union, the central subject of this research. Questions that do not directly refer to the subject of EU citizenship are processed from the perspective of the influence exerted on nationals. Questions of membership, the image projected on the European Union, and the vision of a future outside it make the difference between Remain and Leave. Questions that refer to citizens' trust in certain institutions, in this case, political parties and the media, are used to identify whether there is a certain degree of outside influence on the perception of the British.

The opinion of British citizens on European Union citizenship was measured by the four questions mentioned above in the period 2012-2018. In the Eurobarometers, through the answers given by the British, Great Britain is positioned below the average of the answers collected at the level of the European Union in most cases (Figure 1).

The four questions selected from the EB are about the perception of Britons about Union citizenship. Figure 1 shows the British's opinion about their relationship with the European Union, as well as the internal relations with the parties and the press.
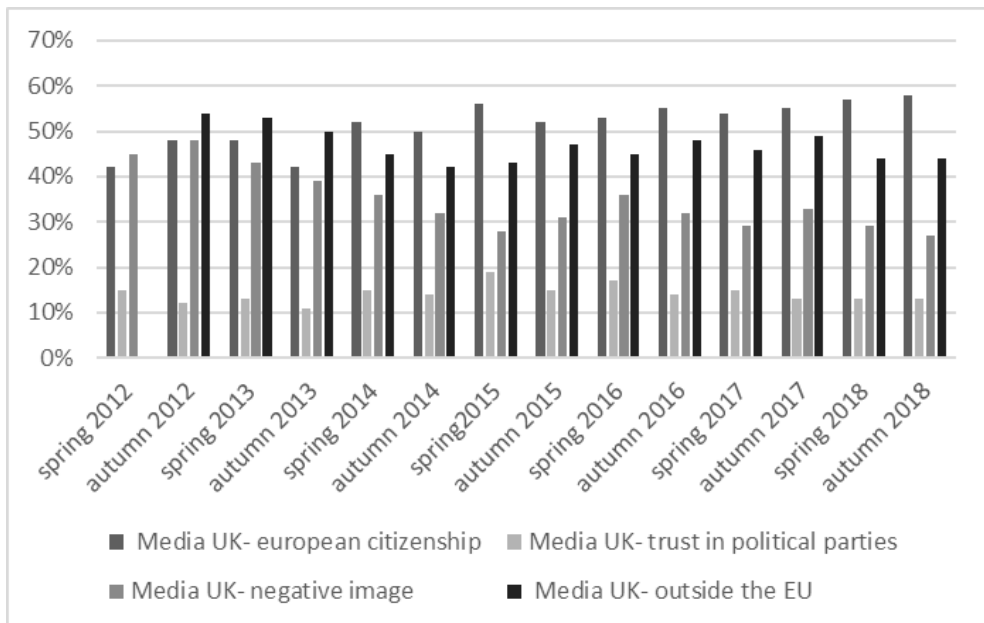
Figure 1. *Relationship between variables*

Source: Standard Eurobarometers 2012-2018

In most cases, a constant average is maintained, with minor exceptions regarding the negative image of the Union, where a considerable decrease is registered. From the average of Great Britain, compared to that registered at the level of the European Union, a slight fluctuation can be observed at the level of percentages. These differences may arise due to the Eurosceptic attitude, lack of education or respondents' involvement (FISHER ET AL., 2019). The question that measures the level of citizenship of the Union can be observed an increase at the level of Great Britain, but also in the case of the question concerning the future of the country outside the European Union. Certain dates somehow cancel each other out, in the sense that a considerable percentage of British people feel they are citizens of the Union in the midst of the referendum process. The same sample of people answered that Britain would be better off if it left the European Union.

Subsequently, we will perform a multiple regression analysis to check if the Eurobarometer questions are correlated. The desire of the British represents the dependent variable that is the subject of this analysis captured in the question, „Do you feel like an EU citizen?" This question was chosen as the dependent variable because it represents a paradox around which the rest of the independent variables are situated. The independent variables are closely related to the dependent variable. In this case, the independent variables with which the comparative analysis was carried out relate to a negative image, trust in political parties and Union citizenship.

Regarding the respondents' image of the European Union, they had to answer if it is positive, quite positive, neutral, quite negative or very negative. We took the answers regarding the negative image, and the highest percentage was recorded in 2012 at 48%; in the rest of the years, it was close to the average of the European Union. The second variable concerns trust in institutions, especially political parties. The question referring to this is, „I would like to ask you a question about how much you trust a certain institution, for each of the following institutions, please tell me whether you tend to trust or not institution - Political Parties". And the last variable addresses the question „Could your country cope better with the future outside the EU"?

Table 1. *The main predictors revealed by regression's results*

Eurobarometer	EU image for you	Our country would have a better future outside of the EU	Our trust in the Political Parties	R squared
May 2012	0.443***	-	0.227*	0.20
May 2013	0.411***	-	0.331*	0.20
May 2014	0.316***	-0.299***	0.439***	0.35
May 2015	0.371***	-0.298***	0.098	0.35
May 2016	0.393***	-0.322***	0.128	0.48
May 2017	0.362***	-0.374***	0.083	0.49
March 2018	0.332***	-0.353***	0.024	0.41

p<0.001***; p<0.01**; p<0.05*

Source: European Commission (2022)

Source: Standard Eurobarometer of Opinion 2012-2018

Table 1 shows the coefficients obtained by the independent variables in the period analysed. As can be seen, each independent variable is positively or negatively correlated with the dependent variable. Following the analysis of the variables, it can be seen if there is a real influence between the dependent and independent variables. Thus, for the question concerning the image of the European Union among the respondents, the results show that a person's perception of the EU is directly correlated with the extent to which he feels like a citizen of the European Union. For example, in May 2012, it was found that if people have a favourable view of the EU, they are more likely to identify as EU citizens. For the Eurobarometer question that aims to identify citizens' perceptions of a future outside the European Union, the regression indicates that those who believe their country would prosper better outside the EU tend to feel less like EU citizens. This feeling is strong in certain years but not in all. Trust in political parties is not a determining factor in this analysis. Given the low percentage recorded in the data collected with the help of Eurobarometers, it does not present a clear picture of the fact that trust in political parties influences the feeling of belonging to the EU. There appears to be a link in certain years, but it is not a constant.

„R-squared" is an indicator that measures how accurate our analysis is. A value closer to 1 indicates a higher accuracy (1= 100%; 0.41 =41%). For example, in 2012 and 2013, the accuracy was 20%, which means that these

three factors – the image of the EU, the perspective on the future outside the EU and trust in political parties – can only explain 20% of how people feel about their EU citizenship.

This analysis does not show us the causes of these feelings but only identifies their connections. What clarifies are the percentages obtained in Eurobarometers every year. Here we can only see if one variable influences the other, not the respondents' answers.

Therefore, comparatively, the negative image of the European Union is the most important variable in explaining the desire of British citizens to leave the EU, followed by the variable measuring the citizenship of the Union among the British, as presented in this case.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Following the multiple regression, we identified that the questions that correlate are those aimed at the EU's negative image and the British's desire to leave the Union.

As stated in the previous section, European citizenship was introduced due to the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty. This citizenship was viewed with scepticism as political decision-makers felt it as an undermining of the authority and sovereignty of the state.

According to the Standard Eurobarometers of Opinion (Figure 2), British citizens feel they are citizens of the European Union. There is a fine gap between the EU average and the UK average. Figure 2 shows that in spring 2015 and autumn 2016, the highest values were recorded, 56% in 2015 and a percentage of 55% in 2016. In 2015 it was the migrant crisis that was discursively presented as a catastrophe for the Kingdom United because of the large number of immigrants. Immigrants coming in and taking the jobs that the British should have filled (GOODMAN, 2021). The second high value recorded was in the fall of 2016 when the referendum to remain or leave the European Union was voted. In difficult times feelings about belonging to the citizenship of the Union will increase (STOCKEMER ET AL., 2018). The average recorded by the UK during the analysed period did not rise to the level of the European Union average, the lowest percentage in terms of feelings was recorded in 2013 at 59%, and the highest percentage was found in 2015 and 2016 with a

value of 67% in both cases. Also, in 2017 and 2018, there was even a slight tendency to increase the feelings of the British regarding the European Union, even though at that time, the UK was in the transition and negotiation to leave the European Union. The main reason there is an increase in percentages may be due to adequate education and communication at the level of the European Union (CHAN ET AL., 2020). Education about European citizenship is fundamental because the more educated a citizen is, the more we tend to believe he knows his citizenship rights. The level of the communication strategy is relevant, and it is an aspect that made trust in European citizenship grow the closer one is to the people. This rapprochement is achieved by explaining in simple language what is happening at the level of the Union, what are the rights and the benefits; in this way, the message reaches the citizens faster (KOCHENOV, 2020).
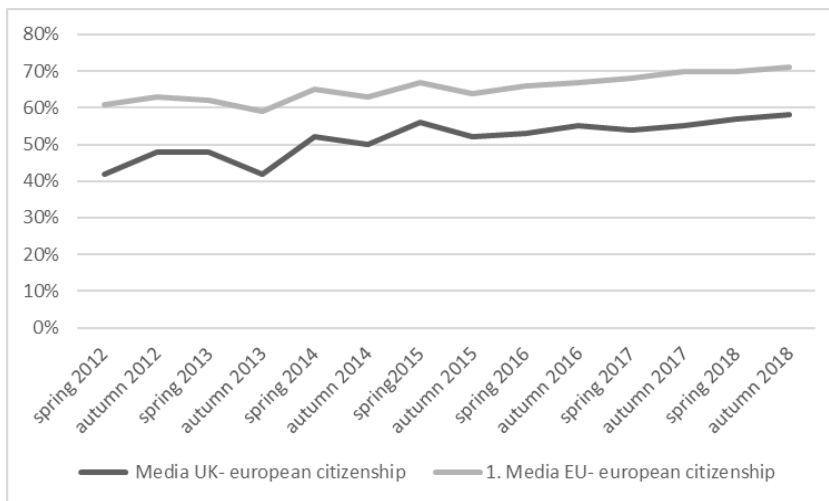

Figure 2. *British people's attachment to European Union citizenship*
Source: Standard Eurobarometer of Opinion 2012-2018

In order to see if the trust in certain institutions influenced the perception of the British regarding European citizenship, we chose the political parties, which according to the literature, enjoy the greatest public exposure (Figure 3). Thus, we gathered information on trust in political parties, the most relevant and vocal in the UK are the Conservative Party, the Labour Party, the UK Independence Party and the Liberal Democrat Party.

As can be seen, the percentage recorded in Figure 3 regarding trust in parties, both at the level of the European Union and the United Kingdom, is low. In the case of the UK, the lowest recorded value was 11% in the fall of 2013, and the highest was 19% in the spring of 2015. The parties build a political manifesto in the electoral campaign to express their vision. Each party's manifesto aims to solve some challenges of general interest, and strategies are listed with which they can be solved (DERMODY & SCULLION, 2001). The political manifestos related to the research period selected to be analysed are those of 2010 and 2015 that had an impact on the future of the United Kingdom. The characteristics of party candidates, along with the image and history of the party, are key elements of the political offer (KAVANAGH, 1995). The Labour Party manifesto was written more as an adverse reaction to the policies of the Conservative Party, and the link with the European Union is vaguely mentioned.
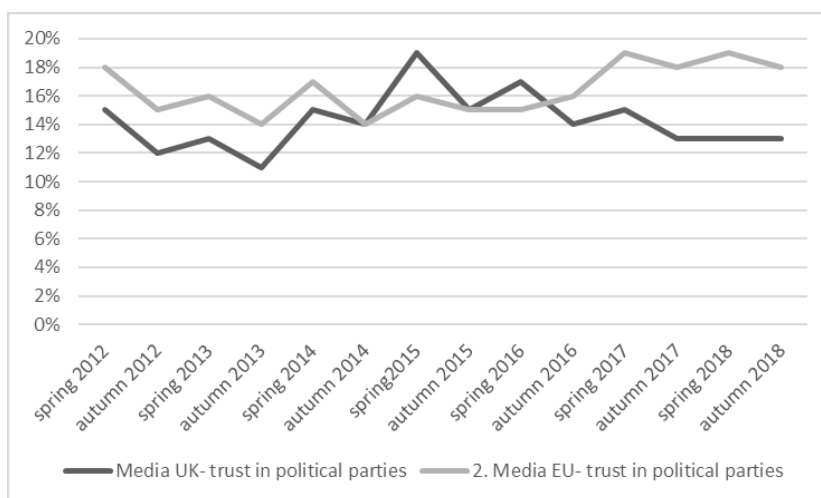

Figure 3. *The level of trust of the British in political parties*
Source: Standard Eurobarometer of Opinion 2012-2018

On the other hand, the Conservative Party, in 2015, came up with the idea of holding a referendum through which citizens would express their desire to stay or leave the Union. The UK Independence Party has framed its political manifesto around why the UK should leave the Union. The Liberal Democratic Party has a continuity in its political strategy and positions itself

to support membership in the European Union. Two camps are emerging, pro and against membership of the Union and thus, through the circumstances, they push the citizens to make a choice. According to literature, parties in election campaigns promise issues that they cannot or do not want to keep, automatically leading to low trust in parties. As the UK average approaches that of the European Union, distrust of political parties is not an isolated issue, being present in all Member States.

Starting from the question, „In general, does the EU evoke a very positive, quite positive, neutral, quite negative or very negative image for you?" the focus falls on the values that underline the negative image of the Union. As for the United Kingdom, compared to the values recorded at the level of the European Union, they are much lower. The highest percentage of citizens among whom the image is negative was 48% in the fall of 2012; the lowest value recorded is in 2015. The same situation is repeated in the case of trust in parties, where in the spring of 2015, the respondents had a more significant attraction towards the European Union. At the level of the European Union, the recorded values are relatively low, between 19% and 29%. Stocks favour the Union even though the UK is heading for Brexit. Mathematically, the percentages show that citizens have a positive image of Union citizenship.
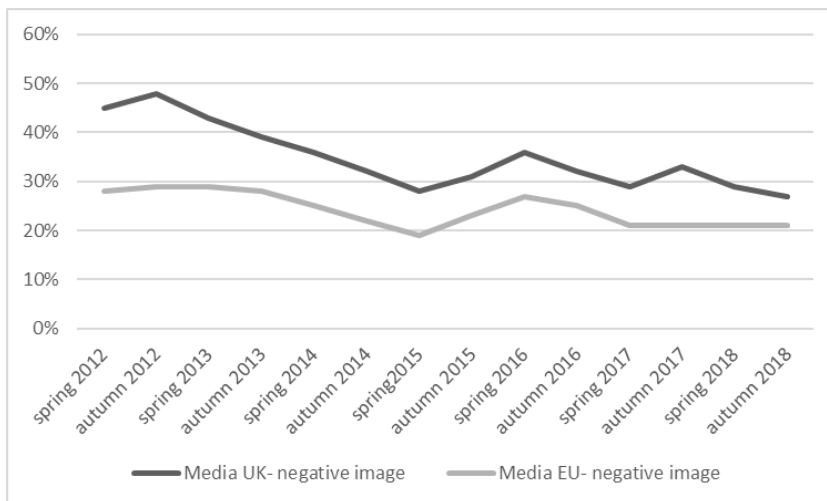
Figure 4. *Projection of a negative image on the European Union*
Source: Standard Eurobarometer of Opinion 2012-2018

The last criterion for analysing the perception of the British regarding the citizenship of the European Union is the sense of belonging (Figure 5). Respondents were asked whether the UK would better cope with all the challenges if it left the European Union.
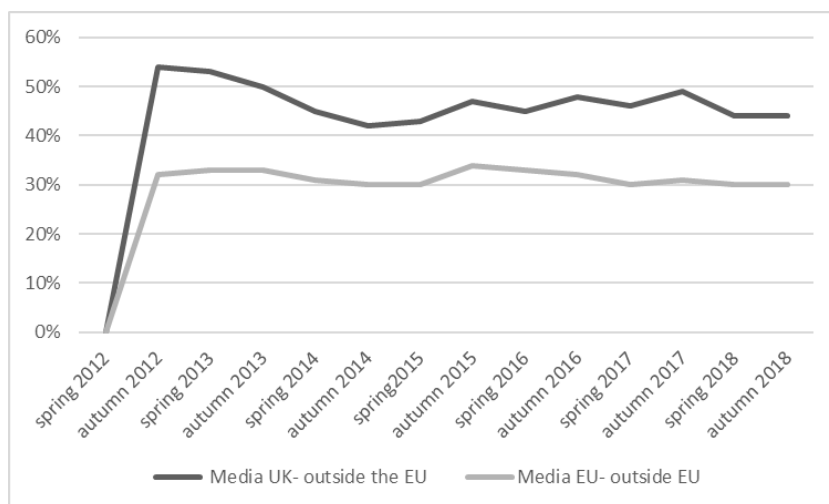
Figure 5. *The vision of an anticipated Brexit*
Source: Standard Eurobarometer of Opinion 2012-2018

Not surprisingly, given the relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union, the values recorded were relatively high but not exaggerated in relation to those recorded at the level of the Union. To some extent, with few exceptions, the values from this question start from 2012 in descending order. That is, the value recorded in 2012 was 54%, and at the end of 2016, the value was 48%. This figure holds, with over 40% each year saying the UK would be better off if it left the Union. Compared to the values presented above, in the Union, the lowest percentage recorded on this subject is 30%, and the highest is 34%. The parties positioned themselves differently towards the European Union in the two periods in which general elections were held. The Liberal Democrat Party pointed to the benefits the UK enjoys as a member of the European Union. At the same time, the UK Independence Party argued that the Union stands in the way of development. From another perspective, the Labour Party sees the European Union as a market for British products and services. Over the vision, the strategy

of the other parties comes the Conservative Party with the project aimed at the exit of Great Britain from the European Union. Referendums often ask citizens to decide on complex and unfamiliar issues (HOBOLT, 2006), which means that political decision-makers who put forward the request do not want to take responsibility for such a decision. The decision was left in the hands of people more or less educated about what the European Union stands for, easily manipulated and misinformed. The literature revealed that the Remainers camp was more vocal and active on social media platforms (CLARKE ET AL., 2021).

After analysing these statistics over six years, we have come to some conclusions. Regarding the question that verifies how European citizens feel, the values were high, even though approximately the same values were recorded at the level of perception of the negative image. In the data from the Eurobarometers chosen to be analysed, it was identified that there are questions that cancel each other out to a certain extent. One noticed another interesting aspect, the values are high at certain specific moments, depending to a large extent on the internal political context. When the referendum was launched in the spring of 2015, questions about feelings of belonging and trust in the European Union registered positive values that did not portend Brexit.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper analysed the factors that may influence the perception of the British people regarding the citizenship of the European Union during the period 2012-2018. According to what was presented during these chapters, the factors I mentioned and presented did not actually impact the perception of Union citizenship, and there are no significant changes. The factors mentioned and supported by the Eurobarometer analysis are not factors that determined and justified Brexit. The analysis of variables and multiple regression evidenced this finding. The closer it got to the time of the referendum, the more the record values were beneficial to the Union.

Citizenship of the European Union and the way in which the British related to it has been controversial. Analysing the past, the relationship between the European Union and the United Kingdom comprised many

grievances promoted among citizens by political parties. Domestic actions and external challenges have shaped an image and perspective of what the Union represents for Britain.

Another conclusion we reached is that those who answered that they do not feel like citizens of the European Union are those who did not directly benefit from these rights. They represent that category of people who have not activated their European citizenship, free movement in the member states, the right of residence, and the right to petition.

The position adopted by parties for or against the European Union has created the Remainers and Leavers camps and even a division at the level of society. There is chronic tension and constant debate between Remain and Leave among British citizens. The finding of this study shows that this debate in British society has not altered the perception of EU citizenship.

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