CITIZENSHIP VARIATIONS IN EUROPE:
DE-ETHNICIZATION VERSUS RE-ETHNICIZATION

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The participants of the discussion, organised at the Gellner room of the Central European University (CEU) on 7 July, were *André Lieblich* from the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Genève, *Christian Joppke* from the University of Bern, *Mária Kovács* and *Szabolcs Pogonyi* from the CEU. All participants take part in the Politics of Ethnicity summer course at the CEU. The event was lead by *Zsolt Körtvélyesi*. The language of the discussion was English.

The roundtable was initiated by *Christian Joppke*, who explained the title concept of the discussion, suggesting that this double concept might be a useful basis to understand citizenship variations in Europe. His approach concerned mainly Western European countries, where the de-ethnicization process gives a great challenge to Western governments in connection with a huge number of immigrants. *Joppke* pointed out that there was a significant development in the field of immigration politics that took place after the 1980's, which for instance in Germany led to a radical reform of its relevant policy in 2000.

The increased openness, inclusiveness and liberalization of the ethnicization process were due to three important factors, according to *Joppke*. First of all, governments have made the naturalisation process much easier e.g. by diminishing waiting times before an applicant can receive citizenship. Secondly, a pragmatic concept of the state (increasing tolerance) and more rightful claims from part of the applicants also made citizenship processes more accessible for the immigrants. (Germany for example has discovered its basic interests in neutralising its immigrants, but a total cultural assimilation was no longer required from part of applicants.) And thirdly, the introduction of a territorial birthright citizenship for the second generation, an idea originally from the United States, meant a real novelty to the European system.

According to *Joppke*, while de-ethinicization is practically a liberalisation of citizenship in Europe, re-ethnicization means to re-assume co-ethnics in Europe. The 1992 co-ethnics regulation in Italy is a good example for that. De-ethnicization is principally more typical for Western European countries than re-ethnicization. *Joppke* exemplified that again with the case of Germany, where governments concentrated more on offering better opportunities than on citizenship allegations to call back those who left the country for some reason in the past (scholarships, for ex.).

Joppke thinks both processes explainable, and he underlined that they are basically generated not by the immigrants but by the states themselves, who are responsible for all of the consequences of their ethnics policy. He also mentioned the fact that there are no predictable differences in left and right-wing government from this point of view, citing one of the left-wing government's co-ethnics regulations introduced in Portugal, 2005.

Joppke spoke also about the psychological importance of „upgrading citizenship", by ceremonies, oaths for example, to make it "feel" more than permanent settlement permission. Permanent settlement can be considered a „limbo state", a status between definite citizenship and temporary settlement – by choosing citizenship one takes a firm decision, and apart from the judicial consequences, by upgrading it the permanent nature of the process can be underlined. However, there are significant factors that act against this upgrading; one of them is the lack of resources to finance it but the second one is EU common law which is far more significant.

Citizenship politics, according to *Joppke* are basically symbolic politics, smoke and mirrors, and for the EU the most important question about each incomer is whether they fit the "liberal will". But *Joppke* thinks that liberalism has its limits in Europe, and the greatest competitor to liberal identity is the Christian identity. There are some cultures that will never fit the liberal idea, that are presumed to be notoriously non-liberal cultures by Europeans – Muslim culture, for example.

Joppke demonstrated his thesis with an interesting case that happened in Italy some years ago. A Finnish woman sued an Italian school at the European Court of Justice because she thought that the fact that it has a crucifix on the classroom wall restricts his son in his rightful liberalism. The Court found that the crucifix on the wall in itself was not incompatible with the liberal idea, because it is part of a local culture, the culture of the majority which – while absolutely accepting the right to exist of all other cultures in the country – is rightfully more privileged.

The second speaker, *André Lieblich* pointed out that with the expansion of the European Union the main problem for the older member states was to help the new member states to restrict their accessibility by jurisdiction, since with the disappearance of borders they became the new filters for immigrants. However, there were no appropriate legal means for that, so the new member states operated with the naturalisation process – introduced stricter rules, or language tests for those who wished an access to citizenship.

Taking a language test for citizenship is not really a problem in countries like Britain or France, whose languages are spoken around the world (especially in the ex-colonies) but it can be a very difficult task in case of other languages, like Estonian for example. So, new member states were required to make stricter rules while they were accused of discrimination at the same time.

Re-ethnicization processes can also be very restrictive in some cases. *Lieblich* mentioned some interesting cases, where cultural affinity can receive very different legal interpretations, as in the case of Spain, where descendants of the Sephardic Jews, expelled from the country about 500 years ago are to be considered of cultural affinity and have a right to citizenship. According to *Lieblich*, the possibility of being a citizen even though the person does not live in his or her country of origin is a principle that is starting to get wide-spread all over Europe. He pointed out the difference between the kind of cultural links a person whose ancestors left a country some hundred years ago might have with that country and the kind that ethic minorities have to their nation of origin living in the neighbouring country, as in the case of Slovakia.

According to *Mária Kovács* while Western European countries have already overstepped the problem of ethnicization, this process is just getting started in Eastern Europe. The extension of the Hungarian citizenship, for instance, is a problematic question not because of ideological controversies but from very practical reasons. Recent developments suggest that Hungarians over the borders of Hungary soon will get not only citizenship but also the right to vote at the regular Hungarian elections. This could mean – even if the numbers suggest a much a lower percentage of those who actually took the oath – that 20% of the country's electorate can possibly be living abroad. This of course raises the question of irresponsible voting, given the fact that these people will have nothing to do with the consequences of their voting. Also, this process deflates the value of the domestic votes.

Beyond the political and moral problems the new jurisdiction may bring, there are still the practical problems. *Kovács* thinks it problematic how the electoral process would take place and how the campaign, financing and the voting itself could be monitored in a foreign country.

Szabolcs Pogonyi suggested using the word *territorialisation* instead of ethnicization. In this context, he spoke about the situation in Eastern European states which are principally immigrant-sending states, and thus they try to de-territorialise their legislation concerning citizenship. *Pogonyi* pointed out the main difference between migrant receiving and migrant sending countries. The countries in the former group, which try to re-territorialise their citizenship, formulate their relevant regulations with the goal of motivating immigrants to take on citizenship – so these states tolerate dual citizenship, because they know that the newcomers would be much less inclined to take the oath if for that they had to cut all their ties to their country of origin. On the contrary in case of the nations that have major co-ethnic communities abroad, dual citizenship has no practical use, it is plainly symbolic, but still generates a number of controversies on the political and social levels. The result is that Western and Eastern European states have the same regulations with completely different reasons behind them.

Following the speeches the audience had the possibility to ask questions and make remarks on the subjects introduced. A question was raised about whether the similarities between the citizenship regulations of Hungary and Croatia determined the fortune of the newly introduced Hungarian law on citizenship. *Mária Kovács* thought that the Croatian example shows in fact a precedent, as the external votes there played in fact a decisive part during the elections and pointed out that Croatia now tries to diminish the external voters' impact on domestic politics. *Szabolcs Pogonyi* thought a significant difference was that while Croatia wanted to strengthen its newly lost citizens' ties to their homeland, Hungary lost its territories 90 years ago, which makes a similar step much less acceptable from Hungary's part. *André Lieblich* added that such a measure also expresses a deep disagreement with the current state of the borders.

All agreed on the problematic nature of the relationship between state policy and individual needs. *Christian Joppke* specified the difference between what he calls the „two faces of liberalism": on one side, it is permissive; on the other it is exclusive. Liberalism slowly becomes a certain *modus vivendi*, and it started to have some ethical references, which, according to *Joppke* can be problematic, especially if this new kind of liberalism, affected by traditional European Christianism, becomes more directed *against* some non-Christian cultures.

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