The Good European Citizen
Person-centered Analysis of Citizenship Norms and their Correlates in Young People from Seven European Countries
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Background
Concepts of Good Citizenship

Traditional-elitist
Core norm: low-abidingness. The relationship of the citizen with institutions of authority is characterized by loyalty, trust and abidingness.

Communitarian
Core norm: solidarity. The civic responsibility towards others and the common good is brought forward, characterizing the good citizen by solidarity, tolerance and social participation.

Liberal
Core norm: deliberation. Emphasizes the need of deliberative and critical virtues that question authority and lead to engagement in public discourse.

Participatory
Core norm: active participation. Emphasizes active political participation as the core virtue of the good citizen.

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Method

Sample

955 respondents
2 Age groups:

Adults 16 - 19 year old
Young adults 20 - 26 years old

52%
48%

7 EU countries: Italy, Czech Republic, Greece, Germany, Portugal, Estonia, Sweden

Results

These profiles tend to differ in the level of participation and in some preferences for particular types of participative behaviors (Fig. 2).

Low normativity (5.97% of the sample).
A numerically small profile is characterized by lower scores of importance on most citizenship norms considered in our measure, suggesting a possible refusal of mainstream notions of citizenship.
- Generally more passive especially in online activities
- Higher levels of unconventional participative forms

Deliberative-critical notion of citizenship (5.76%).
The smallest group of youth consider especially important for the EU citizen to be informed, to form their own opinion about EU independently and to raise their voice concerning EU topics. Not someone who abides the law and votes.
- Generally more active
- Activist forms, but not civic ones
- More support for control and restrictions on civic liberties

Low normativity vs. traditional and pluralistic profiles

Traditional-solidaristic notion of citizenship (48.27%).
The largest group assigns relatively high importance on law-abiding, voting, solidaristic, informed norms, as well as on forming one’s opinion independently. Less likely to think that the European citizen should be active politically and critically.
- Generally more passive
- No preference for a particular type of activity

Pluralistic notion of citizenship (40%).
All considered citizenship norms are endorsed as highly important in the second largest profile.
- Higher levels of activity
- Particularly in civic participation

Membership in the different profiles is influenced by some of the predicting variables considered (Table 1). Political alienation, nationalism and European identification did not have significant effect on the latent categories.

Discussion

Our findings suggest that most young respondents support different citizenship norms in an integrated way (Denters et al., 2007), linking traditional, solidaristic, deliberative and active virtues as important for the good EU citizen. However, we also found distinct views of more critical stance among youth, differentiated by either refusal of mainstream notions or by endorsement of solely deliberative norms. These results confirm the need to take into account youth population heterogeneity when addressing their ideas of active citizenship.

Acknowledgements

The data used for the presented analysis was collected as part of the cross-national pilot study for WPF “Processes in Youth Construction of Active EU Citizenship” of the CATCH EuCit project. We would like to thank the WPF leaders Peter Noack and Petr Mack, in particular, as well as all partner members of the CATCH EuCit consortium.

References

