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Polish migrant settlement without political integration in the United Kingdom and Ireland: a comparative analysis in the context of Brexit and thin European citizenship

Bryan Fanning*, Weronika Kloc-Nowak** and Magdalena Lesińska**

ABSTRACT

Following EU enlargement in 2004, the United Kingdom and Ireland experienced large-scale migration from Poland and other new EU states. The Poles who migrated to both jurisdictions were demographically similar and have faced similar challenges although these have begun to diverge in the context of Brexit. Previous research emphasized the intentional unpredictability of many Polish migrants who deferred decisions whether to settle or return which appears to account for limited political incorporation in both the Irish and UK cases prior to Brexit. This literature also examined how such migrants have become socially embedded but not politically integrated. Drawing on surveys conducted in Ireland and the UK during 2018, we highlight predicaments arising from the thin nature of EU citizenship which allowed for free movement but has neglected political integration. In the Irish case, we suggest that EU migrants, including Poles, are likely to remain detached from citizenship and political participation.

INTRODUCTION

In June 2016, millions of long-term EU-origin residents of the United Kingdom (hereafter "the UK") had no say in a referendum that very much affected them. Their reliance on the EU citizenship, which conferred reciprocal rights to free movement, employment and to social services, left them disenfranchised and at high risk of losing these rights due to Brexit.

This article addresses this unintended outcome for intra-EU migrants by comparing the experiences and perspectives of a large group of them – Poles in the UK with Poles in the Republic Ireland (hereafter, "Ireland"). Polish migrants who arrived in both jurisdictions following EU enlargement in 2004 had a similar profile, engaged in similar kinds of employment, lived similarly transnational lives and were similarly disengaged from political participation for reasons that included self-perceptions that they were temporary migrants. Yet, since the 2016 Brexit referendum the legal situation of EU migrants in the UK started to diverge from the status quo in Ireland.

The use of the term "immigrant" to describe long-term Polish and other EU-origin residents in Ireland or in the UK is viewed as problematic within a number of qualitative studies which have

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emphasized the "deliberate indeterminacy" and transnationalism of these (Krings et al., 2013a: 13–14). Much of the qualitative research that looks at the lives and choices of such migrants ignores issues relating to politics. Low levels of naturalization and of civic and political participation within the host society are explicable to some extent by the unwillingness of many migrants to decide once and for all where to stay or return. A tendency to defer such decisions has come to see as a defining characteristic of Polish transnationalism (McGhee et al., 2017: 2110). Various studies suggest that such indeterminacy, in part, accounts for the predominance of the low levels of citizenship and political participation and that these collectively constitute weak integration.

In the Irish case after 2004, Poles quickly became the largest immigrant community, and according to the 2016 census, 122,515 Polish nationals comprised 2.5 per cent of Ireland's population and Polish had become the second most commonly spoken language after English. Yet, in 2016 most of the 9,273 Polish–Irish dual citizens living in Ireland were minors born on the island, not adults entitled to vote in parliamentary elections and referenda (CSO, 2017). In the UK, as of 2016, the Polish nationality population was around 1 million, including 911,000 Polish born and a large second-generation community. By 2018 when we undertook our research, Polish-born population had reduced to an estimated 832,000 or 1.8 per cent of the overall UK population (ONS, 2019).

As recent data show, immigrants are generally not willing to change their citizenship, even if they have the opportunity due to the existence of liberal naturalization procedures, especially EU immigrants whose permanent resident status in EU countries has in practice the same scope of social rights as citizen status. This can be partly explained by the relation between HDI of the country of origin and new citizenship acquisition that is a lower propensity to naturalize among migrants from more developed countries, such as other EU member states (Vink et al., 2013).

The article opens with a review of literature on naturalization as a part of political integration and puts the concept of "thin" EU citizenship in this context. We then present Poles' naturalization and political engagement on the background of their soft integration in the two compared countries, also reviewing literature on how Brexit affected these phenomena in the UK. We then move on to presenting our 2018 surveys of Poles living in the UK and Ireland which asked them, among others, questions related to political participation and intentions to naturalize. The subsequent survey data analysis is focused on integration related factors likely to influence naturalization. We then discuss how our comparison of Poles in two contexts differentiated by the Brexit in UK and lack of a comparable political stimulus in Ireland contributes to the knowledge on naturalization and the effects of Brexit. We conclude by proposing some political implications for the EU and nation states' levels.

NATURALIZATION, CITIZENSHIP AND PROCESS OF POLITICAL INTEGRATION

Successfully incorporating immigrants into the political process matters not only for the immigrants but also for the quality of the democracy in the host country (Just and Anderson, 2012). Citizenship is frequently described in the literature as a resource that has a positive impact on political participation (Hochschild and Mollenkopf, 2009; Hainmueller et al., 2015). Several studies based on comparing election rates among country-born citizens and immigrant residents confirm clearly that obtaining citizenship and increased years of residency in the country are positively related to higher rates of electoral participation (Jones-Correa, 2001; Messina, 2006; White et al., 2006; Bevelander and Pendakur, 2011). In this context, it is worrying that in recent years a decreasing number of persons acquired citizenship of one of the EU member states, vast majority of them were non-EU citizens or stateless (only 17% were citizens of another EU member state) (Eurostat, 2019).

Among the factors affecting the level of naturalization, in addition to legal regulations conditioning the acquisition of citizenship, also other determinants on the side of the sending state, the

receiving state and the immigrants themselves have been identified in the literature. These include primarily the assessment of costs and benefits associated with the acquisition of new citizenship, which in turn is the result of other factors, among others – the political situation in the country of origin, individual immigrant plans, the possibility of dual citizenship and others (Yang, 1994). It is also expected that duration of residence matters: the longer an immigrant resides in a country, the higher the expectation of naturalization (Vink et al., 2013). Moreover, different studies confirm that apart of years of residence, such ties as being married or having partner who is citizen of country of settlement and children, as well as speaking the language positively encourage decision of naturalization (Yang, 1994; Dronkers and Vink, 2012). Socio-economic determinants such as human capital and employment status should not be also forgotten. Highly educated and skilled people who are active on the labour are more likely to acquire the destination country citizenship (Vink, 2013: 8).

Naturalization is a prerequisite for full citizenship because this alone confers full voting rights upon intra-EU migrants. EU citizenship consists of the right to free movement together with the right to vote in European elections and local government elections as set out in the Treaty of Maastricht and reciprocal rights to social security and social services for citizens of EU countries living in other such countries. It consists of a strong degree of what T.H. Marshall referred to as "social citizenship" (rights to welfare goods and services) with limited political citizenship; crucially, there is no right to vote in parliamentary elections and (usually) in referenda. A tendency for EU migrants to rely on social citizenship combined with political quietism, which may be encouraged by the lack of opportunities for those who have not naturalized to participate fully in politics, has created a political context in which even large immigrant communities have little or no political influence.

An EU citizen is first and foremost a citizen of a nation state, and their lesser EU citizenship rights, exercised when they live in another member state, derives from national citizenship (Bellamy, 2008: 609). EU citizenship is not a kind upon which a viable polity can be based because it does not confer voting rights; it cannot be practiced (Bauböck, 1999: 6). In this context, viable immigrant political participation generally depends on naturalization. The exception emanates from the right to vote in local government elections which in both Ireland and the UK are extended to non-citizens who meet residency criteria. However, research undertaken in Ireland has found that the participation of Poles in local government elections has been consistently lower than for migrants from non-EU countries of origin (Fanning et al., 2011: 417–420). There have been similar findings in a 2011 UK study which compared Polish and Somali participation in local government elections (Scuzzarello, 2015: 1223). This study showed that Polish respondents expressed little interest in becoming British citizens, and they also did not see any advantage in naturalizing. At the same time, they expressed a strong sense of Polish nationalism and some considered that it was their duty to vote in Polish elections.

LIMITED CIVIC ACTIVITY OF POLES IN UK AND IRELAND IN CONTEXT OF THIN EU CITIZENSHIP

The guarantee of the rights related to social citizenship and to free movement seems to have undermined the motivation of intra-EU migrants to naturalize. Migrants from non-EU countries are far more likely to naturalize in EU host countries once these become entitled to do so suggesting that EU migrants are far less likely to become politically integrated than other migrants. The outcome of the Brexit Referendum may well have been different had EU migrants living in the UK been entitled to vote.

The outcome of the Brexit referendum, passed by a narrow majority (by 52% of those who voted) in a context where several million EU migrants were not entitled to vote, points to the inadequacy of relying on "thin" portable EU citizenship rather than political citizenship secured through

naturalization. By 2006, in the aftermath of EU enlargement there around 6.5 million EU citizens entitled to vote in their countries of origin living in other EU member states where these did not have a right to vote (Shaw, 2007: 2252). By the time of the 2016 Brexit Referendum, EU citizens comprised 3.537 million or 6 per cent of the UK population.¹ As put by Shaw (2007: 2553):

It is ironic that while the European Union exists in part to encourage mobility between the Member States, it gives rise at the same time to a structural 'citizenship deficit', in that those persons who exercise mobility rights are excluded from full democratic membership of the state of residence unless they take on the national citizenship of the host state.

This structural citizenship deficit does not prevent migrant EU citizens from naturalizing in host EU member states. However, most have tended not to do so. In the UK, one can observe how since the Poland's accession to the UE the number of naturalizations decreased and especially during the financial crisis was lower than in the period preceding the 2004 enlargement. Only since 2010 the number of Poles being granted British citizenship started to grow, reflecting the higher numbers of people satisfying the length of residency requirements (see Figure 1). The numbers of Poles that naturalized after the Brexit referendum, in 2017 and especially 2018, exceeded the previous peak of the year 2013. In comparison, in Ireland the naturalizations of Poles were scarce until 2011 and have been growing, albeit at a slowing pace, since 2012 (Eurostat, 2020a). If all the immigrants naturalized over the presented period continued to reside in these countries (almost 43 thousand in the UK and 7.2 thousand in Ireland), they would correspond to around 5.2–5.9 per cent of the Polish-born populations there, while the share of all EU nationals who acquired citizenship is 1.23 per cent in the UK and 0.9 per cent of this category in Ireland (Eurostat, 2020b). This suggests that in these two countries migrants from Poland are slightly more inclined to naturalize than average EU citizens.

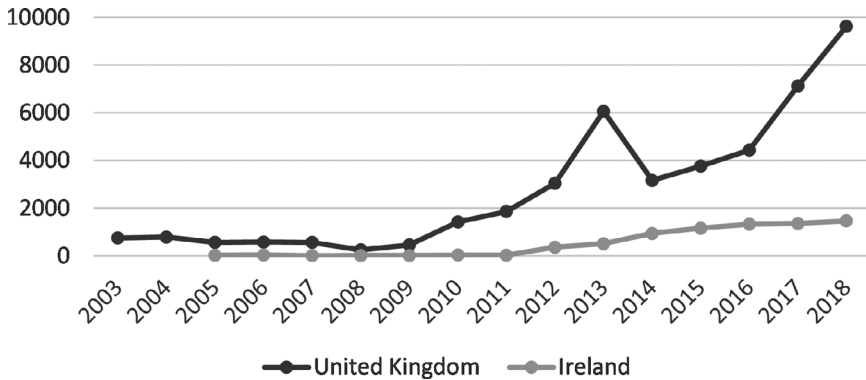
In Ireland and the UK Polish and other EU migrants have tended not to naturalize, and these have not been encouraged to do so by host country integration policies. Nor have these been encouraged to do so by the Polish government which has become increasingly preoccupied in recent years with encouraging its emigrants in the UK and other EU countries to move back to Poland.

Prior to the election of the Law and Justice party-led government in Poland in 2014, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs engaged in some outreach with Polish citizens living in Ireland encouraging the civic and political participation of these. This included training for "Active citizenship volunteers", provided by the Warsaw-based School for Leaders Association, who then organized a number of voter registration events. In advance of the 2014 Irish local government elections, Polish organizations ran an awareness campaign under the slogan "Vote! You are at home". This was based on "Your vote Your choice", a project funded by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs aimed at encouraging migrants living in Italy, Spain, France, the Netherlands, United Kingdom, Belgium, Hungary and Ireland to participate in the 2014 European Parliamentary elections. The project also encouraged Poles to register to vote in the Irish and British 2014 local government elections (O'Boyle et al., 2015: 212).

The "Vote! You are at home" campaign exhorted Ireland's Polish community to think of Ireland as their "home". Yet, the networks that sought to promote integration in Ireland were politically and institutionally orientated towards Poland. Not only was the 2014 campaign financially supported by the Polish Embassy in Dublin but the meetings and seminars in which the campaign developed and was publicized were almost exclusively Polish affairs where Poles networked with one another and with embassy officials. In summary, therefore, political activism seemed to be strongly orientated towards Polish communities rather than outwardly towards the wider electorate.

The tone of the "Vote! You are at Home" campaign organized in the United Kingdom was somewhat different than its Irish equivalent. The 2014 British local government elections took place in a

FIGURE 1
NUMBER OF POLISH NATIONALS NATURALIZED IN IRELAND AND THE UK, 2003–2018



Note: Data from Ireland not available before 2005

Source: Own elaboration of Eurostat data [migr_acq], Eurostat, 2020a

context where, unlike the Irish case, anti-immigrant populism found ongoing expression in mainstream politics. Polish organizations were openly critical of anti-Polish racism and of the British political establishment. In February 2014, Polish activists organized a rally opposite Downing Street in London to protest against discrimination towards Polish people living in the UK. In April 2015, the Polish government expressed concern about what it described as an upsurge of racist attacks against Poles living in Northern Ireland. Eighty-eight out of some 476 hate crimes recorded there in 2014 were directed at Poles. In 2016, the majority referendum vote to leave the European Union (Brexit) was generally interpreted as one in support of restrictions on immigration by Poles (by then numbering more than a million) to the UK. Anti-immigrant political populism during the Brexit campaign apparently resulted in rise in hate crime and racist abuse directed towards Poles among others that continued after the referendum was held (Irish Independent, 2016).

Polish organizations in the UK appear to have been less focused than those in Ireland on encouraging voter registration and the participation of Polish candidates in local government elections (Garapich, 2008). In an interview published in 2007, the Polish Ambassador described such participation as interfering in British affairs a view that could be interpreted to mean that “the Polish state sees the participation of its citizens in elections of a foreign country as a potentially disloyal act, something that reduces the control over its citizens” (Garapich, 2007: 17). This is a perspective on migration that views integration as a kind of one-or-the-other monogamy. It captures little of the nuance revealed by qualitative research where rather than choosing one over the other migrants who had the option of choosing both end up choosing neither.

Since 2014, campaigns funded by the Polish government have been mostly focused on encouraging return migration rather than on encouraging integration of Polish migrants in host countries (Lesińska, 2014). State programmes aimed at facilitating access to education, to housing and employment for migrants returning to Poland from other EU countries were implemented. In 2017, the Polish Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy introduced a low-interest business loans for migrants seeking to return from the UK. In 2019, the local government in Gdańsk introduced a preferential accommodation scheme for migrant families returning from the UK.² Current policies towards Poland’s diaspora set out in *The Government Programme of Cooperation with the Polish Community Abroad for 2015–2020*, mostly focus on maintaining Polish national identity, teaching Polish language and supporting access to Polish culture (MSZ, 2015: 3). This approach is rooted in

the essentialist understanding of the nation as a community based on common ethnicity, culture and history, and conviction that Poles living abroad are part of Polish nation. In this context, there has been considerably more emphasis on encouraging Polish citizens living abroad to vote in elections taking place in Poland rather than in destination countries.

SOFT INTEGRATION OF POLISH MIGRANTS IN DESTINATION COUNTRIES

A body of qualitative research and theoretically focused scholarship has examined the perceptions and behaviour of Polish migrants in the UK and Ireland through the lens of concepts such as transnationalism with challenge the presumptions of approaches that think in terms of integration (Johns, 2013; Krings et al., 2013b; Bivand Erdal and Lewicki, 2016). Various studies have found it difficult to determine the intentions of Polish migrants to stay or return not least because many arrived with no firm plans and because their views changed over time (Burrell, 2010). As put in early analyses, one of the features of post-enlargement Polish migration to the UK was the "deliberate indeterminacy" (Moriarty et al., 2010) or "intentional unpredictability" of many migrants – their tendency "to keep their options deliberately open" (Eade et al., 2007: 21). They may not have intended to remain permanently in the UK or Ireland, yet found themselves, becoming settled there without having proactively planning to do this. This literature suggests a taxonomy that takes account of the degree of planning and accident that went into the decision-making processes that led migrants who perhaps envisaged temporary stays inadvertently becoming long-term migrants or permanent settlers. For example, Pietka-Nykaza and McGhee (2017: 1422) distinguish between: "economic migrants" (who remain orientated towards the "home" country and who envisage a temporary stay until their economic goals are achieved), "circular, transnational migrants" (who actively maintain diverse links with both countries and are undecided about where they will ultimately settle), "overstayers" (who may have started as economic migrants but have postponed making a decision to return), and "settlers" (who have become primarily oriented towards the destination country and have forged diverse links to the destination country). This taxonomy includes several categories of migrants who to some extent regarded themselves as transitory even if they were not. Those who fitted the categories of "economic migrants" and "circular transnational migrants" tended "to keep their options deliberately open" (Eade et al., 2007: 11). It suggests that some individual migrants move over time between categories.

Qualitative research on Polish migrants living in both Britain and Ireland has emphasized the significance of kinship and transnational relationships in their lives (Ryan, 2010; Share et al., 2017). It has been argued that reliance on kinship networks and transnational ties, in the sense of enduring "dual lives" (Portes et al., 1999) can work against a wider sense belonging to the community defined spatially, in the host country. The inference is that reliance on transnational relationships works against civic and political integration in host countries (Ryan, 2010).

Another study on Polish migrants has emphasized their perceptions that life in the host society was comparatively "normal", stable and secure. As summarized by Pietka-Nykaza and McGhee (2017: 1419):

In this context 'normal life' is understood by Polish migrants as everyday activities in the country of residence that relates to work, food, housing, transport, entertainment but also decent living conditions... Achieving a 'normal life' or 'normalcy' in the UK in opposition to what they perceive as relatively abnormal life in Poland brings security and stability to the fore when Polish migrants articulate their settling decisions.

Arguably, from the perspectives of many Polish migrants soft integration matters more than often-abstract debates about integration conducted by politicians or ones focused on integration

outcomes in areas such as health, education, political participation and access to citizenship and naturalization that are commonly used as indicators of integration (see MIPEX database). EU citizenship, because it addresses crucial rights to health, to education and to other forms of social security, clearly contributes to meaningful kinds of integration, but not to political integration. Some assessments of how Brexit might affect Polish migrants in the United Kingdom have focused on the likely impact of deepening perceptions of insecurity and of the erosion of normalcy, and how these are likely to push "overstayers" to become settlers by seeking formal residency status and British citizenship or to think of themselves, to a greater extent than before as temporary and transitory (McGhee et al., 2017: 2110). To some extent, the apparent rise in racism and xenophobia experienced by Polish migrants in the UK after Brexit, and earlier manifestations of such prejudice have undermined a sense of security (a good example is the deterioration of neighbourhood relations documented by Rzepnikowska, 2019: 72).

Prior to Brexit, Polish and other EU migrants to Britain did not have to commit to any particular life plan in order to ensure free movement and residency status. One of the consequences of Brexit is that it will provide an impetus to proactively seek residency status and citizenship. Doing so, McGhee et al. (2017: 2112) argue, does not necessarily imply a decision to settle permanently. It could be a form of insurance. Applying for permanent residency status may be viewed as a way of keeping ones options open. Their March 2016 online survey sought to assess the attitudes of (N = 894) Polish migrants towards the Brexit Referendum, its effect on their lives and their strategies if (as it transpired) the outcome was a decision that the United Kingdom would leave the EU. This study found that just over half (51%) of respondents would apply for permanent residence if the UK decided to leave the EU and that a large majority (72%) wished to remain and formalize their residence through civic integration members regardless of the referendum result. However, the findings also indicated that Brexit would somewhat reduce the level of "indeterminacy" by pushing more migrants to formulate concrete plans for the future. Those who were fluent in English (spoke the language in the workplace) were found to be more likely to be planning to seek naturalization. Those over 40 years of age were almost three times as likely to be planning to secure permanent residency status or to apply for British citizenship than younger migrants. Those over 30 were almost twice as likely as younger migrants to have such plans.

However, highly qualified respondents were four times as likely as those educated to secondary level to be planning to leave the UK in the next five years while at the same time these were twice as likely to apply for citizenship (McGhee et al., 2017: 2117–2120). Overall, the research suggested that post-referendum anxiety about Brexit, and feeling "insecure" about the durability of currently enjoyed rights had made Polish migrants twice as likely to seek naturalization than previously (McGhee et al., 2017: 2122).

COMPARISON OF THE POLES' ATTITUDES TO NATURALIZATION IN THE UK AND IRELAND

Although Poland is considered a developed country already, such destinations as the UK and Ireland still offer many advantages and their passports are valuable to Poles. Given the large size of the Polish diaspora in both countries, even a low percentage of migrants acquiring citizenship could translate into considerable numbers and, once mobilized, a noticeable electorate. These factors make the attitudes of this group to naturalization and political incorporation worth studying.

Our research addressed two hypotheses:

(H1) In both countries, Poles had become socially embedded and "softly" integrated (in terms of language, social relationships or housing ownership, etc.) but not politically integrated as voters and citizens.

(H2) Brexit-related insecurities had encouraged a greater degree of political integration in the UK. The expectation here is that there is less of an impetus towards political integration in the Irish case because EU citizenship continues to apply there and "soft" integration is not be under threat.

Survey data

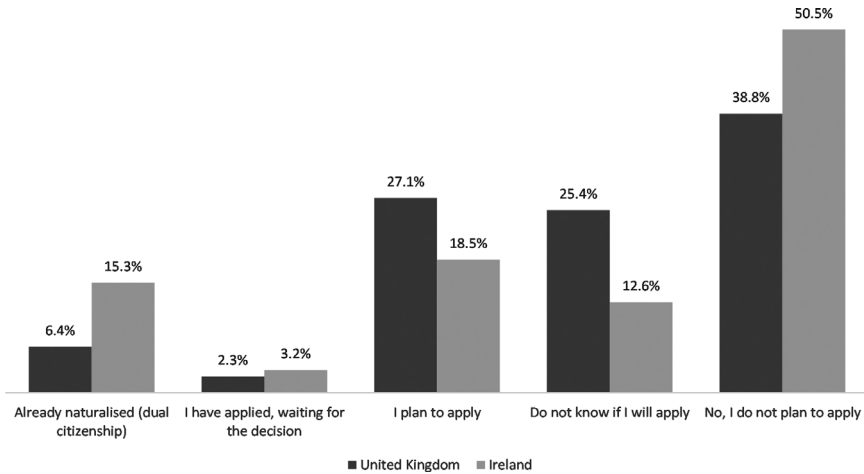
In order to study in detail the attitudes of the Polish migrants towards naturalization, voting abroad and other dimensions of political integration, in 2018 the Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw, conducted parallel surveys in the UK and in Ireland. The sampling was purposeful, stratified by region and age according to the Polish migrants' population structure in the most recent census in each country. In order to ensure diverse profiles of participants percentage quotas for gender (at least 40% of each), economic activity (at least 75% working) and employment sector (minimum 10% in each of four professional groups) were imposed following a well-established survey of Polish migrants by the National Bank of Poland (Chmielewska et al., 2018). Respondents were immigrants with Polish citizenship who had arrived to the UK or Ireland as adults after 1 January 2000 but before 1 January 2014. The survey in the UK was conducted in the period June–September 2018, and the achieved sample of respondents aged 22–44 was $N = 472$. The survey in Ireland was conducted from June to October 2018, yielding $N = 444$ of respondents in the analogous group aged 22–44³. The data were collected in the field using CAPI by Polish speaking interviewers, bound by limits on the number of interviews per interviewer and per location (controlled according to GPS) to prevent bias and ensure diversity. Given such design, non-response rates cannot be calculated and the quality of the samples can only be assessed by comparison with census data or random sample surveys on analogous migrant populations. In both countries, the share of employed was higher in the samples than in the relevant migrant population. In Ireland, the sample matched the census data very well with respect to the percentage of married people and those with post-secondary education (see Annex 1). In the UK, the respondents of our survey were less likely to be married and more likely to have a post-secondary diploma than matching Poles in the Annual Population Survey 2018 (see Jancewicz et al., 2020). The characteristics of respondents in both samples are compared in Annex 2.

Method of analysis

First, we present a set of descriptive statistics of the main variables, and then, we reveal a multinomial logistic model of attitudes towards naturalization. The dependent variable of the model has been constructed from two survey questions. One question asked whether the respondent has already obtained the citizenship of the country of stay. Respondents who had not yet naturalized were asked if they planned to apply for it. For the model, the small group who had applied but were still awaiting the granting of citizenship have been joined with the naturalized ones, as both groups have displayed action towards naturalization, while the others remained in the sphere of declared attitudes. Respondents who were not naturalized and declared they did not plan to apply for the citizenship served as a reference category. In the context of this category, relative odds ratios have been calculated for each of the predictors regarding the probability of belonging to the three remaining groups.

The independent variables include the country of stay, basic demographic characteristics as well as one indicator per cultural, social, economic and political dimension of integration. We recoded or grouped independent variables to ensure large enough categories for a statistically correct model. The aim of the model was to verify whether, controlling for other variables, there were significant differences in the attitudes to naturalization explained by the country of stay. The data have been analysed using SPSS 25.0 software package.

FIGURE 2
 UNDERTAKEN ACTION OR ATTITUDE TOWARDS NATURALIZATION IN IRELAND OR THE UK



N = 916

Source: CMR survey 2018

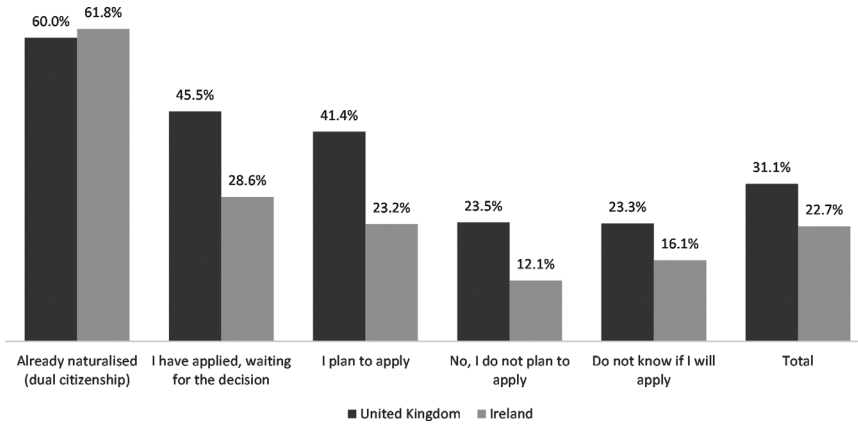
Results

Our findings show a low level of naturalization among Polish long-term migrants, especially in the UK. Naturalization was more than twice as common among respondents in Ireland (15%) in comparison with those in the UK (6%, see Figure 2). However, the picture is different when we look at fresh applications and plans to apply. This is in line with an earlier study of the intentions of Poles in the UK, which found that in the aftermath of the 2016 referendum that Brexit made Poles twice as likely to seek naturalization (McGhee et al., 2017: 2122). Our 2018 results suggest that Brexit may have provided an impetus to seek naturalization but it remains largely only a potential interest, as the percentage planning to apply for naturalization in the UK (27%) was almost three times the combined percentage who have already obtained citizenship or were awaiting a decision (almost 9%). In the Irish case where no equivalent political impetus exists, the percentage of migrants planning to apply was lower and the percentage not envisaging such a step – higher than in the UK.

The shares of respondents displaying other than naturalization indicators of integration (distribution in Annex 2) were higher. In the UK, even the percentage of migrants living with a native spouse or partner was higher (by 5 percentage points) than the percentage of naturalized ones (in Ireland, both shares were approximately 15%). Also, a costly anchor in the form of home ownership in the country of stay was more widespread (20.8% in the UK, 18.7% in Ireland) than citizenship. This suggests, along the lines of our hypothesis 1, that these personal everyday experienced ties are more readily created by the migrants than legal ties and that legal ties lag behind even if a very long-term stay is considered.

In the UK, median length of stay of naturalized respondents was 11 years, compared to almost 8 years among the non-naturalized majority. In Ireland, the median was practically the same in both groups (6.8–6.9 years) while the mean length of stay among the naturalized migrants (8.1 years) was shorter than for the non-naturalized (8.5 years). While we have to emphasize that the survey covered only long-term migrants (min. 4.5 years of stay), the relationship between the

FIGURE 3
THE SHARE OF VOTERS IN LOCAL ELECTIONS AMONG MIGRANTS DECLARING DIFFERENT
ACTIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS NATURALISATION



N = 916

Source: CMR survey 2018

length of residency and naturalization, in this case, is not as straightforward as suggested by Vink et al. (2013).

In both Ireland and the UK, the right to vote in local government elections is not restricted to citizens. The share of respondents who have voted at least once was larger than of the naturalized ones and equalled 31.3 per cent in the UK and 22.7 per cent in Ireland. Yet, in both countries those who had naturalized were more likely to have ever voted in such elections. In both, a majority of the naturalized migrants had voted at least once in such elections (see Figure 3) while among other groups only a minority of migrants participated in any local election. Although the trend among the non-naturalized migrants is similar in both countries, the share of voters in each group is higher (up to 18 percentage points of difference) in the UK than in Ireland.

It is particularly striking that far higher proportion (41%) of those intending to apply for citizenship in the UK had voted in local elections than equivalent respondents (23%) in Ireland. This suggests that those who intend to naturalize in the UK are more politically motivated to do so than in the Irish case.

We now turn to the presentation of our model (Table 1). The model aims to explain the patterns of actions and attitudes towards naturalization among the Polish long-term migrants in the UK and Ireland by looking at the indicators of their soft integration and the differences between the two countries of stay. The distribution of the variables used in the model is presented in the Annex. The table presents for each of the predictors the odds ratios of the respondent's belonging to any of the three groups relative to the reference category who answered they did not plan to apply for British/Irish citizenship.

The key predictor in the model was the country of stay. In comparison with the migrants interviewed in Ireland, those in the UK were less likely to have taken action towards obtaining a second citizenship. In contrast, they were more likely to plan to apply and much more likely to declare an unspecified attitude than to report not planning to apply.

Our analysis does not confirm the impact of the duration of stay in the country of residence or of the basic demographic characteristics such as gender or age group, contrary to McGhee et al. (2017) findings. The importance of educational attainment was most visible when comparing those

TABLE 1
RESULTS OF MULTINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS ON ATTITUDES TOWARDS NATURALIZATION

Predictors	Naturalized or applied, waiting for decision			Plans to apply			Does not know whether to apply		
	Odds Ratio	CI	p	Odds Ratio	CI	p	Odds Ratio	CI	p
Intercept	1.04	0.97-1.12	0.000			0.036			0.000
Duration of stay in years	0.54	0.33-0.91	0.019	1.01	0.95-1.06	0.851	1.01	0.95-1.07	0.804
United Kingdom	1.06	0.64-1.75	0.835	1.58	1.10-2.28	0.014	2.61	1.77-3.84	0.000
Female	0.65	0.29-1.45	0.291	1.25	0.87-1.81	0.233	1.06	0.72-1.54	0.776
Age: 40-44	0.77	0.40-1.47	0.420	0.90	0.50-1.62	0.722	1.07	0.60-1.93	0.818
Age: 30-39	1.33	0.65-2.75	0.436	0.75	0.47-1.20	0.232	0.73	0.45-1.19	0.210
Education: vocational or less	1.65	0.94-2.89	0.082	0.48	0.28-0.84	0.010	0.75	0.43-1.31	0.315
Education: secondary	0.71	0.43-1.19	0.195	0.58	0.39-0.87	0.009	1.03	0.67-1.58	0.891
Fluency in English: less than very good	12.49	6.62-23.55	0.000	0.66	0.45-0.96	0.029	1.12	0.74-1.69	0.581
Lives with partner or spouse who has local citizenship				1.95	1.03-3.69	0.041	1.51	0.71-3.20	0.283
Owens a home in the country of stay	2.01	1.13-3.57	0.017	2.21	1.40-3.49	0.001	0.92	0.52-1.64	0.780
Voted in local elections in the country of stay	5.40	3.20-9.12	0.000	1.65	1.08-2.52	0.020	0.97	0.6-1.59	0.916
N	907								
Nagelkerke Pseudo R-square	0.308								

NOTE: The dependent reference category is "Does not plan to apply for citizenship". The independent reference categories are the following: resident in Ireland, male; under 30; post-secondary education; assessing own fluency in English as very good; not living with a British/Irish spouse or partner; not owning a home in the country of stay; and having never voted in local elections in the country of stay.

who did not plan to apply (the reference group) with those who wanted to do so. Respondents with secondary or lower education were less likely than those with higher-level diplomas to declare application plans.

We now turn to evaluating the role of different dimensions of integration. Fluency in English was self-assessed by the respondents on a four-level scale ranging from poor to very good. We assumed that for long-term migrants “very good” command of the local language would be the appropriate reference category. Those who assessed their level of English as lower were significantly less likely to be planning to apply for citizenship. Living with a spouse or partner who has a British/Irish citizenship increased the odds of Poles being naturalized, which can be explained by the shorter period of required residence before applying for citizenship in Ireland and in the UK until 2012 (Sawyer and Wray, 2014: 12) if they have native partners as well as by the joint decision of couples to naturalize. In addition, migrants who were spouses and partners of citizens were also almost twice as likely to declare planning to naturalize rather than distance themselves from such a possibility. Respondents who had invested in the country of stay’s real estate were also more likely to already have obtained, have applied or plan to apply for citizenship than others. The last dimension represented in the model is political integration measured by having ever voted in the local election in the country of stay. Respondents who have participated in such elections at least once were over five times more likely to have obtained or applied for citizenship. Voters had also higher odds of planning to apply for citizenship rather than declaring no such plan.

In general, the statistical model confirmed the importance of different integration indicators for the attitudes towards naturalization, not only for the probability of belonging to the small group of migrants who had already taken action towards it, but also for increasing the odds of declaring plans to apply for citizenship of the country of stay. Importantly, the only predictor which changed the odds of belonging to each category was the country of stay.

Discussion

Naturalization can be seen as the end result of a very long process, requiring several years of residence and a complex and costly administrative procedure, which has been pointed as a barrier for many immigrants (Sawyer and Wray, 2014: 12). Hence, it may seem an abstract proposition, out of reach for many migrants, especially in the early phase of their stay abroad. Yet, our survey covered only migrants with a long residence, as arriving more than 4.5 years before (prior to 1st January 2014) was a recruitment criterion. The views of the respondents may, therefore, be interpreted as attitudes to a final step towards legal integration that they may consciously decide to make or refrain from pursuing. On the other hand, one has to remember that our sample in the UK does not include those migrants, who reacted the most strongly to the initiation of the Brexit process: by leaving the UK between mid-2016 and mid-2018.

Our findings did not unambiguously confirm our hypothesis (H2) referring to a greater degree of political integration in the UK inspired by Brexit-related insecurities. Naturalization rates were found to be higher in Ireland where the insecurities experienced by Poles in the UK were absent. However, in 2018, in the aftermath of the Brexit Referendum, the percentage who planned to apply for citizenship in future became higher in the UK than in Ireland.

Naturalization in Ireland might have been more accessible due to slightly easier conditions, especially for spouses and partners of citizens, and a lower overall cost of the procedure. There was however an observable split of attitudes to naturalization as over the half of respondents, predominantly the ones not intending to settle in Ireland permanently, declared a lack of interest in applying for citizenship.

In the UK, given the high dynamic of changes in the number of Poles granted British citizenship in the recent years and especially the post-referendum sharp increase, some non-traditional factors may play a role, such as personal risk-aversion strategies or using naturalization to secure the right to work in the UK

after Brexit without an intention to settle permanently or to develop more complex ties to the British state and society. The level of interest in applying for citizenship and the political participation of immigrants in the UK are both higher than in Ireland, which may be signs of activation after the shock of the Brexit referendum, as forecasted by McGhee et al. (2017), at least of those who were still present in 2018.

CONCLUSIONS

The 2016 Brexit referendum could have conceivably gone the other way had a significant proportion of the millions of EU migrants living in the UK been entitled to vote and mobilized to do so. However, most of those who had lived in the UK for more than a decade had relied on "EU citizenship", satisfied with the rights it seemed to guarantee to them – as it turned out only for as long as the UK remained in the EU.

The findings of our 2018 study of Poles in Ireland and the UK of low levels of political participation can be explained by taking into account the consequences of the reliance upon thin EU citizenship and of weak integration associated with the deliberate ambiguity of many migrants in Ireland as well as the UK who have put off deciding one way or another whether they aim to settle or return.

Brexit was very much about controlling immigration and has contributed to feelings of greater insecurities among Poles in Britain. Ireland has remained pro-EU, and Irish politics has yet to be influenced by anxieties about immigration. In both cases, Polish migrants have very similar characteristics but their circumstances and perceptions are likely to diverge in the context of Brexit. In this context, comparisons with Ireland can be used to control for analyses which seek to gauge the influence of Brexit on Poles in the UK. The Brexit referendum heightened insecurities among Poles and other EU nationals living in the UK but it also highlighted the extent to which such immigrants are potentially marginal in other EU countries are a result of not having naturalized and not voting even in the elections they could participate in. For example, Poles, who constitute Ireland's largest immigrant group, remain very politically marginalized, with no voice in the local elections.

To a considerable extent, integration remains mediated by national citizenship rather than EU citizenship. In both Ireland and in the UK, Polish migrants remain to a considerable extent orientated towards Poland. In this context, policies of the Polish State of encouraging the return migration of Polish citizens may also impede integration in host countries. To some extent to goals of the Polish state of encouraging, its migrants to repatriate line up with Brexit goals of discouraging EU migrants from settling in the United Kingdom.

The wider implications of our findings point to a weakness in the current intra-migration EU settlement arising from what we refer to "thin" EU citizenship. This works as a disincentive to naturalization in a context where immigration has become politicized. Large-scale intra-EU migration has produced a democratic deficit though the effective disenfranchisement of millions of citizens of member states living in other EU countries.

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PEER REVIEW

The peer review history for this article is available at <https://publons.com/publon/10.1111/imig.12758>.

NOTES

1. www.ons.gov.uk
2. <https://www.trojmiasto.pl/wiadomosci/Gdansk-mieszkania-dla-wracajacych-z-zagranicy-n135407.html>
3. For Ireland, the full sample collected was N = 503 as it was not limited to people below the age of 45. Yet such respondents have been excluded from this analysis to allow for comparability with the UK sample. The distributions for the full N = 503 sample from Ireland do not change the picture of the presented phenomena substantially. The model using full Irish sample produced very similar coefficients and p values as the one presented in the article. Tables are available upon request.

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APPENDIX 1

COMPARISON OF SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS OF POLISH IMMIGRANTS IN THE SURVEY AND THE 2016 POPULATION CENSUS IN IRELAND

		CMR survey 2018		Irish Census 2016	
		Number	%	Number	%
Sample	Polish nationals, aged 22–44 in 2018 (in the sample only those who came to Ireland for their current stay in 2000–2013 as adults).	444	100	85 554*	100
Gender	Females in the stated age range	233	52.5	43 497*	50.8
Age groups	22–29	107	24.1	17 736*	20.7
	30–39	230	51.8	56 228	65.7
	40–44	107	24.1	11 590*	13.5
Economic status	Employed or employers/own account workers	424	95.5	62 325**	80.3
Education	Post-secondary	128	29.0	22 680***	30.5
Residence	Dublin city	68	15.3	8 653****	9.7
Marital status	Married	230	51.8	44 450****	50.0

*Polish nationals, including Polish–Irish dual citizens resident in Ireland in 2016 aged 20–44 (age of the potential respondents in 2016 approximated to the nearest 5-year group due to availability of aggregated data), regardless of the year of arrival.

**Employees or employers/own account workers' share among Polish nationals only, aged 25–44, as only 10-year-long age groups are published.

***Polish nationals only, aged 15 + whose education has ceased. No data for Irish–Polish citizens.

****Polish nationals only, aged 15–44. No data published for Irish–Polish citizens.

APPENDIX 2

DISTRIBUTION OF DEPENDENT AND INDEPENDENT VARIABLES IN THE ANALYSED SAMPLE

Variable label	Values/Stats	Pooled sample		UK subsample		Irish subsample	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
Attitude to naturalisation (as grouped for the model)	Does not plan to apply	407	44.4	183	38.8	224	50.5
	Naturalized or applied, waiting for decision	123	13.4	41	8.7	82	18.5
	Plans to apply	210	22.9	128	27.1	82	18.5
	Does not know whether to apply	176	19.2	120	25.4	56	12.6
Country of stay	United Kingdom	466	51.4	472	100	-	
	Ireland	441	48.6	-		444	100
Duration of stay	Min	4.58		4.58		4.67	
	Max	18.67		18.67		17.58	
	Mean (SD)	8.81 (3.67)		9.17 (3.71)		8.42 (3.58)	
	Median	7.58		8.17		6.92	
Gender	Female	514	56.1	281	59.5	233	52.5
	Male	402	43.9	191	40.5	211	47.5
Age group	40–44	210	23.2	105	22.2	107	24.1
	30–39	486	53.6	262	55.5	230	51.8
	22–29	211	23.3	105	22.2	107	24.1
Educational attainment	Vocational or less	172	19.0	69	14.8	103	23.4
	Secondary	392	43.2	182	39.1	210	47.6
	Post-secondary	343	37.8	215	46.1	128	29.0
	Missing	9		6		3	
Self-assessed fluency in English	Less than very good	507	55.3	280	59.3	227	51.1
	Very good	409	44.7	192	40.7	217	48.9
Lives with a spouse/partner with local citizenship	Yes	120	13.1	54	11.4	66	14.9
	No	796	86.9	418	88.6	378	85.1
Owns a home in the country of stay	Yes	181	19.8	98	20.8	83	18.7
	No	735	80.2	374	79.2	361	81.3
Has ever voted in local elections in the country of stay	Yes	248	27.1	147	31.1	101	22.7
	No	668	72.9	325	68.9	343	77.3
Valid		907	100.0				
Missing		9					
Total		916					
Subpopulation		857					

Note: For Ireland, the full sample collected was N = 503 as it was not limited to people below the age of 45. Yet such respondents have been excluded from this analysis to allow for comparability with the UK sample. The distributions for the full N = 503 sample from Ireland do not change the picture of the presented phenomena substantially. The model using full Irish sample produced very similar coefficients and p values as the one presented in the article. Tables are available upon request.