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## Mobile pensioners: retirement migrants’ perspectives of EU citizenship and free movement

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The European institutions picture EU citizens as important actors in the process of transforming EU citizenship into a “tangible reality”. By knowing and practising EU citizenship rights, EU citizens are supposed to give meaning and depth to the otherwise hollow concept of EU citizenship. What EU citizenship means for mobile citizens themselves and how EU citizens practice and evaluate their rights (“lived citizenship”) is generally not a central theme in reports and studies on EU citizenship. In this article the value of EU citizenship will be discussed by applying a qualitative research approach and by focusing on retired EU citizens’ perspectives and practice of, in particular, free movement. This article applies a comparative approach and includes EU citizens who move or return from the Netherlands to Spain or Turkey after retirement. Four groups of EU citizens move between these countries: Dutch nationals who move to Spain, Spanish nationals who return to Spain, Dutch nationals who move to Turkey and Turkish dual-nationals who return to Turkey after retirement. This article shows that migratory background, country of origin, country of retirement and the way in which EU citizenship is acquired determine retirement migrants’ perspectives and practice of EU citizenship.

**Keywords:** EU citizenship; lived citizenship; retirement migration; free movement; the Netherlands; Spain; Turkey

### Introduction

The European institutions see EU citizens as important actors in the process of transforming EU citizenship into a “tangible reality” (European Union 2009, 4). By knowing and practising their EU citizenship rights, citizens are supposed to give meaning to EU citizenship which would otherwise remain a hollow concept. The mobile citizens making use of their free movement rights are seen as important driving forces in this process. They are the “human face” of European integration (Favell and Recchi 2009). What EU citizenship means for mobile citizens themselves and how EU citizens practice and evaluate their rights is generally not a central theme in reports and studies on EU citizenship. Only a few empirical studies have been conducted on this topic (cf. Ackers and Dwyer 2002, 2004; Antonsich 2008; Favell 2008; Recchi and Favell 2009; Recchi 2015).<sup>1</sup> This

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article contributes to this line of research by focussing on retirement migrants' "lived EU citizenship" experiences.

"Lived citizenship" deals with the different ways in which social actors give meaning to and practise their citizenship (Lister 2003). In this study I will use a sociologically informed definition of citizenship in which the "norms, practices, meanings, and identities" which citizens associate with their EU citizenship status and the rights attached to it will be central (Isin and Turner 2002, 4). The specific focus in this study is on how mobile citizens practice and give meaning to free movement: the "cornerstone" of EU citizenship.

The analysis of this research is based on the experiences of a specific group of EU citizens: retirement migrants. Retirement migrants are mobile citizens who spend (part of) their retirement in a country other than the country in which they spent their working life. Traditionally, mobile workers are seen as the main actors in the European process. How "economically inactive" mobile citizens who have reached retirement age evaluate and practise their free movement rights has received less attention. Based on qualitative fieldwork with pensioners who move after retirement from the Netherlands to Spain and Turkey, this topic will be addressed. Four groups of retirement migrants move between both countries: Dutch and Spanish retirement migrants who move or return to Spain, and Dutch and Dutch-Turkish retirement migrants who move or return to Turkey after retirement.<sup>2</sup> These four groups allow the making of two general comparisons: firstly, between Dutch retirement migrants who belong to the more affluent cohort of retirement migrants, also called *lifestyle migrants* or *amenity seeking migrants*, and returning retired labour migrants who came as *guest workers* to the Netherlands and return (part of the year) to their countries of origin after retirement. Secondly, a comparison can be made between retirement migrants moving within the EU and those crossing the EU borders. These comparisons provide the possibility to show the value of EU citizenship, but also nuance its significance for different groups of EU citizens.

The article is built on two arguments. Firstly, it will be argued that, although the backgrounds of retirement migrants differ, all retirement migrants prefer a similar, flexible, mobility pattern due to a dual-place attachment to the country in which they have spent their working life and the country of retirement. Secondly, it will be argued that retirement migrants use four different narratives when talking about themselves as moving or migrating citizens: privileged EU movers (the Dutch in Spain), privileged movers crossing the EU borders (Dutch migrants in Turkey), privileged EU migrants (the Spaniards), and national migrants (the Turks). It will be argued that the different narratives are influenced by retirement migrants' migratory histories, country of retirement, and the way in which EU citizenship has been acquired.

The following section of this article provides a brief overview of the development of EU citizenship and free movement. It is followed by a description of the research approach. The subsequent empirical sections discuss retirement migrants' mobility patterns and practices and the meaning attached to (free) movement. The paper ends by concluding that it is important to include citizens' perspectives and practices in the debates on EU citizenship, especially when the content and potential of EU citizenship for citizens is discussed and when citizens' perspectives are used to give meaning to the concept.

### **EU citizenship and free movement**

Historically, citizenship has been closely linked to the evolution of nation-states and was "located" within the boundaries of these nation-states. The nation-state was, and often still is, assumed to be the "primary axis by which peoples are classified and distributed in

polities across the globe” (Isin and Turner 2002, 4). Migration and the formation of supra-national and transnational bodies, like the European Union (EU), have challenged this spatial understanding of citizenship. These developments change the traditional nation-state idea, which holds that *identities* (membership, belonging, loyalty, morality, political values), *borders* (territoriality and admission), and *orders* (civil, social and political rights and obligations) coincide (Albert, Jacobson, and Lapid 2001). Citizenship is no longer purely a building block of national states, it has also become “the building block of political organization in Europe” (Guild 2014, 189).

EU citizenship was established in the Maastricht Treaty which came into force in 1993 and was further worked out in the Amsterdam Treaty (1999), the Nice Treaty (2003) and the Lisbon Treaty (2009). The status of “Citizen of the Union” has been formally enshrined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) which is part of the Lisbon Treaty. EU citizenship derives from national citizenship of one of the Member States and, as an additional status, it cannot exist without citizenship of one of these states (Bellamy 2008; Guild 2014).<sup>3</sup> Who an EU citizen is, is therefore determined by the Member States in accordance with their national laws, depending on the different national forms of citizenship acquisition. In this study the Dutch and Spanish retirement migrants automatically acquired EU citizenship, based on their national citizenship (Dutch or Spanish). The interviewed Turkish citizens acquired Dutch citizenship through naturalisation in the Netherlands and, in this way, became not only dual nationals, but also EU citizens.

EU citizenship is entrenched in different Treaties as a bundle of rights built around the right to non-discrimination on the basis of nationality and the right to move and reside freely within the EU (Isin and Saward 2001).<sup>4</sup> Most of the rights and provisions already existed before the introduction of EU citizenship. From a legal point of view, some scholars saw EU citizenship, therefore, as a hollow concept and “a purely decorative and symbolic institution, which added little new to the ‘pre-Maastricht’ system of free movement rights” as Kostakopoulou analyses (2005, 624).

New directives and the case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union have moved the discussion forward. Besson and Utzinger (2008, 574) observe for instance that

[e]ven if it did not offer much in terms of new rights at first, EU citizenship has now become a key element of the rising European polity. Recently, indeed, and thanks primarily to the European Court of Justice’s (ECJ) case-law and its codification in Directive 2004/38/EC on the rights of movement and residence of EU citizens and their family, things have started to change.

Due to these developments, EU citizenship is slowly moving outside the economic context and becoming a more direct source of rights (Besson and Utzinger 2008).

One of the most direct sources of rights, and the focus in this study, is free movement, which is often described as the “cornerstone” or “trigger” of EU citizenship (e.g. Recchi 2015). The right of EU citizens and their family members to move and reside freely on EU territory is laid down in Directive 2004/38/EC. The Directive unifies the previous legislation scattered among different Regulations and Directives and adopted conclusions from ECJ jurisprudence. Although free movement is now free for *people* and not only for *workers*, there are still some requirements for non-economically active citizens who stay more than three months and less than five years in another Member State. For stays of over three months, EU citizens and their family members (if not working) must have sufficient resources and sickness insurance to ensure that they do not become a burden on the

social services of the host Member State during their stay. After a five-year period of uninterrupted legal residence, EU citizens have the right of permanent residence.<sup>5</sup>

As stated earlier, mobile citizens making use of their free movement rights, are seen as important driving forces in the process of transforming EU citizenship into a “tangible” reality. Mobile citizens are expected to support the EU project with more enthusiasm than non-mobile Europeans, because of the experience of easy border crossing and the enjoyment of denationalised rights as EU citizens (Recchi 2015). Most of the debates on the significance of EU citizenship still focus on legal and political aspects with a top-down approach. In order to move beyond this perspective this study looks at “lived citizenship”: the meaning people attach to citizenship in their daily lives. It also sheds light on “the ways in which people’s social and cultural backgrounds and material circumstances affect their lives as citizens” (Hall and Williamson 1999, 2).

### **Research methods**

This article focuses on retirement migration from the Netherlands to Spain and Turkey. It includes Dutch and Spanish retirement migrants moving or returning to Spain and Dutch and Dutch-Turkish retirement migrants moving or returning to Turkey after retirement. All groups of retirement migrants spent their working life in the Netherlands and moved (part of the year) to Spain or Turkey after retirement. This article includes these different groups in order to shed light on the significance of EU citizenship for different groups of people. By including retirement migrants who cannot activate the majority of EU citizenship rights by moving to a non-EU country, the full significance of EU citizenship becomes clear.

This paper is based on 86 in-depth open-ended interviews, which were conducted between January 2012 and January 2013. During 2014 and 2015 several follow-up informal talks took place. Additional data was collected by participating during social gatherings and interviews with officials. The respondents were selected by purposive snowball sampling. The main criteria for selecting respondents were that the migrants were retired, in the sense that they had chosen or been required to give up paid work, and that they were spending at least six months per year in Spain or Turkey.

A total of 24 interviews were conducted with Dutch retirees on the Costa Blanca in Spain: nineteen interviews with couples, two with men and three with women. Another 21 interviews were conducted with Dutch retirees in the provinces of Aydın and Antalya in Turkey: sixteen interviews with couples, three with men and two with women. 24 interviews were conducted with Spanish nationals in Andalusia, Asturias and the Netherlands: fourteen with couples and seven with men and three with women. 20 Interviews were conducted with Turkish return migrants in the area of Kayseri and Karaman. All Turkish returnees have or had Dutch citizenship while living in the Netherlands. The majority of the interviews were held with couples, because I aimed at interviewing the respondents in a setting which was most natural and comfortable for them. The interviewees were between 50 and 83 years old, with the majority being between 65 and 75 years old. The Turkish returnees were relatively younger than the other retirees. Almost half of the respondents were early retirees.

The interviews were semi-structured and followed a life-history approach in which the retirement migrants were asked to talk about mobility during their working life, the decision-making process leading to (temporary) movement to Spain or Turkey, the factors which influenced their preference for a certain residence and mobility pattern, and their future expectations. During the interviews retirement migrants’ perspectives of (EU) citizenship were addressed directly and indirectly.

### Lived EU citizenship – mobility and free movement in practice

In order to understand retirement migrants' perceptions and the meaning of EU citizenship (and free movement) in particular, the following sections firstly describe retirement migrants' mobility patterns and secondly four different discourses used by retirement migrants to describe themselves as moving or migrating citizens will be discussed.

#### *Pensioners on the move: mobility across borders*

In this study two groups of retirement migrants are included: Dutch retirement migrants who belong to the more general group of Northern European retirement migrants who move to the Mediterranean after retirement, and retirement return migrants who came as guest workers to a Western European country and returned to their countries of origin after retirement.

Northern European retirement migrants are often described as *lifestyle* migrants or *amenity-seeking* migrants in the literature, referring to their lifestyle and motivations for migration (King, Warnes, and Williams 2000; Benson and O'Reilly 2009). Studies on Northern European retirement migrants show that Northern Europeans move to the Mediterranean in order to improve their quality of life by living in a country with a warmer and healthier climate which allows for more (outdoor) recreational activities. Traditionally, retirement migrants move from Northern Europe to Spain, France or Italy, but recently other Mediterranean countries, such as Bulgaria and Turkey, have also received an increasing number of retirement migrants. Adventure and cheap housing prices in these areas attract retirement migrants to these upcoming areas (Balkir and Kırkulak 2009; Nudrali and O'Reilly 2009). There are no recent studies on retirement migration to Turkey, but as the number of tourists has declined during the last two years due to the political developments there and terrorist attacks, it is safe to assume that the number of retirement migrants in the country has also declined as Northern European retirement migration is closely linked to tourism (Gustafson 2002).<sup>6</sup> Studies on Northern-European retirement migrants generally frame retirement migrants as movers who do not face many obstacles when they cross borders and settle in another country after retirement (Benson and O'Reilly 2009). As will be discussed in the following sections, the idea of freedom and easy movement is also reflected in the accounts of retirement migrants themselves.

Return retirement migrants' motivations are framed in a different discourse in the literature. This discourse is less leisure focused and the mobility patterns are framed within their brought migratory history. Return retirement migrants came to Northern Europe as guest workers in the sixties and early seventies of the last century and are now retiring, or have already retired. The moment of retirement can be considered a new phase in the lives of migrants who came as guest workers to the host country. Working and earning money give meaning to guest workers' stay abroad and when, at retirement, the direct link between place of residence and income is no longer self-evident new options arise. An important new option concerns the renegotiation of place(s) of residence (Constant and Massey 2003; Krumme 2004; Bolzman 2006). The majority of the retirement migrants prefer to maintain a flexible migratory pattern due to a dual place attachment and a duality of resources (cf. Bolzman 2006).

Studies on both Northern European as well as return retirement migration have shown that mobility after retirement is enabled by three interrelated factors (cf. King, Warnes, and Williams 2000) Firstly, retirement migrants' stage in the life cycle can be associated with

increased free time and the absence of work obligations. Secondly, globalisation developments such as cheap flights between the Mediterranean countries and the Netherlands and face-to-face video chat, have changed the perception of distance. And thirdly, EU free movement legislation enables retirement migrants to live their transnational lives and may create a perception of movement instead of migration for those migrants moving within the EU. These developments have made it possible for both groups of retirement migrants to: “exploit, maintain and continue to develop residential opportunities, social networks and welfare entitlements in more than one country” (Warnes and Williams 2006, 1265).

Both groups of retirement migrants move at a stage in their life cycle when work obligations no longer tie them to a certain place of residence. This new stage allows them to spend (part of) their retirement in another country. Studies on Northern European retirement migration and retirement return migration show that mobile pensioners prefer to maintain a flexible mobility pattern (Bolzman 2006; Gehring 2016). They have built up a transnational life between the country where they spent their working life and the country where they are spending their retirement (Krumme 2004; Gustafson 2008). Bolzman, Fibbi, and Vial (2006) refer to the dual orientation of retirement migrants as a “duality of resources and references”. A “duality of resources” refers to retirement migrants’ dual economic assets (pensions), family networks and broader social relationships. “Duality of references” refers to the share of cultural and symbolic attachments between the two countries.

The amount of time spent in both countries differs per individual, but retirement migrants generally opt for seasonal migration, back-and-forth migration or (semi-)permanent migration.<sup>7</sup> In all situations, retirement migrants prefer to pay regular visits to both countries, as long as their health allows. In a previous study I have shown that retirement migrants’ considerations for a specific migratory (and residence) pattern are often related to ways of seeking access to social security provisions, both formal and informal (Gehring 2013).

Retirement migrants thus move frequently between the country of retirement and the country in which they spent their working life. The ways in which retirement migrants refer to their mobility between countries differs and is dependent on their background. The following analysis shows that the interviewed retirement migrants speak in three ways about their mobility and (indirectly) also about free movement legislation and EU citizenship.

### ***Movers in the EU***

Dutch retirement migrants moving to Spain describe their mobility between both countries as “movement” instead of “migration”. They explicitly do not see themselves as migrants. Although literature on retirement migration consistently describes the retirees as migrants, it is questionable whether this is the right term to use for the population. A semantical shift towards mobility and movement would better suit the self-descriptions of the retirees. This semantical shift ties in with the shift which has taken place within the EU. EU documents increasingly describe intra-EU movement as “mobility” and the people as “mobile citizens”. Although movement within the EU still, technically, takes the form of international migration, it can be done under the conditions typical of internal mobility. Recchi (2015), states therefore that mobility in the EU can be seen as migration “in first class”, without the nuisance of documents or the risks that characterise the journey and settlement of traditional migrants. In this section I will argue, that the

Dutch retirees moving to Spain perceive themselves to be moving “in first class” and can be described as “privileged movers”.

One of the Dutch respondents who moved to Spain, Sjaak, frames his motivation to move and his perception of movement as follows:

It is actually very simple. If you work you're bound to your work environment and if you no longer work you're free to go wherever you want. That is, so to say, the starting point and the easy part is of course the Schengen story. Thus within Europe, like we all do now, you can move wherever you want. So that was actually really clear to us: that we, after receiving our pension, when you don't have any obligations anymore in the Netherlands to an employer or family ... Then, the Netherlands is not so interesting anymore, so you start to look further. [...] We love our children, but Spain is as close as, say Zeeland from Groningen [two Dutch provinces]. [...] Last year March, one of [our children] was ill, but then you get on a plane, you go there and you take care of them. You move within Europe. That is our opinion. You don't have a feeling of *emigration*. You just *move* from one community to another. If you don't like it there, you move back. That is possible. That is Europe. We have made that all together. [...] What I know about it, is that when you *emigrate*, the motivation is often a negative one: you can't get a job.

*Sjaak, Dutch retirement migrant living in the province of Alicante (emphasis made by the respondent)*

EU free movement legislation, or as Sjaak states the “Schengen story”, enables his mobility and settlement in Spain. By clearly stating that he *moved* instead of *migrated* to Spain, Sjaak refers to the EU as a post-national entity in which the nuisance of borders and papers no longer exists in his perception. Instead of being a migrant who may face discrimination and other forms of disadvantage, mobile pensioners who move within Europe can be seen, and see themselves, as “first-class”, privileged, movers. This is also reflected in the following interview quotation of Wim:

We live here during 8 months per year. That is really easy. We go by car or plane. In both our homes we have summer and winter cloths. We live a double life. That makes everything so easy. We have a Spanish *gestor* [agent] who supports us with the legal part. We just go and that is so easy. From Eindhoven to Alicante by plane is cheap, easy and fast.

*Wim, Dutch retirement migrants living in the province of Alicante*

Before I continue to describe Dutch retirement migrants' perceptions of themselves as mobile citizens in both Spain *and* Turkey, I continue first with a brief insight in the ways in which Dutch retirement migrants in Turkey review their mobility.

### ***Movers crossing the EU borders***

Dutch retirement migrants moving to Turkey are also EU citizens, but they cannot activate (some of) their EU citizenship rights, such as free movement. Nevertheless, the ways in which they refer to mobility are similar to the accounts of Dutch retirement migrants moving to Spain. Although Turkey has been a candidate for EU membership since 1999 and accession negotiations started in 2005, the country has still not been accepted as a Member State. In order to stay and reside legally in Turkey, Dutch retirement migrants need to obtain a visa or residence permit (*Ikamet*). Turkey's Law on Foreigners and International Protection No. 6458, Article 11 (1), states that foreigners wishing to stay in Turkey for up to ninety days shall obtain a visa that indicates the purpose of their visit from a Turkish consulate. The period of stay in Turkey provided by the visa cannot exceed

ninety days within a period of 180 days. Individuals staying longer than 180 days are required to apply for an *Ikamet*. Until 2011 the price of an *Ikamet* was relatively high compared to the price of a visa, hence mobile pensioners generally preferred to stay in Turkey on a visa. After 2011, when the costs of an *Ikamet* were lowered an increasing number of Dutch residents in Turkey obtained a residence permit:

Sjan: It became easier with the residence permit.

Derk: Yeah, it became much cheaper

Sjan: Because normally, before, we only came four months and then you had to ... after three months. We went by boat to Rhodos and collect a little stamp there and we went back the same day.

Anoeshka: Yes

Derk: But now, we have for five years, but that is because ... we did that because, say, two years ago it was very expensive. [The residence permit] cost about four hundred euro per year. So for five years, that's two thousand euro. Well for that money we could go to Rhodos every now and then [haha]. If we are here for six months it's no longer possible to get a visa. It wasn't possible anymore, because the visa is now 90 days in a period of 180 days. You know that probably.

Anoeshka: Yes

Derk: So that's not enough for us. But with that rule, when it came into force, they also reduced the costs of an *Ikamet*. That costs only sixty euro per year. That's actually four times fifteen euro [the price of a visa].

Sjan: so that's what we did right away. We purchased an *Ikamet*. We learned that from our British friends here. [...] We mainly hang out with Turks and Brits here, so well, I feel very European. We decided to move outside Europe because we love adventure, but I feel European.

Sjan and Derk talk about “collecting a stamp” and “purchasing an *Ikamet*”. This shows that visas and residence permits are seen as goods which can be obtained instead of “applied for”. For both their visa and *Ikamet* they do not have to go through a selection procedure. They “just” had to work themselves through the “bureaucratic swamp” (moving from desk to desk) in order to purchase their *Ikamet*. Recchi (2015) describes mobility within the EU as a form of “elite” mobility. The Dutch retirement migrants moving to Turkey show that, being EU citizens, makes mobility outside the EU also a form of elite mobility. It is much easier for a European citizen to “purchase” a residence permit in Turkey than vice versa. This confirms Castles (2005) statement on the hierarchy of citizenship status: although everyone is a citizen, some citizens have more rights than others. This idea seems to be incorporated into the narratives of Dutch pensioners as well. Although Dutch retirement migrants moving to Turkey cannot make use of EU free movement provisions, they perceive their mobility as being free, comparable to Dutch retirees moving within the EU to Spain.<sup>8</sup> The perception of freedom is also created by the choice of the majority of Dutch retirement migrants in Turkey not to register as a resident, so that they may maintain Dutch healthcare insurance and may return to the Netherlands in case they need care:

I'm officially still a resident in the Netherlands. I don't give that up! I will not be a resident here in Turkey. [...] Now I can go to the hospital and everything is arranged. [...] A woman came with me, translated and she arranged everything with my Dutch health insurance. You don't have that anymore when you're a resident here.

*Ben, Dutch retirement migrant in Turkey, living in Alanya*

***Dutch retirement migrants in Spain and Turkey, similarities in their self-representation***

By retiring in another country, Dutch retirees often come to live in an area of the retirement country with a high number of foreigners. Living in these international environments can change the pensioners' self-understanding as citizens. Some of the Dutch pensioners express that they have transformed their national self-understanding to a more post-national or European form of identification. They explicitly feel, like the motto of the European Union, "united in diversity", as is for example reflected in the citation of Sjan and Derk and in the following interview quote from Dutch pensioners in Spain:

- Anne: I feel European, because I can live everywhere and you don't have to change money anymore. That is why I mainly see it as one big country. [...] Where I live now there are many people from different nationalities. That enhances that feeling. I love Europe for that.
- Derek: There are no borders.
- Anne: Well, you still have to show your passport when you fly.  
[...]
- Derek: You have two Europeans in front of you. That is because we could move here and we said good bye to the Netherlands. You could say that you're first Dutch and then European, but now that I live here I feel first European.

*Anne and Derek, Dutch retirement migrants in Spain*

These pensioners provide a clear example of Favell's (2008) statement that horizons change for EU citizens who do move: "The old nation-state-society no longer appears so inevitable as one's ultimate identity, or the framework in which to live out your life". These Eurostars, as Favell calls EU citizens living in European global cities or free movement hubs, define their identities in relation to the international cities in which they live. This is also reflected in the accounts of the pensioners who move to Spain and Turkey and who live in international environments. The Dutch retirement migrants in Spain and Turkey do not live in "global cities" but in "global villages" where they live in an international community.

Living in an international environment and being mobile does not mean that all retirement migrants experience post-national feelings of belonging. Some retirement migrants explicitly state that, within the global village in which they live, they interact solely with other Dutch retirement migrants. These retirement migrants generally state that they do not feel united with other Europeans and consequently do not have a feeling of being European.

European? No ... I'm Dutch. Europe is a mess. I'm Dutch. I live here with the Dutch people. In my neighbourhood are mainly Dutch people. I also go to the Church where I have Dutch friends. [...] I feel most comfortable around these people.

*Peter, Dutch retirement migrant in Spain*

The retirement migrants who express a more national form of identification show that mobility does not trigger a European identity per se and that by being mobile not all EU citizens support the European process with enthusiasm (see also Antonsich 2008). The differences between the interviewed retirement migrants are most often related to retirement migrants' class and educational level, as well as their language skills. Among my

Dutch respondents, those who felt comfortable communicating in English and who had previous experience of living abroad during their working life, generally expressed having a more international network. Thus, although all Dutch retirement migrants refer to their mobility as a form of privileged movement, movement does not trigger identification with Europe or as a European for all retirement migrants.

### ***First-class migrants***

Although Spanish retirement migrants move within the same space as Dutch retirement migrants who move to Spain, the narratives of both groups differ. Whereas Dutch pensioners state that they *moved* to Spain, many Spanish retirement migrants refer to themselves as migrants who *migrate* between states. They talk about their mobility as if they are first-class *migrants* instead of *movers*. Spanish retirement migrants apply a rights-based, historical narrative when talking about their mobility. This is in line with the ways in which they are reflected in the literature (Bolzman, Fibbi, and Vial 2006; Klinthäll 2006). By being positioned by scholars and popular media as migrants, and by migrating to the Netherlands as guest workers, Spanish retirees started to review and reflect to themselves as migrants as well.

The interviewed Spanish retirement migrants moved to the Netherlands before Spain became a member of the EU in 1986. The accession to the EU and the following developments, such as the introduction of the euro, changed the migratory experience of Spanish migrants. The Spanish retirement migrants became privileged EU citizens during their lifetime.

We notice the [changes in Europe] of course. I am from the migrant generation, we've seen it changing. When we first came to the Netherlands we had to travel to Madrid by bus and then we took a train all the way to the Netherlands. We had to stop at each and every border and show our passport. It took us very long to get there! People were lining up. Now we just go. What really changed is the money. We used to have pesetas, francs and guilders when we travelled. [Now] [w]e go and come back and our children can come and visit us as well. Now it's easy in Europe and all.

*Anna, Spanish retirement migrant living in Asturias*

The history of the Spanish retirement migrants closely follows the development of European integration in recent decades. The Spanish migrants frame their narratives on Europe in this historical perspective and in relation to the rights which they have acquired. The Spanish retirement migrants refer to the developments with regard to free movement as factors enabling their mobile life, but they also continue to explicitly describe themselves as migrants.

The EU promotes free movement and settlement as if it is similar to intra-state movement. As stated before, the EU has marked this semantically by referring to intra-EU movement as “mobility” instead of “migration”. The Spanish retirement migrants generally continue to refer to themselves as “migrants” (*los migrantes*) or “return migrants” (*los remigrantes* or *los migrantes retornados*). They came to the Netherlands as guest workers who migrated from one state and became foreigners in another state. They did not move as “first-class” EU citizens within a space without borders. Although the legal emancipation of this group of EU citizens took place, the perception of the self has not shifted and is still rooted in the pre-EU vocabulary of migration.

Many of the Spanish migrants do not feel that they integrated well in Dutch society, because they mainly lived within Spanish communities. The assumption of the European

institutions that when citizens make use of their free movement rights, greater bonds are created between Europeans and a collective European identity is boosted, is generally not reflected in the narratives of the Spanish retirement migrants. They generally did not or do not have a lot of contact with the Dutch population and they continue to feel migrants or foreigners in the Netherlands. Over the years the interviewed Spanish migrants have become transnational *migrants* who move across the borders of states and they have not changed in post-national movers.

### *National migrants*

The Turkish retirement migrants included in this study also belong to the first-generation guest workers who came to the Netherlands in the 1960s and 1970s. A high number of Turkish retirement migrants settled in the Netherlands and reunified their families. For Turkish labour migrants, the main aim was to work and earn money. Therefore, when their participation in the labour market ended due to unemployment, disability or retirement, Turkish migrants started to renegotiate their places of residence as Balkır and Böcker (2015) have shown.

The Turkish retirement migrants included in this article are naturalised as Dutch citizens and also became EU citizens in this way. For the majority of EU citizens, EU citizenship was a status automatically granted by having citizenship of one of the EU Member States. EU citizenship was not automatically granted, but was acquired by naturalising. In this sense being EU citizens is less self-evident. The Turkish retirees are in a more vulnerable position when being mobile after retirement, than the previous described groups of retirement migrants because they may lose Dutch, and consequently EU, citizenship when on the move. Although the Turkish retirement migrants included in this study are EU citizens, they may face risks which can be associated with traditional migration. These risks are mainly related to the possibility of losing Dutch, and EU, citizenship when returning to Turkey. As a consequence they may lose access to Dutch welfare provisions and direct access to the Netherlands when returning permanently to Turkey. In this study the Turkish retirement migrants can be referred to as *national migrants*, because they may face the traditional nuisances of borders and documents when moving after retirement and they mainly refer to their movement as migration between two states. They do not move in a post-national space without borders, but migrate between two states each with its own rules and regulations. The Turkish retirement migrants generally do not refer to their EU citizenship directly; they do not explicitly live their EU citizenship. EU citizenship is perceived as an abstract concept. When Turkish retirement migrants refer to the meaning and their perceptions of citizenship, they generally refer to national citizenship status. Yet, comparing these perceptions and practices of national citizenship with the perceptions and practices of the previous groups shows the added value of EU citizenship. The perceptions and practices of Turkish retirement migrants concerning citizenship differ between retirees returning part of the year to Turkey and those returning permanently. Both groups are discussed in this section.

Turkish retirement migrants who move back-and-forth between the Netherlands and Turkey retain direct access to both countries. These retirement migrants explicitly state that it is important for them to maintain their Dutch citizenship status, because it provides security and important rights:

We got a Dutch passport, because travelling is easier with a Dutch passport. The Netherlands is my second country and that's why I wanted a passport. [...] It is also some kind of security, a Dutch passport. My son returned to Turkey to study, but he could not find a job there. Because

he is also Dutch he could return to the Netherlands to work there again. We now go and come back between the Netherlands and Turkey. Maybe one day we will return permanently, but then I want to keep my Dutch passport.

*Ali, Turkish retirement migrant*

Ali continues his story by stating that Dutch citizenship provides him direct access to Dutch welfare provisions and to his family in the Netherlands. Citizenship is thus seen as an asset. Ali states that he has two countries and that he can get the best of both worlds when he travels between these countries. Dutch-Turkish citizens who decide to move back-and-forth between the Netherlands and Turkey do not face many obstacles when on the move. They can move between and reside in both countries. For these migrants, having Dutch and thus EU citizenship, provides them unrestricted access to the EU. Comparable to the Spanish retirement migrants, these migrants also refer to their mobility as migration between countries, because of their guest worker background. They are seen as guest workers by themselves and the broader society. Although often preferred, a fluid migratory pattern is not an option for all Turkish retirement migrants. These retirement migrants lack the financial means to build a life in both countries or legal rules compel them to settle back permanently as will be discussed below.

Dutch-Turkish returnees who decide to return on a more permanent basis and who decide to return with a Dutch remigration benefit face the risk of losing Dutch and EU citizenship and consequently see their mobility as being impeded by legal rules.<sup>9</sup> 12 of the 20 interviewed couples received a remigration benefit. Dual citizens may be required to give up their Dutch citizenship if they want to make use of the Dutch Remigration Scheme. When losing Dutch citizenship these retirement migrants also lose their EU citizenship and consequently access to all EU rights, such as free movement within the EU.

The remigration scheme offers older migrants from former labour recruitment countries a monthly allowance upon return and/or a lump sum for their moving expenses. The scheme provides former labour migrants who face problems in the Dutch labour market the option of returning to their country of origin for good. They have to renounce their Dutch citizenship and have to declare that they will not move back to the Netherlands.<sup>10</sup> At the time of the fieldwork, return migrants were eligible for the monthly allowance when they were aged 45 years or older and must have been receiving a social benefit or pension for at least six months prior to their application.<sup>11</sup>

To be forced to renounce their Dutch citizenship and to be unable to return to the Netherlands, were difficult and also humiliating restrictions for the Turkish retirement migrants. They felt that their movement was no longer free. Several Turkish retirees stated that they had contributed to the economic development of the Netherlands and that their contributions were not respected and recognised by the Dutch authorities. Furthermore, because only one of the partners had to renounce Dutch citizenship, Turkish retirees stated that an unequal status was created within the family. One of the partners could no longer move back to Netherlands, whereas the other still had this right:

I'm an exceptional case within my family now. It's like I committed a crime and this is my punishment. I had that right. Why is that taken away from me?

*Mehmet, Turkish return migrant*

I would like to have a paper which states that I'm free to go to the Netherlands whenever I want for holidays. I don't want to go there to work! Why can't I visit my children and friends to see how they are doing? What are they afraid of? We lived there and build something up, why is there a separate treatment for us?

*Salim, Turkish retirement migrant*

The Spanish retirement migrants who were dual nationals could make use of the same remigration scheme, but as EU citizens they did not face the same risks as Turkish return migrants when losing Dutch citizenship. As EU citizens Spanish retirement migrants could continue to make use of all EU provisions and could resettle in the Netherlands at any time, the decision to return permanently was less definite. The Spanish retirement migrants who made use of the scheme, mainly received a financial benefits in the form of moving expenses and were not faced with other, less fortunate, consequences of the scheme.

The Turkish returnees demonstrate that when EU citizenship is acquired through naturalisation, moving across the borders of the EU has more consequences. When moving to a non-EU country, these EU citizens may face the risk of losing their Dutch and consequently their EU citizenship. It seems that EU citizenship has not become a “tangible reality” for this group of retirement migrants, because for them having and keeping Dutch citizenship is more important. Their movement no longer feels free and is no longer unconditional, which are important parameters of EU citizenship. For the Turkish retirement migrants the nation-states are still the primary points of reference.

### **To conclude**

Moving EU citizens are generally seen as the engine in the process of deepening European integration (Recchi 2015). Mobile citizens are seen by the European institutions as important contributors to the process of transforming EU citizenship into a “tangible reality”. By looking at the narratives and practices of retirement migrants who move from the Netherlands to Spain and Turkey after retirement, insight is provided into the diversity of the narratives of retirement migrants with regard to free movement and indirectly also with regard to EU citizenship. Retirement migrants may prefer to be mobile in similar ways, but the meanings citizens attach to their mobility are diverse and linked to their social and cultural backgrounds (Hall and Williamson 1999).

When looking horizontally at the accounts of retirement migrants, four different narratives about movement can be identified: privileged movers, privileged migrants and national migrants. These narratives refer to the ways in which retirement migrants perceive themselves as mobile citizens and also as EU citizens. Although all interviewed retirement migrants are (or were) EU citizens, their perceptions of EU citizenship, and specifically free movement, differed. This is mainly linked to retirement migrants’ migratory background, country of origin, country of retirement and the way in which EU citizenship was acquired.

Whereas Dutch retirement migrants explicitly refer to their EU citizenship and the rights attached to it, only some of them, mainly the higher educated retirement migrants and the retirement migrants who worked abroad during their working life, also state that they identify with Europe as a post-national entity and explicitly support the European project. The free movement rights practised by Spanish retirement migrants has not led to post-national identification per se, because they frame their narratives in a rights-based historical context by focusing on their movement as migration between national states. For Turkish retirement migrants EU citizenship is less “lived”, because rights attached to national citizenship status more directly influence their mobility and possibilities to reside in both countries. How EU citizenship as a “tangible reality” is created by EU citizens practising their EU citizenship rights is thus diffuse and differs per individual. The assumption that mobile citizens are the “engine” of European integration should therefore be nuanced in further research on EU citizenship. When analysing the influence of EU

citizenship, one should take into account that the backgrounds of EU citizens are diverse and hard to capture in general and broad statistics. In-depth quantitative and qualitative research could further deepen the complex reality of EU citizenship.

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### **Notes**

1. Ackers and Dwyer (2002, 2004) have conducted research into the rights attached to EU citizenship and the impact on retirement migrants' lives. Favell (2008) has conducted research into the human dimension of European integration, the practice of free movement, and mobility in an integrating Europe by focusing on what he calls "Eurostars" who live in "Eurocities". Recchi (2014, 2015) and Antonsich (2008) have conducted research into the meaning of EU citizenship for citizens. Based on an innovative survey, Recchi and Favell's (2009) edited book "Pioneers of European Integration: Citizenship and Mobility in the EU" provides important quantitative insight into the different types and backgrounds of migrants using their free movement rights.
2. The interviewed Turkish retirement migrants included in this study were all dual-nationals; Dutch and Turkish.
3. Guild (2004) argues that the borders of the European Union fluctuate, are fragmented and are difficult to identify, because the participating Member States change. As a consequence, EU citizenship is not a fixed concept; it is an entitlement for citizens living in one of the fluctuating participating Member States.
4. The other rights attached to EU citizenship concern: the right to vote for and stand as a candidate in European Parliament and municipal elections; the right to be protected by the diplomatic and consular authorities of any other EU country; the right to petition the European Parliament and complain to the European Ombudsman; the right to contact and receive a response from any EU institution in one of the EU's official languages'; and, the right to access European Parliament, European Commission and Council documents under certain conditions.
5. Article 7 (1) Directive 2004/38/EC.
6. The statistics published by the Turkish ministry of Culture and Tourism show that the number of tourists from European OECD countries diminished between 2015 and 2016 by 28% and between 2016 and 2017 by another 22%. The number of tourists from the Netherlands visiting Turkey diminished by 22% between 2015 and 2016 and by 29% between 2016 and 2017. <http://www.kulturturizm.gov.tr/EN,182249/number-of-arriving-departing-visitors-foreigners-and-ci-.html>.
7. Seasonal migrants chose to stay a long season in the retirement migrants country. Dutch retirement migrants generally chose to stay the winter months in the country of retirement (to "over-winter") and return migrants generally chose to stay the summer months in the country of retirement so that their family members could visit them in the family home as well. The back-and-forth migrants are the migrants who chose to divide their time between both countries and spend for example 3 months in one country and then 3 months in the other country. (Semi-)permanent retirement migrants spend most of the year in the retirement country. The permanent migrants are official residents of the retirement migrants country, whereas the semi-permanent retirement migrants chose to retain their main residence in the Netherlands for a variety of reasons (see also Gehring 2016).
8. Follow-up research should be conducted in order to understand whether the recent political developments in Turkey and terrorist attacks have changed the perceptions of Northern European retirement migrants in Turkey. It is possible that a feeling of insecurity concerning their future status in Turkey has created a feeling of being less "free" in Turkey.
9. In 2015, 2016, and 2017 there were respectively 2.793, 2.808, 2.829 Turkish recipients of a remigration benefit. This number is much higher than the number of Spanish recipients: 166 (in 2015), 162 (in 2016), and 156 (in 2017) (SVB/maart 2018 - Kwartaalbericht SVB 25, <https://www.svb.nl/Images/KB%202017%204e%20kwartaal.pdf>).

10. Couples and minor children are expected to return together, but only the applicant is obliged to renounce his/her Dutch citizenship. Return migrants can settle back in the Netherlands within the first year after return.
11. In July 2014, the Remigration Act was revised and eligibility requirements were tightened. The age for applying for a remigration benefit was increased from 45 years to 55 years. The lump sum for moving expenses was abolished. The European Commission influenced the revision of the Remigration Act by questioning its compatibility with the free movement legislation (return to the Netherlands was not possible) and the principle of equal treatment (not all EU citizens could apply for the benefit). In the end it was decided that all migrants from former Southern European recruitment countries were eligible for a benefit if they arrived in the Netherlands before the entry into force of the Treaty on the European Union in their country of origin (Böcker and Hunter 2017).

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