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**Unity and Diversity in Cohesion:  
Immigration, Citizenship and Federalism**

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Unlike in most European states, immigrant integration policies and discourses in Switzerland are characterized by profound territorial variations, resulting from the comparatively broad degree of autonomy of its cantons and municipalities. Our project mapped out these differences and compared them with other federal and regional states. Overall, our results point to the prominent role of the “region” as a major forum of democratic contestation and provider of citizenship rights in the multilevel governance of migration.

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#### Messages for Decision-Makers

- **By European standards, laws of acquisition of citizenship in Switzerland are among the most restrictive. This outcome can be at least partly attributed to the frequent use of referendums and popular initiatives on migration-related issues.**
- **Foreigners' opportunities to naturalize or to vote vary greatly according to the canton in which they reside.**
- **The multilevel attribution of citizenship in Switzerland shares many institutional similarities with the European Union.**

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#### Mapping Citizenship Law in the 26 Cantons

The path that foreign residents must take in order to become fully-fledged Swiss citizens can be compared to a hurdle race, made of obstacles that are more or less difficult to overcome. Candidates to Swiss citizenship are required to demonstrate their successful integration in order to move from one residence permit category to another until they can be “made Swiss” through

naturalization. How difficult the race is partly depends on individual characteristics. Hence, whether a person arrived in Switzerland as an asylum seeker, a student, an EU citizen, or a third country national decisively shapes his/her citizenship prospects. One's nationality, gender, ethnicity, religion, or level of education play are equally important. Above all, it also depends on where the person resides, as cantons play a key role in determining the criteria that one must meet to be deemed “citizenship worthy”. Accordingly, our first concern has been to compare and measure how uneven those hurdles are across the 26 cantons in an unprecedented effort to map out citizenship law in the Swiss confederal space. The results are made available to the broader research community and the general public through SWISSCIT, a series of online tools that allow for systematic comparative analysis of the cantonal legislation as of 2017. Our visualizations are included in the NCCR Migration-Mobility Indicators ([indicators.nccr-onthemove.ch](http://indicators.nccr-onthemove.ch)).

Our interactive visualizations include a comprehensive collection of legal and policy documents (Repository), a comparative summary of the criteria for naturalization and access to electoral rights (Overview) and a policy index measuring their relative inclusion (Indicators). Our descriptive findings expand beyond the analysis of de jure regulations to their implementation in practice, thus

showing considerable variations in how formal rules are de facto applied and interpreted by cantonal administrators.

### **Explaining Citizenship Policy Variations across Swiss Cantons**

Moving beyond descriptive analysis, our research team sought to explain inter-cantonal and international variations across several policy issues, all of them related to citizenship.

Through an analysis of all referendums and initiatives on migration-related issues held at the federal level between 1848 and 2017, we examined the impact of direct democratic instruments on the rights of immigrants. Overall, the results show that direct democracy has had a restrictive effect on these rights. On the one hand, mandatory and facultative referendums often saw the Swiss electorate vote against parliamentary bills proposing to expand the rights of immigrants. On the other hand, popular initiatives provided anti-immigrant groups with the opportunity to place migration-related issues on top of the political agenda.

### **Protecting Undocumented Migrants: Regional Differences in Switzerland, Italy and Spain**

We also compared how cantons in Switzerland, regions in Italy, and autonomous communities in Spain regulate the protection of undocumented migrants. Again, we found considerable policy variations, both across the three countries and across regions within each of them. Regional differences can be attributed to two main factors: First, the ideological color of regional governments plays a fundamental role, as regions led by left-wing parties tend to introduce more liberal policies, especially when the central government is led by a right-wing party. Second, regional policy makers invoke and mobilize distinct regional traditions of protection of other vulnerable groups, such as homeless persons or people with a disability, in their pursuit of new policy aims.

### **Beyond Switzerland: The Politics of Citizenship in Multilevel States**

Switzerland is often considered a “special case”, whose idiosyncrasies cannot be generalized or compared with other cases. Our research team took up the challenge by placing the Swiss case in a broader international and inter-regional comparative framework.

Our main finding is that compared to other European States, Switzerland’s nationality law towards immigrants is among the most restrictive. This holds true both in regards to access to nationality on grounds of birth in the territory (*jus soli*) and long-term residence (ordinary naturalisation). We also find that the multilevel mode of citizenship attribution in Switzerland shares many

institutional similarities with the European Union. For instance, the status of EU citizen is derived from Member State nationality, just like Swiss citizenship is derived from cantonal citizenship. In both contexts, immigrants are required to integrate into societies that are already highly heterogeneous and divided along ethnic, linguistic, and religious lines. In this context, we argue that the European Union has much to learn from the Swiss experience in balancing immigration-related and autochthonous diversity, and vice versa.

### **Key Publications**

- Arrighi de Casanova, Jean-Thomas, and Rainer Bauböck. “A Multi-level Puzzle: Migrants’ Voting Rights in National and Local Elections.” *European Journal of Political Research* 56, no. 3 (2017): 619–639.
- Arrighi de Casanova, and Jean-Michel Lafleur. “Where and Why Can Expatriates Vote in Regional Elections? A Comparative Analysis of Regional Electoral Practices in Europe and North America.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2018 (online version).
- D’Amato, Gianni, and Noemi Carrel. “Contentious Citizenship: Denizens and the Negotiation of Deportation Measures in Switzerland.” In *The Transformation of Citizenship, Volume 2 : Boundaries of Inclusion and Exclusion*, edited by Jürgen Mackert and Bryan S. Turner, 67–83. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017.
- Kurt, Stefanie. “Fast-Tracking Full Citizenship in the Context of the Swiss Integration Stage Model.” *nccr – on the move Working Paper Series*, no. 15 (2017).
- Piccoli, Lorenzo. “Left out by the State, Taken in by the Region? Explaining the Regional Variation of Healthcare Rights for Undocumented Migrants in Italy, Spain, and Switzerland.” *nccr – on the move Working Paper Series*, no. 10 (2016).