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The Perfect Alternative to Citizenship? Explaining the low take-up of the ‘long-term residency EU’ status: Germany as a case-study

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is the immigration status of long-term residency in the European Union (LTR EU status). Germany is used as a case-study for analysing the low take-up of the relatively new EU status. The approach taken is investigation of the implementation, theoretical implications and individual perceptions and views on the status' impact by potential or actual recipients. It is argued that the low take-up cannot be explained by a lack of attractiveness of the potentially gained rights, as often assumed in the academic debate. Moreover, it is contended that the new status could in fact act as an alternative for citizenship in the specific case of Germany. The results suggest that the LTR is very attractive to concerned persons and its low take-up can be mainly explained by a lack of information, knowledge, experience and consultation on the status. Further reasons might be a suspicious attitude of the eligible population towards the new status and its specific regulations, as well as preferential national regulations regarding permanent immigration statuses, such as 'permanent residency' and naturalisation.

Keywords

Citizenship, long-term residency status, denizenship, EU, German

Introduction

The long-term residency Directive of the European Union introduced a new immigration status in 2003 which is intended to enhance socio-economic rights for long-term resident third-country nationals (TCNs) within the EU. In particular, the LTR Directive aims to secure a common EU residence status for long-term residents, ensure internal mobility, and promote uniform rights which are as close as possible to those enjoyed by EU citizens (Kostakopoulou 2010). The LTR Directive targets TCNs who have already been residents of one of the EU member states for at least five years. According to the European Commission, this Directive could be relevant for the legal status of about 10 million TCNs living in the EU (Grounendijk 2007). The Council Directive 2003/109/EC entered into force on 23 January 2004 and it was transposed into the German Residence Act on 28 August 2007. The LTR status is often treated as the second best option after national citizenship regarding the attached rights. The status is especially interesting for people who intend to find a job and settle in more than one member state of the European Union. Indeed, the European Commission considers intra-EU mobility to be one of the strongest incentives for highly qualified TCNs entering the EU labour market (Carrera and Wiesbrock 2010). Nonetheless, in 2009, the European Commission's Report on the application of the Directive found that an insignificant number of third-country nationals have become EU long-term residents (Huddleston et al. 2011). Until 2009, more than one year after the transposition into German law, only 2,103 third-country nationals had acquired the LTR permit in Germany (compared to 96,122 citizenship acquisitions). Amongst these LTRs, only very few (less than 50) have used their EU mobility rights. However, many people would be eligible for the status. In 2005, the year after the LTR EU Directive entered into force, 6.7 million TCNs were living in Germany. Over 60% of these people had been in the country for more than 10 years, and one-third for more than 20 years. Yet, they lacked citizenship and the attached rights (Integrationsbeauftragte 2005). In

light of this, the divergence between potential LTRs EU and those effectively granted this specific status, as well as the actual limited usage of the extended rights, seem to be somehow puzzling.

In fact, although the LTR Directive had initially an ambitious objective, its actual impact has been relatively low so far. Furthermore, up to now, there are no studies on the unexpected low impact of the LTR Directive. The Commission's Report assumed that the reason for this outcome was based on a general lack of information or awareness of eligibility among third-country nationals. Moreover, many deficiencies were found in the transposition of the Directive by the member states, such as restrictive interpretations, additional conditions of admission, high fees, and illegal obstacles exacerbating the implementation. There is a wide range of academic literature on the legal evaluation of the LTR EU Directive, its contextualisation within EU law and the political implications of the new status as a form of 'European denizenship'.¹ However, this structural legal/political approach cannot explain the LTR EU's low popularity to a full extent. There is no information available about whether the extended rights are actually attractive to potential recipients. For this reason, it is crucial to take the individual standpoints of the affected persons into consideration.

Aim and scope

The broader aim of this study is to find out about personal perceptions and views of potential recipients on the LTR EU and the attached gained rights. In particular, this paper will scrutinise the reasons why people choose to apply, or respectively not apply, for the LTR EU status in Germany. In doing so, the paper seeks to contribute to a better understanding and potential explanation of the low take-up of the LTR EU status.

Aiming to address the puzzling low popularity of the LTR EU status, the key question underlying this paper is: *What factors explain the low take-up of the LTR EU status in Germany?* This main question evokes several sub-questions concerning migrants' agency, their motivations when deciding for an immigration status and the contextualisation of the LTR EU status which will be further explored presently. The aim is to better understand how potential applicants perceive this status in comparison to the national statuses of 'permanent residency' and citizenship. Moreover, this study aims to shed light on how the LTR EU status can be contextualised in the EU as 'European denizenship' and, related to this, if it can constitute an alternative to citizenship in the specific context of Germany.

On the one hand, these questions will be answered by analysing the academic debate on the implementation of the LTR status and its emerging theoretical, legal and political implications. On the other hand, personal perceptions from potential and actual recipients of the status will explain its impact and attractiveness at the individual level in comparison to other national statuses such as 'permanent residency' or German citizenship. In doing so, this research intends to scrutinise attached conceptions of mobility, belonging and nationhood. The LTR EU status will be contextualised in the European Union as a form of 'European

¹ Denizenship is understood as a status of a person who is lacking citizenship rights while being a permanent member of a national polity (Walker 2008)

denizenship', questioning its gained value and if the newly available intra-European mobility and socio-economic rights actually matter to TCNs on the ground.

This study draws on a combination of qualitative research methods in order to determine the implications and personal perceptions of the LTR EU status by the eligible population. The methodology consists of desk-study which is a critical analysis and discussion of the legal and theoretical literature on the LTR Directive, its impact on TCNs and on their position as national and (potential) European 'denizens'. The analysis draws on existing academic discussion and an investigation of national and EU law and policies ('EUAufhAsylRUG' and 'Council Directive 2003/209/EC') and reports such as the MIPEX (2014) on the LTR Directive and the 'Commission Report on the Application of Directive 2003/109/EC'. The methodology is complemented by a small-scale qualitative primary research involving persons directly concerned with the LTR EU status.

This combined analytical framework of theoretical and individual interpretations of the novelty of the LTR Directive will help to critically explore the value gained through the new European status for TCNs in comparison to permanent residency and citizenship. This is achieved by looking at possible objective reasons explaining the low take-up, as well as looking at subjective reasons articulated by individuals interviewed. The originality of this paper lies in highlighting these individual perceptions of the European immigration status and attached conceptions. In this way, a rather legal and political topic is discussed from an individual viewpoint of people directly affected. In short, this paper aims to contribute to a wider understanding of the European immigration policy in order to increase the impact and practicality for potential recipients.

The paper now continues with a theoretical part which provides a critical discussion of the academic literature on the LTR Directive, its impact on TCNs, their position as national and (potential) European 'denizens', as well as a discussion of the LTR status as a potential alternative to citizenship for TCNs. In order to bridge the theoretical part with the empirical case study, the specific context of the LTR Directive in Germany will be explained. The final section consists of an analysis of the empirical data collected regarding individual perceptions on permanent immigration statuses and their attached rights by those who are eligible for the LTR status. The combined analytical framework of theoretical and individual interpretations of the novelty of the LTR Directive will help to critically explore the value of the new European status for TCNs in comparison to permanent residency and national citizenship.

Literature review

The LTR EU Directive targeted the deficiency of unequal treatment of TCNs compared to EU-citizens in 2004. This was motivated by the Tampere objective of near-equality of TCNs and EU-citizens regarding employment and residence rights (Wiesbrock 2010). Since then, several scholars have written about the new status and its context within EU law (e.g. Boelaert- Suominen 2005; Halleskov 2005; Kostakopoulou 2008; Swearengen 2006). Regarding the LTR Directive's implementation and impact, much of the academic discussion involved the variable positive and negative outcomes, and the progress and shortcomings of the LTR Directive, some seeing it as a progressive novelty and others as a failure. Mentioned

shortcomings are national derogations, restrictions and exceptions, which might have led to the failure to give effect to the initial goal of equal treatment and mobility rights for TCNs. Others criticised the legal obscurity of the Directive, the overlapping pieces of legislation, interfering with the clear applicability of the Directive, as well as the lack of information and transparency for the affected individuals (Acosta Arcarazo 2011; Atikcan 2006; Ball 2013; Boelaert-Suominen 2005; Carrera and Wiesbrock 2010; Grounendijk 2007; Halleskov 2005; Sanchez 2009; Swaerengen 2006; Wiesbrock 2010;). On the other hand, some authors also pointed out that the adoption of the LTR Directive as such was a progress in itself and did strengthen the legal position of TCNs by acquiring more secure rights (Halleskov 2005), as well as granting a degree of internal mobility rights (Boelaert-Suominen 2005).

Besides these controversies on the actual outcome of the Directive, without doubt the LTR status did have far-reaching implications on the conceptualisation of citizenship, political membership and participation in the EU. Therefore, another main discussion centred on the novelty of the LTR EU status and its theoretical, legal and political implications. In this respect, the topic of LTR EU was often understood as part of a wider supranational development of EU migration policy and EU rule of law (Acosta Arcarazo and Geddes 2013). In order to help contextualise the LTR EU status and the associated discussion on the conceptualisation of citizenship and membership, a matrix will be introduced. Figure 1 visualises the different conceptions on a national and supranational level. The matrix outlines horizontal (political and socio-economic rights) and vertical (policy level) conceptions of citizenship and membership. In this way, it contextualises the gained value (extension of socio-economic rights) of the LTR EU status, understood as ‘EU denizenship’ (upper left box) and its place and impact within national and EU law, as potential alternative to (EU) citizenship.

While the right side of the matrix contains established concepts, such as national and EU citizenship (for more information see Carrera and Wiesbrock 2010; Wiesbrock 2010), the left side of the matrix contains the concepts of national and EU *denizenship*. Scholars define the term *denizenship*, initially coined by Thomas Hammar, as the status of a person who is lacking citizenship rights while being a permanent member of a national polity (Benton 2014; Walker 2008). On the national level, a non-citizen holding a permanent or temporary residence status would be considered a *denizen*; on the EU level, a TCN, meaning a non-EU citizen, holding a European immigration status, such as the LTR EU, would be considered an *EU denizen*, enjoying *citizenship-like* rights gained through the status.

Therefore, the new LTR EU status disturbs classical ideas of statehood and national citizenship. Regarding the increasing citizenship-like rights given to long-term resident TCNs, some scholars conceptualise the LTR EU status as a form of *European denizenship* or even as a *new* or *post-national* form of citizenship (Kostakopoulou 2008; Van der Mei 2005; Walker 2008). Other scholars, for example Atikcan (2006), disagree that the LTR can actually be defined as *Union denizenship*, since mobility rights would still be limited to the national level. Therefore, TCNs could not truly be denizens in the EU, but continue to exist in a way that is still limited to the national level. Nonetheless, according to Walker (2008), the *denizen* is becoming increasingly important in the identity politics of the EU. He categorises the LTR

Directive 2003/109 EC as the most significant development in the membership politics of the EU. Regarding the conceptual relationship of the LTR and citizenship, Walker (2008) points out that one can understand the LTR status in different ways – either as a temporary status on the way to full citizenship; as a permanent sub-citizenship status; or as a status which is moving beyond the citizenship/non-citizenship dichotomy in understanding political membership. Therefore, other scholars rather talk about the LTR as a *transnational membership* to clarify the lack of certain citizenship rights (Bauböck 1997 and 2007; Joppke 2009; Kostakopoulou 2008).

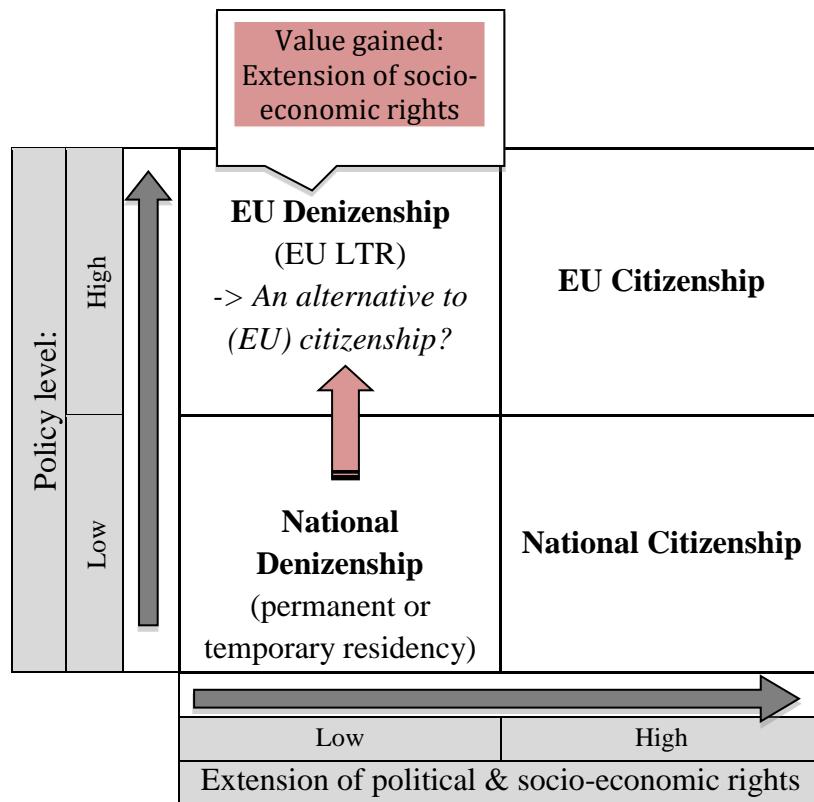


Figure 1: Contextualisation of LTR EU within the national and supranational level.

Nonetheless, TNCs do enjoy a number of citizenship-related and citizenship-like freedoms, rights, and general benefits, granted by the LTR EU status. In this respect, some authors speak about *EU denizenship* or the LTR EU as an alternative to (EU) citizenship. Others debate if the LTR EU could be understood as a *substitute* or *supplement* for national citizenship (Acosta Arcarazo 2011; Healy and Reichel 2013). As a consequence, the LTR EU status is occasionally even defined as a *new European citizenship of TCNs* that is in the making – based on the freedom to move and non-discrimination regarding nationality (Carrera and Wiesbrock 2010). In this respect, Wiesbrock (2010) saw the extension of citizenship-related rights to TCNs through the LTR Directive as an enactment of *quasi-citizenship*. In her view, the new status constitutes a viable alternative to the full extension of Union citizenship (Wiesbrock 2012). As well, Healy and Reichel (2013) understand the LTR EU as a more practical version of citizenship, a concept of citizenship that is broader and more inclusive than nationality and therefore, a de-nationalised immigration status.

In understanding if the new status could really act as an alternative to citizenship, one first needs to understand the reasons and motivations why people do naturalise or not. The following discussion on naturalisation will show in which specific cases the LTR EU might constitute a better option for people than naturalisation, especially when naturalisation regulations might constitute a hindrance to concerned people to do so. Prior research has shown that stricter naturalisation regulations hinder naturalisation and lead to lower naturalisation rates (Dronkers and Vink 2012; Sartori 2011). As a result, accessible citizenship policies and naturalisation initiatives positively influence the probability of acquiring destination country citizenship (Vink, Prokic-Breuer and Dronkers 2013). That means the more open the access to citizenship is, the more people naturalise (Healy and Reichel 2013). This relationship found between the openness or restrictiveness of naturalisation regulations and the actual number of people naturalising, cannot be directly transferred to LTR EU (Healy and Reichel 2013). This means, one cannot explain the actual take-up of the LTR EU status in relation to how open or restrictive the national requirements for the LTR status are. Nonetheless, there is a direct relationship between naturalisation rates and LTR EU rates. Countries with very low naturalisation rates show high LTR EU rates. As well, the other way around, countries with exceptionally high LTR EU rates tend to restrict access to national citizenship (MIPEX 2014). This correlation would suggest that LTR EU constitutes an attractive alternative to citizenship, for countries such as Germany, with a rather restricted access to national citizenship.

In general, factors explaining naturalisation are manifold. However, Reichel (2011) tries to summarise these factors into three groups, based on the research of Waldrauch and Cinar (2003) and Dronker and Vink (2012). The first group contains structural conditions in the country of residence; the second group concerns the situation in the country of origin; and the third group comprises individual characteristics. Regarding individual-level features, Vink, Prokic-Breuer and Dronkers (2013) found out that immigrants from less developed countries are less likely to naturalise than those from highly developed countries. This shows that the relevance of destination-country citizenship policies is conditioned by the kind of origin-country background of the immigrants involved. That means that also factors like the socio-economic background of the country of origin and individual-level factors have an influence on the propensity to naturalise (Vink 2013). Moreover, qualitative research on motivations for naturalisation indicates that the major factor that prevents persons from acquiring national citizenship is the unwillingness to renounce one's previous citizenship (Latcheva et al. 2006; Reichel, 2011; Wunderlich 2005). Moreover, immigrants who can retain their citizenship are more likely (40 percent) to acquire destination-country citizenship (Vink, Prokic-Breuer and Dronkers 2013). Mazzolari (2005) also found that dual-citizenship rights not only increase the propensity to naturalise, but may also promote economic assimilation, such as employment and earning gains in the U.S. context (Mazzolari 2009). This issue gives particular importance to dual-citizenship regulations. The prohibition or toleration of dual citizenship appears to have the most significant impact on people's motivation to naturalise (Reichel 2011). It is important for most immigrants to keep the linkages to their country of origin in this way. Often, they also want to keep the opportunity to return to their country of origin. Therefore, regulations on dual citizenship are an important

country-of-origin and destination-country factor, since both countries have to allow dual citizenship.

In summary, the debate in this section has focused on a conceptual level on citizenship and denizenship. Authors have only tried to evaluate the LTR EU and its gained value in a rather general way. So far, no study exists investigating a specific national country context. A majority of the literature has focused on the limitations and shortcomings of the new LTR EU status. In evaluating the status' impact, many authors saw the transposition of the LTR EU Directive as impractical, since the intended mobility rights within the EU only add a very limited extension of mobility in reality. More criticism was related to the failure of the status to reach real equality between LTRs and EU citizens concerning socio-economic rights. As a result, the national limitations and added requirements restricted the initial goals of the LTR status significantly. According to many authors, this made the LTR status unattractive and would explain the low take-up or failure of the new Directive.

However, it is argued that these restrictions and limitations of the LTR's impact cannot explain the low take-up by the respective population themselves. Besides the legal or political structural implications of the LTR, no qualitative study has actually researched the LTR status' attractiveness and perceived value for potential recipients as such. Therefore, the meaning eligible people would attach to the LTR status is a significantly less researched area. Besides the acknowledged restrictions, the status might still be an attractive option for potential applicants. The only indicator of the limited popularity of the LTR status is the low number of recipients. Moreover, there are no studies on the factors and outcomes for people who possess LTR status so far (Healy and Reichel 2013). Only a quantitative comparison of national LTR EU policies can be found in the MIPEX 2010, comparing the requirements for acquiring LTR status in EU countries. In this respect, the following empirical section will address this gap and will question how affected people (potential or actual LTRs) perceive the EU LTR status and what it means to them. This will help to explain the limited popularity of this status and will add to an understanding of the factors influencing the acquisition of LTR status. Since this involves conceptions of mobility, belonging, nationality and citizenship, the interviews will question the validity of theoretical conceptions of the LTR EU status as a perfect alternative to citizenship from the perspective of the affected persons.

Germany as an example for the potential attractiveness of the LTR EU status

Germany is a particularly interesting case when it comes to the implementation of the LTR EU status, especially when seen in comparison to citizenship. First, it is interesting because of the high number of potential recipients of the LTR status. With 4.3 million TCNs in 2013,² Germany has the highest number of TCNs EU-wide and accounts for one-fifth of the total number of TCNs resident in the EU (Green 2013). TCNs are the group most affected by immigration regulations in the EU, since they are non-EU citizens. Opponents of the LTR Directive questioned why there is actually a need for the new LTR Directive and if naturalisation would not be the better solution for these people to gain equal rights as EU-citizens enjoy. Green (2013) argues that the answer lies in the figures, since 'very large

² Statistisches Bundesamt (2014)

numbers of non-citizens who, even after decades of residence, are either unable or unwilling to acquire the nationality of their country of residence. More than 60% of the 6.7 million non-citizens living in Germany in 2005 have been in that country for more than 10 years and one third even more than 20 years' (Green 2013).

Second, Germany is an interesting case because of the country's rather restrictive citizenship policies and its continuous general rejection of dual citizenship (Vink, Prokic-Breuer and Dronkers 2013). As seen in the previous part, restrictive citizenship regulations, especially regarding dual citizenship, are of crucial importance in explaining low naturalisation rates. It was also shown that there is a hypothesised direct relationship between countries with very low naturalisation rates and those showing high LTR EU rates. Since Germany is defined by below-average naturalisation rates (only 37% of all non-citizens naturalise), one would expect a higher number of LTR acquisitions (Reichel 2012), since the LTR status should be very attractive to gain more citizenship-like rights in the specific case of Germany. Yet, the numbers of take-up are fairly low. Several scholars explain the low take-up of the new status by the lack of attractiveness to potential recipients, due to the many restrictions and additional requirements (see Acosta Arcarazo 2011; Atikcan 2006; Boelaert-Suominen 2005; Carrera and Wiesbrock 2010; Grounendijk 2007; Sanchez 2009; Swearengen 2006; Wiesbrock 2010). Nevertheless, many people did not want to or could not naturalise so far, and the LTR status does bring citizenship-like rights, such as intra-EU mobility, which cannot be gained through other national statuses. This fact indicates the added value of the status and suggests a general high attractiveness of the new status. That means the low take-up must be explained by other reasons.

In this respect, it is expected that in the specific context of Germany, many people decide against German citizenship due to unwillingness to renounce their prior citizenship. For this reason the LTR EU status is potentially seen as an alternative to naturalisation in order to gain more citizenship-like rights. This might mean a valuable addition to the rights and possibilities of long-term TCNs and therefore indicate the LTR's attractiveness to potential applicants. The following empirical section will address this supposition, based on qualitative interviews with potential applicants.

Methodology

The primary data comprises eight semi-structured in-depth interviews which took place over an eight-week period, June and July 2014. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed so that the common themes and nuances which emerged during conversations with participants could be better summarised, analysed and evaluated. Since the focus of this research lies on non-quantitative data, namely subjective perceptions of individuals, qualitative interviewing proved to be the most suitable methodology to use in the study. The semi-structured interview schedule with open-ended questions enabled the participants to talk about individual views and perceptions on complex topics such as nationality, citizenship, immigration status, membership, belonging, mobility and rights. The occasionally broad and non-directive nature of the questions gave room to the answers and enabled the conversation to move in a direction which was meaningful to the interviewee. The interviews lasted between 40 and 80 minutes depending on how much the person wanted to elaborate on certain

questions. Respective interviewees were accessed through the *seed method* (Vargas-Silva 2012) in choosing core actors, which eventually provide further interviewees through *snowball sampling* (Atkinson and Flint 2001). Core actors were identified within the researcher's environment. These were for example politically active migrants, migration researchers, and persons working with migrants, as well as international friends or acquaintances living and working in Germany. In addition, two expert interviews were conducted with consultants from the immigration offices in Hamburg. These so-called *gatekeepers* provided an in-depth professional insight and first-hand evaluation of the low take-up of the LTR EU status.

The interviewees were chosen following the criteria of already fulfilling the requirements for the LTR EU status or being almost eligible to apply for it, which means that they would reach the requirements in the near future. In this respect, the specific requirements for the LTR in Germany are: a minimum of five years residence in Germany; stable resources, which means that eligible persons should work and pay taxes (especially retirement tax) for a minimum period of five years; and the possession of a health insurance (Wiesbrock 2010). Five-year residence is actually the only intended requirement for LTR EU status by the European Union. This is why this study restricted the eligibility of possible interviewees on exactly this criterion of a minimum of five year residency in Germany and having a professional occupation since a considerable time (minimum two years). In this manner, the sample is able to show why people do not have the status in Germany already, although they fulfil the requirements foreseen by the EU. Moreover, this is a particularly interesting phase because the interviewees were actually very likely to be in the process of considering which different possibilities they had in order to gain more rights and opportunities. Therefore, interviewees might have a permanent residency, a Blue Card, a work permit, LTR EU status or German citizenship (when acquired after September 2008).

The interviews were, in part, held face-to-face (1) in the city of Hamburg, and, in the other cases, conducted via Skype video calls (9). Following the above-mentioned selection criteria, the following profile of the interviewed sample was reached: eight long-term resident TCNs, ie. international migrants from so-called third countries, namely Kyrgyzstan (1), Mexico (2), Nigeria (1), Russia (1), Uzbekistan (1) and Ukraine (2), living and working in Germany. Only one of the interviewees has already acquired the LTR EU. Five interviewees had a permanent residence status (two of them also had a naturalisation assurance, under the condition of giving up their own nationality). Another interviewee had a working visa and wanted to apply for the permanent residency in the near future (already fulfilling all the requirements). Finally, one interviewee was waiting for a decision by the time of the interview (expecting to get another five-year working visa). All the research participants were living in Germany for a minimum of five years (five to thirteen years) and worked for a certain amount of their residency (two to ten years). Some of them studied or did an apprenticeship in Germany before starting to work. From the overall sample, only three persons had already heard about the specific LTR EU status from friends and family at the time of the interview. Among those interviewed a fairly equal representation of men (3) and women (5) with diverse educational backgrounds is found. Table 1 gives these and other brief details of the sample in a chart form.

	Nationality	Length of residence in	Current status	Desired status	Dual citizenship as hindrance to naturalise	Knowledge on LTR	Attractiveness of LTR EU
Interviewee 1	Ukraine	7	Permanent residency + naturalisation assurance	German citizenship	YES	NO	YES
Interviewee 2	Uzbekistan	5	Permanent residency + naturalisation assurance	German citizenship	NO	YES	YES
Interviewee 3	Mexico	6	Work permit	Permanent residency	YES	NO	YES
Interviewee 4	Mexico	5	Work permit	Permanent residency or German citizenship	YES	NO	YES
Interviewee 5	Russia	8	Permanent residency	Maybe German citizenship	YES	YES	NO
Interviewee 6	Kyrgyzstan	7	Permanent residency	Maybe German citizenship	YES	NO	YES
Interviewee 7	Nigeria	9	Permanent residency	Maybe German citizenship	YES	NO	NO
Interviewee 8	Ukraine	13	LTR EU	Maybe German citizenship	YES	YES	YES

Table 1: Profile of the interviewed sample.

The questions were formulated in a way that was both comprehensive and colloquial, in order to give all individuals room to answer in a way that really represented their own views and not forcing or influencing them to give an answer that would actually not express their individual perceptions. The questions asked were targeted to find out about individual views and perceptions on the implications of long-term immigration statuses.

Due to the sampling approach taken, and before entering the main analysis, the following methodological limitation should be pointed out. The sample does not include a fair representation of the multiple generations that would still be eligible to apply for the LTR status, due to the small age range of the participants, between 25 and 35. Therefore, the findings presented in this research cannot be claimed to be representative of the overall population and only very limited generalisations should be drawn from them. Most importantly, they serve as examples, giving a meaningful insight to the issues at stake.

Moreover, the positionality of the researcher should also be briefly addressed. Indeed, since the sample consists of people from the social environment of the researcher, such as professional acquaintances and recommended participants, there is, to a certain extent, a personal connection involved. On the one hand, this relationship could have influenced the answers provided, but on the other hand, this could also have created a sense of trust and willingness to invest personal time to talk about such sensitive issues as immigration status and the individual meaning attached to that.

Analysis and evaluation of primary research: individual perceptions of the LTR EU status by potential recipients in Germany

The following analysis is structured according to the topics discussed with the participants. First, the reasons for the low popularity of the LTR status and the associated general attractiveness of the accrued rights are analysed. Second, the reasons and motivations why interviewees have decided for their current immigration status are discussed, as well as their plans and motivations for applying for a different immigration status. In this respect, the participants' views on related concepts such as citizenship, nationality and 'European citizenship', as well as the importance they attribute to European mobility, are analysed. Finally, both the issue of discrimination of TCNs in comparison to EU nationals and the rights that matter to the eligible population are discussed.

Explaining the low take-up of the LTR EU

In explaining the low take-up of the LTR status, the **lack of information** about the status turned out to be an important explanation; this was consistently mentioned by all interviewees. Most participants said that immigration authorities give little advice or do not counsel people on the options available. According to interviewee 4, '*They only assign a category to you and refer you to the internet for more information. You have to take care of everything yourself and inform yourself about which documents you need to bring*'. Interviewee 5 explains that '*first, one has to know one's own rights before going [to the*

immigration office].' For seven out of the eight interviewees, the option of LTR EU was not an issue at all when being counselled by the immigration office. For five of the eight interviewees the possibility of LTR EU was completely new to them and they had never heard about the advantages or disadvantages of the LTR EU status. Two heard about the possibility from friends or family and only one person was informed by the immigration office. As a result, this interviewee decided to apply for the status. In explaining the reasons for the low take-up, the interviewees themselves were assuming a lack of knowledge about the possibility of LTR EU status by the responsible persons. Some of the interviewees also had doubts regarding the expertise of the immigration officers regarding the LTR and their willingness to counsel people about this existing option. Expert 2 also pointed out that the status is fairly new and therefore some lack of information would still exist. He explained that usually immigration offices only counsel when a concerned person is already eligible for the status, but not before one actually fulfils the requirements. Otherwise, they would provide information on demand. According to the same source, information leaflets about the new status were only distributed immediately after its implementation, and have not been distributed since. Regarding this matter, Interviewee 6, on the other hand, suggested that one should even be counselled on that option before actually fulfilling all the requirements in order to be able to plan ahead. She explained: '*It is not transparent and clear and therefore one cannot plan and aspire to get a certain immigration status. When one does not know about this possibility, one also cannot prepare for it and try to fulfil the requirements.*'

Also, Expert 1 explained that still there would not be a new approach to inform people about the LTR EU option. Most interviewees saw the permanent residency and then naturalisation as the 'normal path to go', which means this is seen as the established and popular way of which immigration statuses one should acquire after a certain time. With respect to the fact that naturalisation and LTR EU almost have the same requirements in Germany, some people do decide for acquiring citizenship, as it brings even more practical advantages and is also connoted with a certain prestige and good reputation. Interviewee 3 suggested that the immigration officers should inform concerned people about the two options (LTR and naturalisation) and let them chose whatever option is best for them. Interviewee 8, the only person in the sample holding the LTR EU status, also agreed with the need for more information on the LTR EU and pointed out that a short enlightenment about its requirements and benefits would be already sufficient, as it was in his case. This interviewee also reinforced that it is very difficult to inform oneself online about the different options, especially when one does not know about their existence. He reported that he was unable to find any information on the LTR himself prior to the clarifications provided by the immigration office. In line with this, Expert 2 admitted that it is difficult to find information through other channels such as the internet.

The interviewees who had already heard about the LTR were usually informed by family or friends and not by the official channels, the immigration offices. One interviewee explained that he thought he would not be able to receive the LTR because it would be a 'more advanced status with more advantages' (Interviewee 2). Indeed, he thought that the permanent residence permit would be sufficient. By the time of the interview this interviewee already got an assurance of naturalisation which matched better his long-term plan. Talking

about his strategic considerations in dealing with the administrative authorities, he explained that the reason why he did not pursue the acquisition of the LTR EU status was because he thought that the immigration offices could think that he would just want to get the LTR EU quickly and then move to another country. Since this was not his intention and he would prefer to acquire the German citizenship, he chose not to proceed with the application for the LTR. Nevertheless, he pointed out the attractiveness of the status: '*LTR EU would be even better of course than the permanent residence permit. I would have been happy to receive this title, also to make travelling easier*' (Interviewee 2).

Besides the lack of information, knowledge, experience and consultation, this research also uncovers further potential reasons for the low take-up of the LTR. On the one hand, **preferential national regulations** in respect to permanent immigration statuses seemed to play a major role. In Germany, long-term residents can normally acquire the national status 'permanent residency' before having access to the LTR, since the requirements for the first are easier to fulfil. Most of the interviewees did satisfy the specific requirement for permanent residency, but were not eligible to apply for the LTR EU, since they did not fulfil its further requirements of having paid five years of retirement taxes. According to the experts' interpretation, this more favourable and simple national legislation explains why the LTR EU was not in demand so often. Expert 2 also explained that, in the years following 2008, when the LTR EU was first introduced in Germany, there were special arrangements for migrants who were living in Germany for a long time. These arrangements targeted persons who received a status already before the new immigration and citizenship law from 2005. These persons were treated advantageously in acquiring permanent residency or could naturalise faster. In this respect, as soon as interested persons got the permanent residence permit, they do not come to the immigration office again, and therefore they would probably never be counselled on that option (Expert 2). Nonetheless, Expert 1 also pointed out that the special arrangements of this so-called *Altfallregelung* (*old cases clause*) expire slowly. This indicates that the LTR is getting more relevant and attractive.

Attractiveness of the LTR

Interestingly, the experts suggested a lack of attractiveness of the gained rights of the LTR in explaining the low take-up: '*Affected people don't really see its benefit; they don't think that they would need it because they already live in Germany for many years and want to stay there as well*' (Expert 2). This evaluation of the experts regarding the unattractiveness of the LTR as a reason for the low take-up so far may also have another explanation. This perception may also arise from the rather distanced position of respective persons towards immigration officials, as both the interviewees and the experts mentioned. This is caused by people's suspicious attitude towards the immigration offices and their doubtful view about the specific regulations of the new status, since it is not so popular yet and they do not receive sufficient counselling. Therefore, the status might rather confuse them:

Affected persons are rather distanced and go with caution to immigration officials. Only perceive it [LTR] as one status more, but do not know exactly how it works and what the benefits are, which only seems to make things more complicated. Usually, all

they want is not to have difficulties and just receive some kind of permanent permit (Expert 2).

Nonetheless, the experts recognise the potential attractiveness of the LTR and evaluate its potential to grow in the future: ‘*However, gradually there won’t be any differences [between LTR EU and permanent residency] because the law will be more and more adapted to the European law. Eventually, at one point only the LTR EU will be granted*’ (Expert 2).

In fact, most of the interviewees pointed out the attractiveness of the LTR EU status: ‘*When you compare the two status options and you would see that the LTR EU provides more benefits and more rights...in this case, I would go for this option of course*’ (Interviewee 1). After hearing about it in the interview, Interviewee 4 says: ‘*And now, that you are telling me about this special Visa – Long term residency – I think, to be honest, if I (...) had to lose my nationality when becoming German, I would rather go for this one that you are mentioning (LTR)*’ (Interviewee 4). After being asked if the status of LTR EU could be seen as the *perfect alternative for citizenship*, Interviewee 4 actually agreed: ‘*Yes, exactly, because, again, I wouldn’t like to become German; you know it is a cultural thing – I don’t feel German, I don’t look German, I don’t speak German – I am not German.*’ Moreover, Interviewee 4 explained the attractiveness of the LTR EU status as an opportunity to stay in Germany and ‘*have the same chances as everybody else without losing my nationality. That would be great. And maybe I wouldn’t mind going to France and asking for another one [LTR EU status]*’ (Interviewee 4). Also sharing the same perspective, Interviewee 6 mentioned that the EU status would be attractive to her since she is a consultant and has to travel a lot for work. She believed that she is not a very desired employee in her job because issuing her visa often takes a long time. Interviewee 5, who was informed about the LTR EU status by her husband, presented a different view. She was not eligible for the EU status and received the permanent residence permit instead. She explained that she is happy with her current status and that the EU status would only be attractive to people who actually want to have the option of moving to another country. For her, the LTR EU would not be as interesting because she does not intend to move to another EU member state, being rather willing to stay in Germany with her family. She explained: ‘*admittedly it [the LTR EU] is a nice additional option (...) but one does not make use of it*’ (Interviewee 5).

The only interviewee actually possessing the LTR EU status explained his experience of acquiring it. When applying for a new status in order to gain a work permit after finishing his studies, the immigration office counselled him very briefly on the LTR status since he already fulfilled all the requirements at that point. They let him decide whether he would like to have the German permanent residency or the long-term residency EU. He recollected:

In that case, it was an easy decision because one has more rights and opportunities with the EU permit. The explanation was super-short. They only explained quickly that if the employer would like to transfer the person to another EU country, which would be possible with the EU status, then the person would not need to reapply for a work permit there. This would not be the case with the German permit; one would need to apply for everything there again (Interviewee 8).

Furthermore, Expert 1 explained the reasons why people have opted for the LTR EU in general. He explained that usually concerned people want to migrate to another member state with this status. This might be the case for example when they are seconded to another European member state by their company, or they want to move abroad to their partner. Expert 2 elaborated on the target group that the LTR intends to reach. He said: '*they are usually people who studied in Germany, mostly highly skilled, and not married*'. He says that the status would not be attractive to people who already have their own family. They would not be interested in moving abroad, especially when their children are going to school in Germany.

Reasons underlying the selection of the current immigration status

In this section, the reasons behind the interviewees' choice for their current immigration status are discussed. There was a wide consensus that the reasons are of a practical nature. In this respect, all the participants wanted to work and stay in Germany permanently, but would like to avoid having to prolong their visa every one or two years at the immigration office. Their current status meant more convenience and less effort. They all valued the fact that they do not have a temporary status anymore, but an unconditional permanent work permit which saves them the bureaucratic effort, also opening the possibility of having a work contract of indefinite duration. Moreover, this also gave them the advantage of being able to choose an employer which means having more freedom. Simultaneously, this gave them more security and safety to stay in Germany, also in case of unemployment. This proved to be a particularly important aspect for those migrants who already have family in the country. A great part of the interviewees also expressed that their current status was the best possible option at the time when they applied for a status. Yet, they pointed out that this was also the case because they have not been informed about the possibility of LTR EU. Others explained that they thought they would not be able to acquire the LTR, or that the permanent residence permit would be just sufficient. Regarding the motivations for applying for the LTR EU, Interviewee 8, who currently held the status, explained that the reasons for acquiring the status were rather practical because he needed to stay in Germany and find a job. The LTR EU meant having an option, or 'safeguard' as he called it, if something would happen in the future. However, he stated that he did not decide for it because of an actual desire to work abroad at that moment:

With the long-term residence EU you can work EU-wide. So that was virtually an option that I've kept open. It wasn't the case that I only decided for the LTR EU because of the reason that I could move somewhere else to work. But this is a nice option...you pay 40€ more, but then if something happens you are safe. So it was almost a kind of insurance. If something happens, then I can also work in a different place. One cannot know what one will be doing in about 10 years from now (Interviewee 8).

Reasons to apply for a different immigration status

Talking about their plans and motivations for applying for a different immigration status, all interviewees eventually wanted to acquire the German citizenship at some point in the future, or actually apply for the LTR EU status (3) after hearing about it through the interview. For

them citizenship meant a future possibility, although it was not a priority at the moment. Most participants wanted to wait until making any decisions, in order to keep all options open. On the one hand, this research showed that the German citizenship is significantly attractive for the interviewees given its many practical advantages and good reputation internationally. The perceived practical advantages mentioned by the interviewees are, for example, the possibility of moving for work purposes or settling abroad within the EU, the equal treatment with EU citizens, the simplification of visa-related issues internationally, the access to political and employment rights, and the simplification of banking affairs – such as transactions and receiving credits or lower fees (e.g. at universities). On the other hand, interviewees also highlighted ideological or symbolic reasons for acquiring the German citizenship. Half of the participants said they wanted to be part of the society, either because they feel a certain connection to the country, or because they wanted to have access to the same rights that German nationals enjoy; this is for example the case for the right to vote or the ability to co-decide. Moreover, naturalisation can also be a strategic move as it was the case of Interviewee 2. He said he would like to gain the German citizenship in order to signal to the administrative authorities and potential employers his willingness to stay permanently in Germany. Also, half of the interviewees mentioned that they are motivated by their family plans for the future and believe that naturalisation could make things easier in this respect. In comparison, the motivation for applying for LTR EU, according to Expert 2, is usually that people would like to keep the option of moving abroad open. Therefore, he said, the only reason to acquire LTR EU would be the mobility issue, which was expected to be really attractive. However, according to the same expert, it turned out that people actually think that they would not need it. Yet, he expected the younger generation to be more open to this possibility.

Dual citizenship regulations

An important issue arising from the interviews was dual citizenship. One interviewee pointed out how difficult the decision to naturalise would be if dual citizenship was not a possibility. Four interviewees specifically mentioned that they would like to have the German citizenship, but only under the condition that they do not have to renounce their own citizenship. As reasons for this, emotional attachment to one's own nationality, the culture, and the country of origin were stated. Moreover, practical reasons, such as difficulties with visas and authorities when dispensing one's own nationality, were mentioned. Indeed, most of the interviewees did still keep strong ties and family connections with their countries of origin and would expect further bureaucratic challenges if they chose to give up their home country's citizenship. As an example, they mentioned that they would need to apply for a visa whenever going back home, and they might also have problems with inheritances. Notwithstanding, some interviewees did not perceive many practical advantages of their own citizenship, except for the easy travelling to their home country without having to apply for a visa, or the right to vote. In contrast, the German citizenship seemed to be very attractive to all interviewees in terms of its perceived practical advantages. However, one crucial disadvantage of the German naturalisation stood out – the fact of potentially having to give up one's own citizenship when naturalising, due to the theoretical inability of holding dual citizenship in Germany. Expert 2 confirmed that there is a strong inhibition to denounce one's own nationality for naturalisation. However, being asked if the LTR EU could be an alternative to citizenship,

Expert 2 said that this would be hard to tell because it '*depends on the citizenship law. When dual citizenship is officially allowed, then the LTR EU would be obsolete*' (Expert 2). That means that with the current regulation on the official prohibition of dual citizenship, he saw LTR as an effective alternative to naturalisation. Interviewee 8, being in possession of the LTR EU, explained that the only reason for him to acquire the German citizenship would be to have the freedom to travel more easily internationally. He explained that he would not need a visa for as many countries outside the EU as he currently needs with his own citizenship. However, he also pointed out that the gained rights of naturalisation on top of LTR are not crucial, except for political rights. Moreover, in light of the impossibility of having dual citizenship, he would not want to renounce his own citizenship, because he does not want to lose the right to vote in his country of origin. In this context, he also supported the argument of LTR EU as an alternative to citizenship due to the fact that dual citizenship is not allowed in Germany.

Views on citizenship and nationality

The interviews collected also made clear that citizenship and nationality are understood as different concepts. While citizenship was described as a technical concept, sometimes explained as an 'entry ticket', 'formality', 'ownership' or 'only a document', nationality was described as a feeling of identity and cultural attachment and, therefore, it evoked stronger feelings among the participants. However, this would only hold true for one's initial nationality. Some interviewees even said that they think one can only have one nationality but several citizenships. Although other interviewees said that they think one can adapt to a culture and become a 'mixture' of being German and still carry one's cultural heritage: '*I am also contributing, working and living here and Germany is also part of me (...) I am a bit Germanised as well*' (Interviewee 3). In general, however, the interviewees who wanted to naturalise did so mostly because of practical reasons and advantages and not because of cultural attachment or connectedness to Germany. Nonetheless, one could also perceive a desire to gain the citizenship in order to become a full member of the society they live in, or to acquire a feeling of belonging to that group and have a say in it; which also constituted a symbolic aspect.

Views on European citizenship

Regarding the participants' views on the European citizenship, this research showed that, in the beginning, the interviewees did not understand properly the exact meaning of it or did not even know that this concept existed: '*European citizenship sounds like a utopian thing, like only one more administrative body*' (Interviewee 8). As a result, most participants did not know the difference between European citizenship, German citizenship and the LTR EU status. Usually, and even after a short explanation, they still regarded European citizenship and LTR EU as the same, since both would permit freedom of movement within the EU. In general, the interviewees perceived European mobility as a great advantage:

[It is] great, fantastic to have this opportunity of having no borders due to the EU project and that it was realized and followed through successfully. It is a unique

international feeling. There is so much intercultural exchange and you feel European and you are proud of it (Interviewee 1).

I think it [European mobility] is a main advantage of getting the passport or the LTR EU instead of the permanent residence permit. I think it is one of the things that make Europe so interesting. You have a lot of cultures in one and that makes easier working, travelling...everything. So on top of all the advantages, I think it's on the top of that...so it is really a great advantage (Interviewee 3).

One of the interviewees (Interviewee 5) pointed out that the value of European citizenship and the attached mobility rights within the EU would greatly depend on one's individual goals in life. This would be particularly valuable when one considers moving to another country.

Importance of European mobility

In terms of evaluating the importance of European mobility, five out of the eight interviewees said that this is a very important issue for them. They especially valued the right to work abroad, be flexible for one's employer, enjoy education abroad, travel freely within Europe, and be able to buy property in another member state. Three interviewees were in fact planning to enjoy the opportunities offered by the European mobility in the future. For another interviewee, mobility was only an option but not a priority or actual plan. As he explained: '*Something really extraordinary would need to happen that I would make use of that right. For example, I would get an extraordinary job offer about which I wouldn't need to think for a long time. However, so far this was not the case and probably won't happen*' (Interviewee 8). For two other participants (Interviewees 5 and 7), European mobility was a nice option to have, but not important for them at all, since they want to stay permanently in Germany.

Discrimination of TCNs vs EU-citizens

Finally, participants were asked if they felt discriminated or treated differently in comparison to EU nationals. This should uncover the problems the interviewees might encounter when lacking the LTR EU status, whose purpose is precisely to eradicate discrimination and different treatment of EU nationals and long-term TCNs in the EU. Asking them which rights they do not have, also brings up which rights they would actually like to have and if the rights the LTR EU provides actually matter to them. Being asked directly if they felt discriminated regarding residence, employment and social rights, interviewees' opinions were divided. While half of the participants did not feel discriminated against in comparison to German nationals or EU-citizens in Germany, the other half did mention that they felt treated differently sometimes. In general, it was shown that many TCNs envisaged problems lacking mobility rights in the EU. In this case, restricted opportunities to work in other European member states were often mentioned. Other problems being cited were, for example, missing out on the right to vote, difficulties with the recognition of foreign credentials or certain certificates, and difficulties with bank issues. Interestingly, no problems with entitlements to social benefits were mentioned. One interviewee in particular talked about the career prospects one would miss out on if lacking these mobility rights: '*It is a pity when one does not have this right to mobility. One is discriminated because one might have the competences*

for a certain job, but one cannot do it because of one's immigration title' (Interviewee 6). Furthermore, the same interviewee pointed out the preferential treatment or advantages EU citizens enjoy. The interviewee perceived this an unfair treatment, since she, as a long-term TCN, would have the same obligations and duties as an EU citizen, like for example having to pay taxes, but would not receive the same entitlements. Regarding employment rights, Interviewee 3 explained that she thinks that German applicants for a job would be preferred by companies because it would be less complicated to employ them, since they would not have the difficulties with visa issues that TCNs have. Moreover, in a situation of unemployment, she also stated that German nationals would get a preferential treatment by employment agencies.

Desired rights

In this respect, besides mobility rights, participants particularly mentioned the right to vote as a right they would like to enjoy. For six out of the eight participants, voting rights were of great importance, in order to be able to decide what happens with their taxes and be involved in politics. For the other two participants, political rights were not relevant at all, since they were not interested in politics. One of the interviewees summarised the rights he would like to have in a short and concrete way: '*[I] simply [want to have] the same rights as all Germans have – the same status and priorities'* (Interviewee 2).

In summary, the reasons identified for the low take-up of the LTR EU were manifold, consisting mostly of a general lack of information, knowledge, experience and consultation. Other reasons were a suspicious attitude of the eligible population towards the new status and its specific regulations, as well as preferential national regulations. These imply national immigration statuses, such as 'permanent residency' or naturalisation; nevertheless, the restriction of dual citizenship constitutes a major obstacle for the interviewees to naturalise.

Summing-up: LTR EU as an alternative to citizenship?

An overall analysis of the interviews collected, both with immigrants and immigration experts, showed that the LTR EU can, to a certain extent, be regarded as an alternative to citizenship for many long-term resident TCNs. However, this is only the case because dual citizenship is formally not allowed in Germany. Furthermore, the interviews also showed that naturalisation, or acquisition of another immigration status, including LTR, is seen as a rather technical and pragmatic means to acquire more rights, in particular European and international mobility privileges, as well as political rights. The motivations for acquiring another immigration status are usually to gain greater security regarding employment and settlement and increase opportunities for oneself and one's family. Yet, citizenship is valued even more than LTR EU. This is particularly true because of firstly, the symbolic value of being fully part of a society, having political rights and being able to co-decide; and, secondly, the possibility of enjoying a prioritised international treatment, avoiding visa-related bureaucratic issues and enjoying the good reputation of holding a German passport. Nevertheless, most of the interviewees would only take the German citizenship in the case that they would be able to keep their own nationality. When this would not be possible, they would then like to have the LTR EU, since it would still give them more benefits than the

German permanent residency. In particular, the extended European mobility rights proved to be interesting for most of the interviewees. Nonetheless, not all concerned people were interested in gaining these rights. For some people, mobility rights are not a priority, or not important at all, because they do not consider making use of the acquired rights. However, it remains questionable if a final decision for the LTR EU status could indeed be seen as an effective alternative to citizenship, since the value people attach to German citizenship and LTR EU is not exactly the same. The attached requirements for each option, as for example eventually having to give up one's own citizenship in order to naturalise, also influence the decision of the concerned persons. In this respect, maybe one should rather speak of the LTR EU as a *substitute for citizenship*, given the current circumstances.

The expert view did provide a first-hand evaluation of the additional rights gained and the low acceptance of the LTR status. It showed that mobility rights are the crucial additional value gained. In that way, the LTR EU means a gradual elimination of national boundaries that used to regulate residence permits and set national limits earlier, as Expert 2 explained. According to him, this provides a possibility of having an extended spatial and temporal framework of an immigration permit for long-term resident TCNs. It would only be a matter of time until the status is more established and will be accepted by the concerned persons. He closed off by giving another metaphor of talking about the LTR EU status. Instead of thinking about the status as an alternative or substitute to citizenship, he pictures this option as a *stepchild* in the current situation, which is not really recognised so far but will probably become more relevant in the future. He explained:

I don't want to say that the LTR EU is a 'stepchild'. However, the option is there, but it is not really accepted so far, or the benefits are not recognized yet. The amount of people who see it as an option is still very low or negligible. But I think that will change in the coming years...when Europe is getting more attractive, one is not so bounded anymore (Expert 2).

This means that the experts did not, up to this moment, really encounter a lot of enthusiasm or interest in the LTR status by those potentially affected. For that reason, in their eyes the LTR option did not seem so attractive to potential applicants. However, this might be due to several other reasons, as the interviews highlighted. These reasons are mainly the lack of information, knowledge and counselling on the new status; the rather distanced and suspicious attitude of the likely beneficiaries against the immigration offices; and the lack of experience and low popularity of the new status so far.

Conclusion

This working paper has addressed the implementation of the long-term residence (LTR) Directive at the national level, using Germany as a case-study. The main focus of the research was to scrutinise the unexpected low take-up of the new European status. In conducting interviews with potential and actual recipients of the status, the aim was to uncover the actual factors helping to explain the low take-up of the LTR EU status in Germany. Moreover, it was intended to explore the attractiveness of the additionally gained rights for those concerned. This focus on individual perceptions in explaining the low take-up of the LTR constitutes an

original qualitative approach which has not been covered by existing literature. The academic debate has mostly focused on the theoretical, political and conceptual implications of the new status on a structural level, and the shortcomings of the Directive in a rather general way. However, individual perceptions of those potential applicants on the attractiveness of the LTR status have not been taken into consideration in explaining its low take-up so far. The specific case-study of Germany showed how potential applicants perceive the LTR status in comparison to the national statuses of permanent residency and citizenship, and what the new rights mean to concerned persons. This demonstrated the general attractiveness of the LTR, especially in terms of the increased mobility and political rights, at least for the limited sample of the study. It was shown that the low take-up could be explained by a general lack of information, knowledge, experience and consultation on the status rather than a lack of attractiveness of the gained rights, as often supposed by prior academic work. Other reasons might be a suspicious attitude of the eligible population towards the new status and its specific regulations, a distanced and mistrustful relationship between immigrants and immigration offices, and preferential national regulations regarding other immigration statuses such as permanent residency and citizenship. Moreover, this research seems to validate the theoretical assumption that the LTR EU status, contextualised in the European Union as a form of *European denizenship*, constitutes an alternative or substitute to citizenship, at least in the specific context of Germany. Nonetheless, due to the limited scope of the sample collected, the findings discussed are only exemplary and only very cautious generalisations should be drawn from them. Another aspect that should be taken cautiously is the composition of the eligible group. Indeed, the small age range of the sample collected (between 25 and 35 years old), covering only a younger generation, might also influence the results obtained. This may be particularly apparent in terms of the mobility rights which might be perceived as more important for young people, due to career and lifestyle opportunities, and less relevant to the older long-established generations. This might have effects on the respective decisions for an immigration status. The research conducted aimed to add a qualitative insight to the potential motivations and perceptions on the LTR status by those potentially affected. This angle enabled an original insight to the impact of the legal status of LTR EU, its regulations and practical implementation. The identified difficulties that people might encounter in acquiring or applying for this status point to probable common patterns that restrict long-term resident TCNs to benefit from the additional mobility rights the status could provide and thereby limit the full success of the LTR Directive. In this respect, this study seems to emphasise the importance of further delving this topic from both a qualitative and quantitative perspective. Further investigations of the eligible population on a bigger scale may be especially relevant in order to find out in which way the low take-up can also be partially explained by the socio-economic composition of this group.

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